



WEBSITE OPTIMISATION FOR BETTER CONVERSION RATES



CONTENTS

WHAT IS CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION (CRO)?	4
WHY IS CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION (CRO) IMPORTANT?	4
HOW CAN CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION (CRO) GROW YOUR BUSINESS?	5
OPTIMISING YOUR EXISTING WEBSITE	6
SO HOW CAN WE USE DATA TO IMPROVE CRO?	13
THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN OPTIMISING FOR CRO	14
FINAL THOUGHTS	17

INTRODUCTION

Conversion rate optimisation (CRO) is a critical search marketing technique ensuring the best and easiest path to purchase, and that ultimately it offers the best user experience to deliver conversion. When we look at the ways in which website optimisation can lead to better conversion rates there are plenty of tactics that can be implemented, these eBook will cover them in detail.



WHAT IS CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION (CRO)?

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

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.

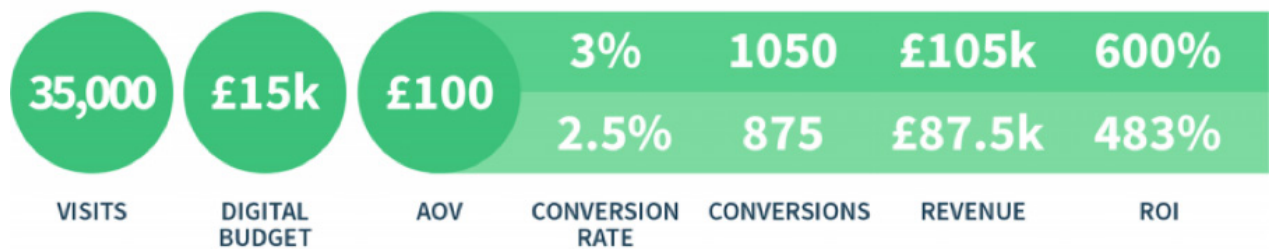
WHY IS CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION (CRO) IMPORTANT?

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).



Pictured above: How CRO can make a difference to an average business.

As can be seen above, an increase of only half a percent could potentially lead to an increase in 117% ROI and a 20% increase in revenue. This is money that can be fed back in to the business, whether that is to fund expansion of products and services, expand into new markets or to improve the brand's overall visibility – regardless of how it is spent, however, it is money that required no additional budget to earn (beyond the time invested in the optimisation process).



OPTIMISING YOUR EXISTING WEBSITE

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

One of the most important things you need to do to increase the SEO performance of your website is to make sure that it's brimming with great content and that you understand your audience.

The first step in writing great content for the web is learning about your audience. You aren't writing web content simply because you enjoy writing and you (hopefully) aren't writing just to make the search engines happy. That means that you should be writing (mostly) for humans not robots, making the content something that users will genuinely want to read, engage with and share on their social channels. This will, in turn, make for good SEO and help to pull users through the buying process, helping to increase conversions.

In the early years of the web, overly optimised meta tags and pages of content that were stuffed with certain keywords and phrases were able to rank highly in search engines. Although it was often unreadable, site owners didn't really care as long as it was picked up and ranked well by search engines. They were writing for the search engines and not humans, so, although they may have been getting traffic to their site, their conversion rate would have remained fairly static as the content they produced did not encourage visitors to make a purchase or trigger them into repeat business.

Now, however, Google penalises sites that produce this type of content. This is why there has been an even greater focus, in recent times, on content. If you produce content that is informative, entertaining, solves problems and provides readers with something worthwhile, this will generate traffic, will be more shareable on social media sites and will better place your brand as a good source of knowledge about your industry. This is what will get you good results in the search engines.

You should have a specific purpose in mind for the content and a specific type of reader to write for. If you're new to writing for the web, or are trying to reach a new audience, it's worth going through a formal process to define your buyer personas. This is a series of fictional, character representations of those individuals that define your brand's audience, helping you to better understand their needs and write content specifically for them.

UNDERSTAND WHY PEOPLE MAY SEARCH FOR YOUR CONTENT

Great, so you've identified your audience. Now you need to make sure that the content you produce connects with them. If it addresses the needs of your persona(s), it will be read more and shared more, helping it to rank better in search engines. People search for a variety of reasons. Common reasons in the B2B sector include searching to:

- Understand a product category
- Learn about a product or solution
- Solve a specific business problem
- Be informed about new approaches

Common reasons in the B2C sector include searching to:

- Find the best deal
- Find the closest location
- Locate a product or service that's advertised

As above, a basic buyer's journey includes the following stages:

Awareness > Interest > Consideration > Purchase > Post Purchase > Re-Purchase

You can think about this before beginning a piece of content. Is your persona:

- Looking for a general category of information? (Awareness)
- Looking for a solution to a specific problem? (Interest)
- Looking for an enterprise solution? (Awareness-Interest)
- Identifying and comparing specific products or vendors? (Consideration-Purchase)
- Looking for help with one of your products they already own? (Post-Purchase)
- Looking to replace or upgrade a product, and planning to remain loyal to you? (Re-Purchase)

OPTIMISING YOUR CONTENT

Keyword research is a vital part of any organic search campaign, whether it is used to mould onpage copy or to develop brand or product positioning – it is imperative that it is not only done, but done thoroughly and well.

As search engines have improved their ability to ‘understand’ natural language (from the advent of the Hummingbird update in 2013, to the new levels of query relevancy offered by RankBrain and the introduction of BERT), a lot of brands and agencies have begun to place less importance on the role of keywords in content.

The worrying possibility this raises, however, is that, though it frees our writers to express themselves with fluency and style without having to rely on keyword anchoring, the reduced importance of keywords in on-page copy can sometimes carry over into keyword targeting. Keywords should not and must not be overlooked, and their importance in attracting a potential consumer can be underrated.

Take, for example, someone looking to make a purchase for a new hobby. They are interested in the hobby, but lack a degree of knowledge when it comes to hobby specific key terms; in this case, they are going to be searching for more general keywords and are going to rely on brands using search marketing strategies that account for this.

The best keyword research will identify themes – around price size, colour, etc. as well as gaps in the market with low competition from competitors. By grouping such terms into ‘themes’ (groups of keywords), they can be converted into pages of content which will represent a thorough match to a number of targeted searches, increasing relevancy and usefulness for consumers – again heightening UX at the same time as improving chances of conversion.

This is a good time to refer back to your buyer personas, what are they looking for, what will they want to know and at what stage in the buying cycle will they want to know it? Think about how you search on a phone as opposed to on a laptop. Are there differences in your own search methods from one device to another? What are your intentions across devices?

Think about the levels of interest and expertise possessed by your buyer personas – are consumers looking for brand specific items, using specific industry jargon more or less likely to want to buy or to need information than those searching for generic, non-specific terms? How can your keyword targeting nurture the buyer journey by delivering the right content at the right time? If you have run PPC campaigns for your goods or services in the past, there may be a wealth of useful information available to you in your Search Query reports.

Once you have assembled lists of key terms and questions, use online tools (such as Google's Keyword Planner) to quantify search density and, therefore, which of these keywords, terms and themes should be the focus of your efforts.

Ideally you're looking for the golden ratio of low competition and high volume. Also, use Analytics to monitor in-site searches – those terms which consumers are searching for while on your page – as well as popular landing pages and seek to consolidate these terms externally.

The role of keywords in modern search marketing is in flux at the moment – and there are some which, with good reason, have suggested that the industry should be looking to move away from using specific keyword rankings as a success metric – especially as trophy keywords are likely to diminish in importance (as the way we search shifts and queries continue to trend longer).

However, regardless of the relative importance for monitoring progress, keyword research will retain its importance when determining positioning and importance as well as when considering audience targeting.

HOW TO OPTIMISE A PAGE

It is a fact that organic search has evolved significantly since its early beginnings. Producing content that meets the needs of your audience and customers is now at the core of effective SEO.

However, there are still a few things that are important that you must remember to consider in order to give those search engine robots just that little bit extra help.

META TITLE TAG

Though it is ultimately limited by pixel length, your meta title tag should be as accurate, concise and precise a description of your content as is possible in 56 characters. It is one of the most important sources of information for Google's algorithm when it comes to deciding relevance (and therefore affects SERPs position) as well as aiding in the ease of browsing for the consumer – it should always contain key terms relating to the page.

META DESCRIPTION

The best explanation of the ‘meta description’ tag is as a short summary of the page – a clear and concise 155 character description of the on page content (with a minimum of 90 characters recommended). However, as this is the text visible in SERPs, it should also serve to draw consumers to the page – featuring, wherever possible, some form of enticement or call to action. A good ‘meta description’ can drastically improve your click through rate.

<meta name=“description” content= ”This is a concise web-page description”>

Though a brand may publish a novelty blog titled ‘10 uses for unwanted Christmas knitwear’, in order to ensure the bounce rate is kept low and your potential readership is given a full and attractive account of on-page copy (detering the searchers that may be looking for recycling or upcycling advice), you may wish to describe it as: “A Humorous List Of Unexpected Uses For An Unpopular Christmas Gift”.

* Note: if you don’t include a meta description, or if Google believes it to be incorrect, then the search engine will create its own description based on what it thinks the user should see.

BREADCRUMBS

Like most of the other suggestions in this eBook, breadcrumbs are a useful tactic to help both your site visitors and the search engines crawling your site. Breadcrumbs take their name from the Hansel and Gretel story and are useful for helping your visitors find their way. They differ in a significant way; they are not a literal representation of the path your visitor took to get to the page they are on. Breadcrumbs are instead a representation of where the current page lives in the site hierarchy.

Breadcrumbs typically live in the upper left corner of a page (below the primary navigation) and are an easy way to both set the context of where the content lives in your site and to help your visitors navigate to higher level content. Since these are standard links, search engines will follow them, so breadcrumbs increase the odds that a search engine will discover your content.

Google believes breadcrumbs are important in helping visitors to understand the structure of the site and how the specific page fits into the site hierarchy. It will include breadcrumb navigation in search results when it can.

HEADER TAGS

Headers summarise the pages you create for both consumers and search engines – and should be easily read by both. They are also important stylistically.

<H1></H1>

Though wit and humour are desirable for a page title, it is more important in the digital age for it to convey the information you wish to rank for. While ‘Book lack in Ongar’ is a great headline (one of my favourites), Google’s search algorithm is looking for ‘Funding cuts for Essex libraries result in severe book shortages’ for search queries regarding library funding. Though there is no definitive limit, best practice dictates that you should attempt to keep your titles unique, between 60 and 80 characters, and featuring keywords near the beginning.

<H2></H2>

This is a more appropriate place to flex your creative muscle and generally serves as a sub-title. The tags are also good for use as stand-alone subheadings when seeking to break up content for ease and speed of understanding. Again, it is still recommended that keywords feature somewhere in the subheading – as each header is important to framing the relevance of page to search queries.

<H3></H3>

This is a tertiary emphasis tag – or your ‘sub-sub heading’, formatting of which should adhere to its role as a paragraph leader, or stand-out line. As above, ensure this header is relevant to the text it precedes or is linked to – using keywords from the text to add relevance to the passage to promote ease of reader and search engine understanding.

Alt text

Alternative text is used with images (and other non-text content) to describe what the image shows. The words used within an image’s alt attribute should be its text equivalent and convey the same information or serve the same purpose that the image would. This helps the visually impaired understand what an image is about using screen reading software, and it also helps those people that use browsers unable to download images. It’s also another chance to tell search engines what the image and your page is about.

When writing the alt text for an image, ask yourself: if you were to replace the image with the text, would most users receive the same basic information? Every image on a page should have alt text.

WHAT MAKES GOOD ALT TEXT?

Shorter than 65 characters (including spaces)

The alt text should be a short 'stand-in' in the event that the image itself is not available.

The alt text should accurately represent the image

Structured data

While structured data (referred to as schema from here on) involves a little more code awareness, the likelihood that schema will play a big role in the future of search makes it worth a mention.

In addition to the prospective importance of schema, there are free plug-ins for many CMSs (such as Yoast) which can make implementation much easier. However, whether you're using a plug-in or not, it's worthwhile ensuring that you run your site through Google's free checker once in a while in order to make sure everything is working as it should.

WHAT IS SCHEMA MARKUP?

The result of collaboration between Yahoo, Bing and Google back in 2011, there came into being a site called schema.org, this site seeks to unify the language used by webmasters to provide metadata on pages which can be easily read by search engine spiders and parsers. Schema markup is how we refer to the microdata code that provides this metadata.

If structured data is, to extend the metaphor, the scaffolding that allows for better understanding of information, then markup is the individual scaffolding poles. With hundreds of varieties of possible markup types, the aim is to create a machine readable internet – or in the words of the creator of the world wide web, Tim Berners-Lee, a semantic web:

“I have a dream for the Web [in which computers] become capable of analysing all the data on the Web – the content, links, and transactions between people and computers. A “Semantic Web”, which makes this possible, has yet to emerge, but when it does, the day-to-day mechanisms of trade, bureaucracy and our daily lives will be handled by machines talking to machines. The “intelligent agents” people have touted for ages will finally materialize.”

While there is a lot to cover with regards to schema, it would not make sense to cover too much of it here – instead, you can download a designated guide to schema from our website which will give you everything you need to get started.

SO HOW CAN WE USE DATA TO IMPROVE CRO?

There are a number of ways in 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 things 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.

Rob Brennan from Opentext put together this handy chart, highlighting some of the areas that you can focus on to form your CRO hypotheses, and we can use this to look in more detail at how important data can be.

Data Resource	Typical Data Points
Web Analytics	<p>Top Entry & Exit Pages</p> <p>Paths to Conversion</p> <p>Visitors Likely to Convert (eg, new vs. repeat OR mobile vs. desktop, geography)</p> <p>Actions Leading to Conversion (eg, calculator interaction, product comparison)</p>
Previous Test Data	<p>Types of Elements that Increased Conversion (eg, headline, CTA, content)</p> <p>Audiences that Responded Positively</p> <p>Actions Leading to Conversion</p>
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)

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN OPTIMISING FOR CRO

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.

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 conducting 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.

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.



BEST PRACTICES FOR PLANNING CRO

If your website's getting plenty of traffic, but relatively few conversions, chances are that you need to make some changes to your site. Here's how to plan your CRO tests effectively to help you get the most value out of the process. This is the most important part of the process; investing extra time in the planning stage will pay off tenfold later on.

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.

Setting KPIs for CRO

How will you measure success for each test: in CRO terms, what will the 'conversion' be for each test? The more conversions you get, the faster you will get a statistically valid result.

This might be when people take the next step in the customer journey and won't necessarily be your conversion page. For example, if you're testing a landing page, getting a customer to the basket page might be a sufficient KPI.

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.

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.

GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY

ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning search & digital 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, social media and analytics. 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?

CONTACT US



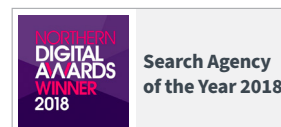
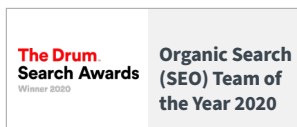
Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#), or to find out what Click Consult can do for you, call:

0845 205 0292

OUR ACCREDITATIONS



OUR AWARDS



OUR TECHNOLOGIES

monitor **TRAX** rank **TRAX** feed **TRAX** link **TRAX** pro **TRAX** page **TRAX**

