

Converting Shopping Carts into Sales

By Lindsay Woolman

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According to a report by Invesp (<http://bit.ly/S21ad4>) the most important element of the checkout process is helping customers overcome any fears, doubts, or uncertainties about their purchase. Businesses who understand how to motivate customers and implement an intuitive shopping cart can get past these hurdles and ultimately make more sales.

The easiest way to remove second thoughts is to ensure the journey from product page to order confirmation is as seamless as possible. Let's take a look at the shopping process from beginning to end.

First Impressions

Your customer searches, receives a referral, or responds to an email with curiosity. In many cases her mindset is to browse or price compare, but if she is motivated, she will buy. The first impression of your website should convey that your prices and in-stock items are accurate and easy to find. So make sure product categories are clearly labeled, pictures are of a high resolution, and prices are clearly visible. If a customer has to click through several pages just for a price or product description, chances are she will click away from your site without fully exploring its offering. For more on optimizing your site read, "Six Ways To Optimize Your E-Commerce Site" (<http://linkd.in/OnDNor>).

To find the weak spots in your checkout progress, track at which point customers click away from your site. One way to do this is to by setting up a destination goal and funnel on Google Analytics (<http://bit.ly/OuK6aB>). For WordPress sites consider adding a plugin that tracks user behavior, such as WooCommerce (<http://bit.ly/NZ3qQP>) or Market Press (<http://bit.ly/OBkyKO>).

By identifying where a customer leaves your site, you can determine where you may have an issue. Below are three of the most common issues in the checkout process.

1. Hidden Shipping Costs

High shipping costs are the number one reason people abandon shopping carts with 44% of customers walking away once the complete cost of their purchase is revealed according to the Invespo report. It's frustrating to spend thirty minutes picking out the perfect item and then upon checkout, realize the shipping costs no longer make it appealing. If you suspect your shipping costs are too high, try a flat-rate option or incorporating shipping into the product price. ASOS (<http://us.asos.com/?hrd=1>) clearly states on each of its site pages that it offers free shipping and returns, removing any shipping cost doubts customers may have about investing their time on the site. The psychologically of free or reduced shipping makes people think they are getting a deal—which we all love. See "Go Beyond Free Shipping To Gain Loyal Customers" (<http://linkd.in/OLYfk0>) for more on this.

2. Asking Too Many Questions

Another area to beware of is collecting too much user data and overwhelming your customer during checkout. If you require customers to login before completing the purchase, they can get frustrated (especially if just browsing). Most people appreciate a guest checkout and the option of registering after their purchase is complete. Also, don't ask for unnecessary information such as a phone number or work information. Those precious seconds can lose shoppers.

3. Keep The Process Clutter Free

As your customer reaches the final checkout stages, make sure all of the buttons are easy to find and react to. This is also a good time to offer first purchase incentives such as coupon codes or promotions that expire quickly to provide an extra push. Essentially, you want a knee jerk reaction toward your goal page. Sites such as soap.com and zipcar.com achieve this by advertising coupon codes for first time buyers.

By ensuring your checkout process flows smoothly you can create a feel-good, practical, no-brainer experience your customers enjoy.

Do you have any tips for turning shopping carts into sales? Please share in the comments below.

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