



SEO & CRO - THE PERFECT BLEND



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INTRODUCTION

Search engine optimisation (SEO) allows your business to appear for relevant user searches more frequently and at the time the user is looking for your products or services. This is something that we have specialised in over the years and we know that by not embracing a versatile, well executed SEO strategy brands and businesses have little chance of success online. But SEO isn't enough.

Once you get a user to your website, you need to ensure that they convert and buy or request more information about your offering. This is where conversion rate optimisation (CRO) comes in.

For a business to be successful nowadays they must embrace both areas of search marketing and let them work together in harmony if they are to see the best results. This eBook will look at this relationship in more detail and assist you with not only getting more site visitors but more conversions.

Let's begin...



WHAT IS CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION (CRO)?

One of the best ways to make sales online is to make sure that when a person visits your site that they are able to convert easily. It sounds simple but so many businesses spend too much time and effort earning visits and not conversions.

This of course, could be down to the way the site is set up and poor user experience (UX) but it is more common that it is because the search results have attracted a user with a low purchase intent.

Conversion rate optimisation (CRO) is a search marketing practice which engineers the consumer journey, emphasising positive UX and learning from user interaction, to maximise the percentage of visitors to a website that complete a chosen action.

CRO moves the user further along the buyer's cycle and to nurture them until they convert.

“SEO and PPC are effective ways of raising the visibility of your website and increasing the number of visitors.

“CRO helps you to increase the proportion of those visitors that convert into leads, sales, subscribers, or whatever the goals of your website may be.”

Representing a confluence between the desperate need for UX improvement and eCommerce performance of the early 2000s and the rise of analytical tools available to search marketers, conversion rate optimisation came to the fore in 2004 with various tools allowing for the A/B testing of page layouts, content, images and colouration.

The process, which took and developed on ideas and principles established in the practice of direct marketing – a subset of marketing which also used continual trial and improvement methods – such as A/B testing, audience testing and A/B split testing to optimise marketing campaigns.

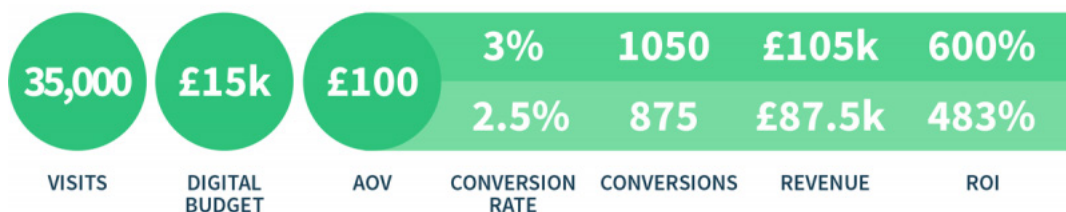
WHY IS CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION (CRO) IMPORTANT?

Conversion rate optimisation is vital not only to smaller brands, but to brands of any size, allowing them to ensure that the most is being made of existing site traffic before budget is allocated to growing the traffic.

Reason	Explanation
Reliant on data, not guesswork	CRO depends heavily on data and analytics, meaning that a conversion rate optimisation project can be as close to 100% data-driven as any marketing activity can achieve.
Uses split (A/B) testing	A/B testing means that you can divert real traffic to variations of web pages meaning that there is no consumer modelling required, real consumer behaviour will help you choose a winner.
Fantastic low-cost or free tools	Tools such as VWO and Optimizely make the maths required to decide statistical significance easy with built in calculators. Simple drag and drop features also make rearranging content easy.
Allows for incremental improvement	With conversion rate optimisation, you need not rest on your laurels, each successful optimisation can be built upon, meaning that CRO can be a continually beneficial optimisation process.
Makes the most of your audience	Building your audience is an ongoing, and sometimes expensive, endeavour. With CRO, you can look to ensure that rather than building your audience, you are achieving the best results with the audience you have.

HOW CAN CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION (CRO) GROW YOUR BUSINESS?

Simply put, conversion rate optimisation is both a money saver and a revenue generator. By ensuring that your brand is making every consumer count, you can free up funds by lowering cost per acquisition (CPA) while increasing revenue and return on investment (ROI).



WHERE DOES SEO COME IN?

Every element of your website should help answer searchers' queries and move them closer to becoming customers and as such you need to consider some of the following 'SEO' tips:

Think about your content and search intent

One of the most difficult things about producing online content for a brand is determining its purpose. Content for content's sake can have detrimental impact if, for example, it dilutes the relevance signals the site provides the various algorithms that rank pages, while insufficient content can leave sites struggling to compete for relevant search terms.

Search intent according to ahrefs, is the why behind a search query. In other words, why did the person make this search? Do they want to learn something? Are they looking to make a purchase? Or, are they looking for a particular website?

Whether you're looking to identify gaps in order to generate content ideas, or looking to ensure you're serving the right content at the right time, the search queries report can help. User intent can seem a tough proposition, but the main issue is developing a list of genuine queries – after that, we can generally use a degree of common sense to categorise the levels of intent.

Users today want to get the answers to their queries quickly and easily. They also want to make sure that the results that are returned are relevant and that they are from a trusted or apparently trusted source, (this latter point is important as it goes without saying that customers want a trusted service, the problem is that if you are new to the space then you have to appear as professional, relevant and authentic as possible).

Customers and users tend to be looking for one of the following things:

- an accurate answer
- an item
- a specific set of details
- a date
- an image
- an address
- a service
- a definition

In an official definition, there are three broad categories that cover most web search queries: informational, navigational, and transactional. These are also called “do, know, go.” The three areas are:

- Informational queries – Queries that cover a broad topic (eg Liverpool or New Cars) for which there may be thousands of relevant results.
- Navigational queries – Queries that seek a single website or web page of a single entity (eg YouTube or Facebook).
- Transactional queries – Queries that reflect the intent of the user to perform a particular action, like purchasing a car or downloading a screen saver.

Optimise title tags and meta descriptions

To rank and convert site traffic, you’ll want to create accurate title tags and meta descriptions that describe exactly what searchers can expect to find on your pages.

If your title tags and meta descriptions accurately describe the content, you’ll drive more relevant traffic to your site, and you’ll see engagement metrics rise, while bounce rates drop.

Think about mobile content

Firstly and most importantly, the ability for your content to be discovered by search engines has to be the first point in any checklist. This means that you should ensure your content is not blocked by robots.txt or any in any other way out of the reach of search engines.

With the shift to mobile devices, search also developed the need for low demand, high speed pages. In order for your content to be considered ‘quality’, it will need to load quickly – so you will need to avoid render blocking scripts, loading too many animations, images or excessive numbers of fonts to ensure that the content is fast loading. This all adds to the user experience and will encourage more conversions.

SO HOW CAN WE USE DATA TO IMPROVE CRO?

There are a number of ways which you can use data to perfect your CRO strategy and much of it starts with an understanding of your audience. The importance of having a clear idea of who you are marketing to is a given, but how can you improve your conversion rate even further? Well one of the first thing to do is to marry up the people with the products. Look at exactly who is buying your products and separate them into clear demographics. Are they male or female? Which age bracket do they fit into? Do they have children? All of these demographics can be paired with behaviours (psychographics) to build a more complex understanding of customers and potential customers.

Data Resource	Typical Data Points
Web Analytics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Top Entry & Exit Pages Paths to Conversion Visitors Likely to Convert (eg, new vs. repeat OR mobile vs. desktop, geography) Actions Leading to Conversion (eg, calculator interaction, product comparison)
Previous Test Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Types of Elements that Increased Conversion (eg, headline, CTA, content) Audiences that Responded Positively Actions Leading to Conversion
CRM Data	Attribute Analysis of Past Purchasers
3rd Party Data	Visitor Profile Data (eg, psychographic, demographic)
Voice of Customer Data (VOC)	Qualitative Data (eg, common pain points)
Session Replays	Causes for Abandonment (eg, form field errors, form submission issues, data entry hesitation such as SSN)

SUCCESSFUL CRO PLANNING – WHAT TO TEST?

- Get a small group together representing various teams within your business and brainstorm ideas for improvement from a range of perspectives, including a fresh pair of eyes where possible.
- Keep a running wish list of suggestions for changes and enhancements to your site.
- Use Google Analytics data – look at popular landing pages that have a high bounce rate and examine the common paths to conversion, reviewing any pages with a high exit rate.
- Usability testing – spend a small amount of money on getting some user feedback (typically \$1 per question). You can show certain pages on your site and set users
- tasks to complete and then ask for their feedback.
- Put yourself in the shoes of your customers or users: how can you show them what they want to see when they want to see it?
- Look to improve high traffic pages, even if they're already performing well.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

There are a couple of metrics that are often overlooked by those looking to improve their conversion rates. This is dangerous because it shows that they are not realising the potential of their website. Here are a few things that you shouldn't neglect:

Actual order value (AOV)

The AOV is a key metric as many businesses draw the line under a customer once they are an actual buyer. The goal in terms of gaining a conversion has been achieved. But what if the customer was going to spend more? And what if they were struggling to find a product and settled for a cheaper option. At the conversion or payment stage you could add in a carousel or banner featuring other products that they may like or products that accompany the item they are close to converting on.

Entry/Exit Pages

By collecting data through web analytics you are able to highlight the entry and exit pages of your website. Analysing entry pages and understanding how each customer finds you this is important as it gives you a model to build your marketing strategy. If there is one page that is converting at a higher rate than others, ask why this is and build similar pages to this and use similar hooks in terms of your links and content.

The exit pages allow you to see your potential converted audience. You can see where they are leaving your site and why. Look on these pages to make sure that the content is up to scratch and that links or payment options aren't broken. You can also check that the correct products and services are available in accordance with the site navigation that the customer has taken.

Successful landing page

To maximise conversions and reduce bounce rate as far as possible, your landing pages need to:

Be persuasive and engaging

Use a powerful headline and only use copy if it adds value – don't be afraid of white space. Offering prospects something for free, such as a download, can be a powerful motivator

Offer a useful and engaging user experience

Answering questions or displaying relevant products; it must also be easy to navigate.

Develop credibility and trust in your brand

Through clear brand identity and additional information that reinforces why to choose your brand (such as facts and figures or testimonials where appropriate).

Provide a logical and consistent journey from the referral source

For example, an organic search result, a PPC ad or a link in an email.

Contain a clear CTA (call-to-action)

What do you want the visitor to do? Make it clear and simple for them to do it. Limiting the options on each page can be an effective technique.

Perhaps the most important aspect affecting landing page success – and a theme that runs through each of the factors – is relevancy: a landing page should always seek to provide what the consumer is expecting to see.

You'll want your landing pages to feature as high in the rankings as possible for relevant search terms, enabling your potential consumers to find the page early and therefore easier for them to convert. This means you should apply best practice SEO in the same way as you would any other area of your website. Even simplified landing pages, therefore, should feature useful copy below the fold to ensure that it does not fall foul of various algorithm or manual penalties for thin content.

Visitors

You can understand a lot about CRO and potential conversions by looking at your returning vs new customer breakdown and whether the new audience is growing. CRO is all about potential and this metric shows you that if you get your offering, navigation, pricing and user experience (UX) right your conversion rate should improve.

You can also look at metrics such as geography. Are all or most of your customers from a certain area? If this is the case then maybe you can target your content and marketing activity to further strengthen this. If you are looking to expand to another territory then you can use what you have learned in these metrics to determine a plan moving forward.

One topic that is very popular at the moment is last click attribution, and the fact that users might be becoming savvier. They may visit your site as a means to conduct further research before converting from a different device later on. Looking at mobile vs desktop use is important here, as is the time the user visited and the navigation they took.

The 'PIE' framework

Ensure that you're making changes to pages that can have a significant effect on your conversion rate and average order value (AOV); there's no point wasting time testing a page that gets no traffic, or a change so minor it won't make a difference.

The PIE analysis framework sets a score for the potential, importance and ease of each test and ranks them to create your test plan.

- **Potential**
What impact do you think the change will have on conversion rate and AOV (average order value)? Major changes will typically have a greater effect on conversion rate than smaller changes. Replicating something that works on another part of your site, or another site, often has a greater chance for success than completely new ideas. Look at previous test data to help estimate improvement.
- **Importance**
How important is the page or feature? What is the size and value of current traffic to the page? Remember to speak to other departments for their plans and priority areas and to check that the tests you're planning won't cause issues for other teams and/or your agency.
- **Ease**
How difficult is it going to be to set up the test and permanently change your site if it is a success? There is little value in the short term of finding an improvement that you can't make to your current site.

Product comparison

Looking at the actions that lead to a conversion can give you further evidence for how well your strategy is performing. Are your users comparing products on the site and what is it that makes them choose one over the other. Is it price? Is it the link that got them to the product? Or is it the on page content or images?

Previous test data

Test, test and test again. That's the message here. Look at your calls to action (CTA), your previous sale items or offers that worked well. The language and style of your content and how the audiences responded. Also look at things such as your social media and mentions, are customers looking to buy a certain product or are they holding out for a new offering? Just think of the hype that brands like Apple create surrounding new product launches.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It makes sense that all businesses optimise their website in order to increase their chance of improving conversions but it makes more sense to do it in an analytical manner. If you are able to identify your audience and use real time statistics and analytics, you will be best placed to improve performance further.

If you are able to identify exactly who your customers are and how they are finding your website you have cracked half of the problem. If you can then see exactly where they are going on your site and how they move around it, what they look at, how much they spend and how many visits it takes to convert you can compile this to streamline your strategy. You can shake off all the things that aren't working and concentrate on the ones that are, you can also learn as you add new products and services.

CRO is a case of trial and error and of constant learning. As your audience grows and the number of conversions that your audience make grows you collect more data and therefore have more evidence as to how and why you should change your strategy.



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ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named both SEO Agency of the Year and Organic Search (SEO) Team of the Year 2020; ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, and a Microsoft Advertising Select Agency Partner.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

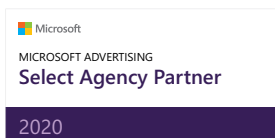
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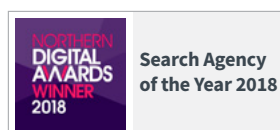
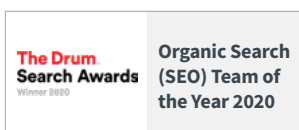
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