

WHITEPAPER

BEST CONVERSION AND SEO PRACTICES

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Introduction

Over the past seven years of growth in search engine use by consumers and B2B buyers, much of the focus for website design was on increasing traffic through search engine optimization (SEO). As the industry matured, online marketers began to focus on increasing the number of web visitors who succeed in performing a desired online result, such as completing a sales transaction or downloading information. The challenge was to convert and the metric was called the conversion rate.

Conversions are affected by many external and internal variables but conversion rates of 0.5 percent or less are typical for many websites. A conversion rate of 2 percent is considered quite good. The pursuit of increasing conversions is called conversion optimization since it requires no increase in traffic for success.

The return on investment from conversion optimization is outstanding. For example, if a typical website were able to double the conversion rate from 0.5 percent to 1 percent, the effect would be equal to doubling overall traffic to the website. Increasing conversions sufficiently to attain good status (2 percent) would have the same effect as quadrupling the traffic.

Financially, typical website owners could compare the cost of doubling traffic versus increasing conversions by 0.5 percent (from 0.5 percent to 1.0 percent) and conclude that the return on investment from conversion optimization was more than worthwhile.

Search Engines Optimization

SEO is primarily directed at increasing traffic to a website from search engines. To help users find the information they seek, search engines must find and organize billions of web pages on the internet. To do this, search engines algorithmically crawl, index and rank those web pages.

Although very sophisticated, technical limitations in search engine technology mean some web pages present difficulties in being crawled and indexed. Optimizing web pages removes those difficulties. The practice of SEO is often referred to as the process of making websites search engine-friendly.

SEO also addresses a web page's ranking in search engine results. Studies show that the first position in search results typically receives over 40 percent of all click-through traffic with the first 10 results receiving 90 percent of all click-throughs. Traffic is clearly affected by search engine ranking and improving ranking is a significant component of SEO.

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The importance of SEO to growing online business cannot be understated. With nearly half of all internet users using search engines on a daily basis, it is fast approaching email (at 60 percent) as the internet's killer app. In 2009 the Nielsen Company reported that total searches increased 20.3 percent year-over-year in the U.S. alone, noting that searches on all search engines exceeded 9 billion in the month of reporting (May 2009).

What is Conversion?

A conversion occurs when a visitor performs a desired online outcome or goal such as completing a sales transaction, downloading information or filling out a form. The conversion rate is the number of web visitors who perform that desired online outcome, divided by the total number of visitors.

Traditionally website designers focused their conversion efforts on the landing page, the web page where a visitor “lands” after clicking on an online advertisement or search engine result. Conversion optimization means experimenting with variations in layout, copy, images and other elements of web page design. Reducing distractions and creating compelling landing pages with effective calls to action are prime concerns.

Initially conversion optimization advanced largely through trial and error. As application intensified online marketers began using testing techniques borrowed from mainstream marketing such as A/B and multivariate testing. A/B testing is used when a baseline landing page is compared to a number of single-variable alternates. When one alternative is found to convert better than the others it is then subjected to multivariate testing to refine and improve it.

The effectiveness of testing was such that conversion optimization became virtually synonymous with ongoing testing. A key metric became the bounce rate, the rate at which first-time visitors leave a website after viewing only a single web page.



SEO & Conversion

Once the importance of testing in conversion optimization was firmly established in the minds of online marketers, some marketers suggested that there should be more attention on the pre-testing stage of the process. Advocates of this approach believed that marketers should invest more time and resources to understanding their audience.

Some online marketers observed that the conversion rate naturally increased by conforming to the best practices of SEO.

By developing a deeper understanding of the customer an especially targeted message can be crafted that is highly relevant to the search query. Any resulting landing page could then be subjected to testing.

Following this line of reasoning, some online marketers observed that the conversion rate naturally increased by conforming to the best practices of SEO. Traditionally considered two separate disciplines within online marketing, conversion optimization now intersected with SEO.

By ensuring that content found is relevant to search queries, online marketers can attract more visitors who are intrinsically more likely to convert. Conversion specialists now had a head start because a greater share of visitors found the information that was relevant to their query.

By developing a customer model, online marketers can hypothesize probable search queries and create content that matches those search queries and their underlying intent. Landing pages satisfy the search objective by offering relevant content. Customary conversion testing would continue to find the best approaches and refine them.

Machining Content to Query

A customer model facilitates conversion of prospective customers by providing a framework within which relevant content can be created. To develop a customer model, online marketers can access an array of qualitative and quantitative research tools used in mainstream marketing like surveys, questionnaires, focus groups and in-depth interviews.

Customer research is performed to reveal the following: the information that prospective visitors want, the way they prefer it presented and the manner in which these visitors frame their queries in search engines.

After creating content that satisfies the customer's information requirements, marketers can match search queries to the content by using keywords. Keywords are the foundation of search. To determine the relevance of web pages to search queries, all search engines use proprietary algorithms that are based on keywords.

SEO best practices mandate that keywords are prominently used in titles, text and meta data. When these and various other SEO techniques are employed, more customers will find the information they seek. The goal overall is to create relevant, informative and useful content.

The goal of SEO is to target customers by matching that content to customer's search queries leveraging keywords. Many SEO experts feel that keyword research has the highest return on investment of any SEO activity. Keyword research includes knowing which keywords are most likely to convert, not just those who have the most search volume.



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Keywords that suggest expertise or experience mean the searcher will more than likely convert.

In fact the 'long tail' has proven to be most important facet of SEO for many companies. The long tail refers to the many low volume searches for relatively unique searches. For example, if a website page is found for 'b2b lead for compressor manufacturing', that is very relevant and proves expertise or experience, the searcher will more than likely convert. This is due to the fact the searcher knows that it is difficult to find credible information and will want to act on it immediately. This is in contrast that to buying keyword ads, where the company would not buy this keyword phrase as it would not have any search volume. Skilled SEO optimization ensures that the long tail is being found, and can increase conversion substantially.

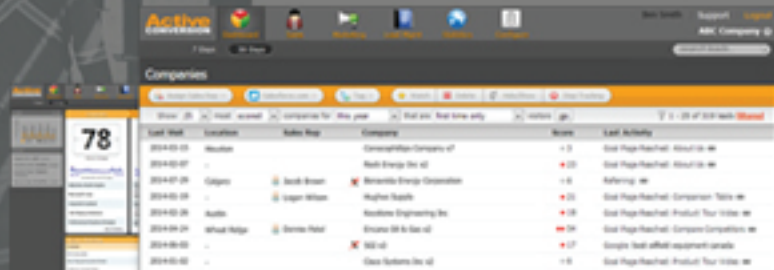
Conclusion

Over the past decade of growth in search engine use, much of the focus for website design was on increasing traffic by practicing Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Meanwhile, online marketers began to employ testing to find the best ways to convert visitors into customers. The effectiveness was such that conversion optimization became virtually synonymous with ongoing testing.

Experts in online marketing then observed that conversions naturally increased when websites conformed to the best practices of SEO. When SEO techniques are employed, the visitors most likely to convert will find the relevant, informative and useful content they seek. By leveraging keywords, online marketers can target those customers by matching that content to customer's search queries.

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Last Visit	Location	Sales Rep	Company	Score	Last Activity
2014-03-03	Houston		ConceptMax-Company of	-10	Get Page-Ratchet About Us
2014-03-07	-		Next Energy Int'l	+20	Get Page-Ratchet About Us
2014-07-28	Chicago	Scott Brown	Renovate Energy Conversion	-10	Referring URL
2014-03-28	-	Logan Wilson	Hyflex Supply	+20	Get Page-Ratchet Comparison Table
2014-03-28	Austin		Nextline Engineering Inc.	+20	Get Page-Ratchet Product Tour Video
2014-09-24	Whitewater	Denise Reed	Enroute Oil & Gas Int'l	+20	Get Page-Ratchet Compare Companies
2014-05-02	-		Mid-Val	+17	Simple Tool Offer/Equipment Details
2014-03-02	-		Case Systems Int'l	-10	Get Page-Ratchet Product Tour Video

About ActiveConversion

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