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## Jump Start Web Data Analytics

### Syllabus

Jump Start Web Data Analytics : Creating foundation reports, E-commerce website guide, Website jump start guide, Measurement jump start guide, Blog measurement jump start guide, competitive benchmarking, Reflections.

### Contents

- 3.1 Creating Foundation Reports
- 3.2 E-Commerce Website Guide
- 3.3 Website Jump Start Guide
- 3.4 Measurement Jump Start Guide
- 3.5 Competitive Benchmarking and Reflections

### 3.1 Creating Foundation Reports

#### 3.1.1 Webmaster

A webmaster is someone who creates and manages the content and organization of a website, manages the computer server and technical programming aspects of a website or does both.

Generally, a webmaster's responsibilities include,

- Register and maintain the website's domain name.
- Design the website, or supervise page designers and programmers.
- Monitor the size of the site to ensure allowed bandwidth and disk space is not exceeded.
- Plan future growth, requirements and limitations of the website.
- Adding new content.
- Revising or removing older/inaccurate content.
- Responding to user inquiries.
- Organizing the content.
- Hunting down dead links.
- Monitoring website traffic.

Webmaster is a key role player in web analysis as webmaster knows in and outs of the web contents. Web analytics tools or software are indispensable tools for every webmaster. This is because it allows smooth collection, collation, measurement, and analysis of data for their websites. Usually, webmasters often install these tools on their website for the simple purpose of automating data collection.

#### 3.1.2 Web Analytics Dashboard

A web analytics dashboard organizes and visualizes the most important data tied to your business goals and tracks the performance of those metrics over time.

By capturing the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of your digital assets (your website, social accounts, advertising campaigns, etc.), you can shape a narrative that ensures your financial investments result in business growth.

##### 3.1.2.1 Need of Dashboard

- Tools do not always have easily accessible reporting
- Not enough users provisioned for individual logins

- Asking stakeholders to log into a variety of tools
- Combining an expanse of data into one centralized location
- Tools require some expertise to understand the results

#### 3.1.2.2 Web Analytics - Answerable Questions List for Better Analysis

Asking intelligent business questions is such an important skill because asking intelligent questions means the answer you uncover will be actionable.

Web analysis should answer questions,

- Is anyone actually using the text size or print buttons ?
- When they're browsing, are they using search ?
- What do our most valuable users do differently on our site ? Does that matter ?
- Are there broken devices or browsers ?
- Where are the leaks in the funnel ? How can one fix them ?
- Which promotions are most effective ?
- When they do X, is an event being fired ?
- Are error messages being recorded ?
- How often are items removed from the cart ?

#### 3.1.2.3 Steps to be Taken Before Web Analytics Analysis

1. A simple website walkthrough.
2. Look for suspicious/"bad"/risky parts of the site.
3. Look for signs of poor tracking (e.g., each flow can't be measured separately because the URLs are the same).
4. Develop a list of questions you need answers to.
5. Like 3 what's, go through the list of questions and ask yourself, "What are you going to change/do based on the answer to this question?" If you don't have an answer, remove it.

#### 3.1.2.4 Identify Key Performance Indicator

Interestingly, web analytics reports or dashboards can be used in a wide variety of contexts. Some of these include e-Commerce, social media, UI/UX design, and SEO. Each of these contexts brings diverse perspectives to the performance of every website. For instance, a webmaster will always want to ensure that the site generates a healthy inflow of search engine traffic when it comes to SEO. On the other hand, an e-Commerce expert will also want to ensure that the website increases sales.

Determining where to begin with your web analytics dashboard actually starts with your business goals. If you run an e-Commerce business, you're focusing primarily on product sales. If you're a media publisher, you might be focused on website traffic and subscriptions. A local service business might be trying to book appointments.

- e-Commerce - sales
- Publisher - ad buys, sponsors, subscriptions
- Local service business - appointments
- Non-profit organization - donations
- Marketing agency - clients

Understanding own primary business goal and how it relates to digital marketing strategies will guide your analytics monitoring decisions. Once one has primary, revenue-generating business goals identified, one should map out secondary goals that support the primary goal. This can be tied to the website, advertising campaigns, social media campaigns, email marketing campaigns, or other marketing strategies.

- Website traffic
- Calls/Driving directions
- Email/phone number captures
- Consultations
- Website forms filled
- Demos
- Social media followers/likes/engagement
- Email opens/clicks
- eBook downloads

By documenting most important metrics, one can begin to understand how increases or decreases of those KPIs are tied to your marketing efforts.

### 3.1.3 Creating Web Analytics Reports

#### Step 1 - Measurement plan

- Defines your company's objectives; maps those objectives to goals, metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Defines what success looks like; discuss with top executives.
- Provides direction and way ahead for your marketing strategy.
- Lays the groundwork for proper JavaScript and HTML tagging on your website (for tracking data).

- Plans how you will sort through the data : what do one needs and why ?
- Assists in optimization and improvements

#### Step 2 - Create Goals / Strategies

Goals are what drive success of a given business objective.  
Goals should be all of the following :

- Actionable
- Measurable
- Understandable

#### Step 3 - Identify the web analytics metric and key performance indicators

KPIs are digital outcomes that help you gauge success against your goals. There's a lot of debate about picking KPIs - some argue metrics like visits, page views and time on site are "vanity metrics". Dig deep into metrics that will help gauge the success of your goals.

#### Step 4 - Locate source of data and find best analytics tool

Identify the current source of the data, such as Adobe Analytics, Google Analytics, and more. Determine your preferred choice of view of your dashboard, such as mobile or TV dashboard. Determine and assess the dashboard software vendor. Pull data from your data sources into the dashboard. Build and design graphical representation and visualization for your web analytics dashboard. Share the web analytics dashboard with your team. This encourages adoption.

#### Step 5 - Set targets / benchmarks

You got 2 million new email addresses from your lead generation campaign. That's amazing ! Wait, that's amazing right ?

Targets (or benchmarks) put your website's goals into perspective. They are a numeric value that force you to measure the success of your goals.

You should use your company's historical data to choose targets. If no such data exists, use industry benchmark data (a simple Google search will help you track down the data).

#### Step 6 - Determine reporting and segments

When the time comes to report on your efforts the amount of data is staggering. Spending hours digging through reports is not a wise use of your time.

**Step 7 - Analyze, adjust and improve**

The whole point of analytics is to make data driven decisions that will propel one's business forward. So always keep analyzing for improvement.

**3.2 E-Commerce Website Guide****3.2.1 E-Commerce**

E-Commerce, also known as e-Business, or electronic business, is simply the sale and purchase of services and goods over an electronic medium, like the Internet. It refers to the buying and selling of goods or services using the internet, and the transfer of money and data to execute these transactions. E-Commerce is often used to refer to the sale of physical products online, but it can also describe any kind of commercial transaction that is facilitated through the internet.

One can separate the definition of e-Business from e-Commerce where e-business refers to all aspects of operating an online business and e-Commerce refers specifically to the transaction of goods and services.

E-Commerce also involves electronically transferring data and funds between two or more parties. Simply put, it is online shopping.

E-Commerce started way back in the 1960s when organizations began to use Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) to transfer documents of their business back and forth. The history of e-Commerce begins with the first ever online sale : on the August 11, 1994 a man sold a CD by the band Sting to his friend through his website NetMarket, an American retail platform. This is the first example of a consumer purchasing a product from a business through the World Wide Web - or "e-Commerce" commonly known today.

Since then, e-Commerce has evolved to make products easier to discover and purchase through online retailers and marketplaces. Independent freelancers, small businesses, and large corporations have all benefited from ecommerce, which enables them to sell their goods and services at a scale that was not possible with traditional offline retail.

**3.2.2 Types of E-Commerce**

As commerce continues to evolve, so do the ways that it is conducted. Following are the most traditional types of e-commerce models :

- Business to Consumer (B2C)** : B2C e-commerce is the most popular e-commerce model. Business to consumer means that the sale is taking place between a business and a consumer, like when you buy a rug from an online retailer.

- Business to Business (B2B)** : B2B e-commerce refers to a business selling a good or service to another business, like a manufacturer and wholesaler, or a wholesaler and a retailer. Business to business e-commerce isn't consumer-facing, and usually involves products like raw materials, software, or products that are combined. Manufacturers also sell directly to retailers via B2B ecommerce.
- Direct to Consumer (D2C)** : Direct to consumer e-commerce is the newest model of ecommerce. D2C means that a brand is selling directly to their end customer without going through a retailer, distributor, or wholesaler. Subscriptions are a popular D2C item, and social selling via platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook, SnapChat, etc. are popular platforms for direct to consumer sales.
- Consumer to Consumer (C2C)** : C2C e-commerce refers to the sale of a good or service to another consumer. Consumer to consumer sales take place on platforms like eBay, Etsy, Fivver, etc.
- Consumer to Business (C2B)** : Consumer to business is when an individual sells their services or products to a business organization. C2B encompasses influencers offering exposure, photographers, consultants, freelance writers, etc.

**3.2.3 E-Commerce Website**

E-Commerce websites are online portals that facilitate online transactions of goods and services through means of the transfer of information and funds over the Internet. In the early days, e-commerce was done partially through emails and phone calls.

Now, with a single website, anything and everything that a transaction needs, can be executed online.

Earlier a website used to be a fun novelty for a business, but those days are long over. Today, a website is as essential as a **business card**. With the continual growth of E-Commerce, businesses worldwide have discovered new ways to connect with customers far beyond the possibilities of traditional brick-and-mortar commerce.

**3.2.4 Anatomy of E-Commerce Website - The Trust and Security, The Aesthetics, The Function, The User Experience (UX)**

Every E-Commerce website has to perfect three different things: aesthetics, function, and user experience. Many websites are only strong in one of these areas. Some handle two of them pretty well. The very best websites, that have customers coming back again and again, have mastered all three of these essentials.

**A. The Trust and Security**

It is important to design a website that shoppers feel they can trust. Most shoppers are concerned about privacy and whether the site will protect their personal data by providing a secure transaction. If the website does not feel trustworthy, they will simply choose to shop elsewhere.

Below methods will communicate trustworthiness to the shoppers,

- Include an overview of the business
  - Provide general information about the business.
  - Photographs and useful details of people behind the business.
  - Contact information of the store.
  - Links to social media of the store.
  - A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page.
- Publish store policies in easy to understand and easy to locate them
  - Shipping and return policies.
  - Outline the return process and what products can be returned with related examples.
  - Provide easy access to a privacy policy that covers shoppers' personal and financial information (this is crucial) and few statistics.
- Write in plain language and avoid legal or internal policy jargon.
- **Add recognized trust seals.** A trust seal verifies the legitimacy and security of a website. Some trust companies even add an extra layer of protection by offering some insurance if the transaction turns out to be fraudulent. Using recognized trust seals assures potential shoppers of a secure transaction process, which leads to increased sales and provides better e-Commerce user experience (UX).
- Security and PCI Compliance

Hackers and massive data breaches just can't stay out of the news. It's no wonder people are concerned about the safety of their personal data. Today, this goes beyond the fear of a credit card number being stolen, and into the realm of identity theft, loss of personal accounts, and other such.

This is why your website must use top-of-the-line security. An **SSL certificate** is the bare minimum, but to accept credit cards online, your website also needs to be PCI compliant. PCI compliance was introduced into the eCommerce industry to help establish a set of security standards meant to counter the issues of hackers and breached data. It

includes the usual security measures like SSL and firewalls, but goes beyond them into a vigorous process including audits and inspections of your business.

Handling PCI compliance alone is time-consuming and expensive, but fortunately, some payment providers and e-Commerce platforms have PCI compliance built in, and manage it so you don't have to.

**B. Aesthetics**

Aesthetics refers to the appreciation and understanding of beauty and good taste. In web design, this translates to the need to **create a website** that has as universal an appeal as possible, instead of building a site according to the designer's personal preferences. One has to think about what customers like, what they want, and how they want to use the website - not what one's personal choices like. Below are the crucial aspects of look and feel for any E-Commerce website.

**1. Proper color scheme**

Color scheme is one of the more subjective aspects of web design because the best colors partially depend on your brand identity. The trick is to create a visually-pleasing website that uses color properly - doesn't distract visitors or fatigue their eyes, or draw their attention to the wrong place, or obscure your important information, etc. - while still matching your brand.

**2. Layout**

When a person views any type of content, whether it's a book, a magazine, a poster, or a webpage, they expect to be able to move their eyes across it in a natural fashion. There are some minor cultural differences involved here, relating to the written direction of the viewer's native language, but every person is going to naturally want to start at the top of a page and move their eyes in the direction they're used to reading - even if the page is mostly images and little text, like an online store category page.

As the viewer looks at the page, they'll need some quick moments to pause and let their eyes (and brain) rest as they absorb the information they just took in. If you don't provide them with these moments of rest, they'll get overwhelmed and turn away from your website. Your site's layout is critical for giving your visitors a comfortable environment to absorb the information you're presenting to them.

This is the reason best eCommerce website layouts are based on a grid, with sufficient whitespace between products and other elements. The grid layout doesn't force the visitor's eyes to jump around, and the whitespace allows them to rest.

### 3. Graphics

Every part of the website needs to look top-of-the-line, which of course includes all graphical elements such as your logo, page backgrounds, banner images, and more. High-quality graphics will add to the professionalism of the website, while low-quality graphics will have the opposite effect - bad graphics will make your business look amateurish and cheap.

Even with great website graphics, sometimes less is more. Don't clutter your pages with unnecessary logos, buttons, or other elements.

### 4. Good product photography

Since e-Commerce customers can't inspect a product in person before buying, great product photos are essential for helping them make a decision. Show your products from multiple angles and with proper lighting that doesn't obscure details or make the colors look different from how they appear in life.

### 5. Place important content above the fold

"Above the fold" is a term originating with newspapers, and refers to the area that is above the actual fold when a paper is placed on a newsstand. The most important headlines, articles, and photos are placed above the fold so they can be seen immediately by passersby. In web design, the same principle applies, and the "fold" refers to the bottom of the visible viewing area before the visitor scrolls the page.

Even though one can scroll down on websites, the most important information should still be placed high enough on the page that a visitor can see it immediately, without scrolling down. Placing your website's most important content above the fold means a better chance of instantly engaging your customers. This isn't as straightforward as it might sound - visitors on desktop have always used a variety of screen sizes, and now that mobile browsing has become so popular, you also need to take smartphones and tablets into account.

### 6. Minimize noise

In web design, "noise" refers to clutter on a web page that pulls the visitor's attention away from the important content. Too much clutter will cause the visitor's eyes to jump around on the page and lead to confusion as to what they're supposed to be looking at, or what the actual point of page is. Noise will detract from website's efficiency at capturing customer interest and will hurt your conversions. This is because an overly-busy website causes a phenomenon called **cognitive load**, which in short means you're forcing visitors to use too much brain power. Too much cognitive load, and the visitor will give up.

Noise can include text boxes, images, advertising, and more. All can be confusing to visitors and cause them to lose interest in finding what they need. A customer visiting your website should feel like you respect their time and value their attention.

One can prevent noise problems by keeping website content to the essentials. If you absolutely need to add content that could be considered "noisy," keep it out of the way and separate from your main content. Depending on the type of content you're trying to prune from your front page, you could move some of it to a different page, a menu or sidebar, or simply place each piece in its own section below the important parts - but only if you absolutely need to keep it rather than deleting it completely.

### 7. Clear and Easy-to-Read Text

Text is a vital part of the website because it's going to be your primary method of communicating with customers. Like other design elements, color and contrast come into play here. Your text needs to have enough contrast to make the text easy to read without being grating.

The font choice is also important. Different fonts will affect the mood of the site and have different psychological effects on your visitors. This is why font choice is an important part of brand identity. When choosing a font, one needs to balance clarity and readability with the type of mood you want to evoke. Fortunately, it's possible to select a great font that is both easy to read and still matches your brand identity, as long as you make some small considerations :

- It's a good idea to eliminate "strange fonts" from your brand identity in the first place, except for places like the logo, where overall visual impact is as important as readability.
- Don't use too many fonts in one place, and ensure the ones you do use are related or at least similar to keep your design cohesive and uniform.
- All the main text content should be one easy-to-read font, with others (if any) used only for menu titles, headings, or other similar elements - i.e. the parts of your text you want to stand out.
- Generally, the stranger the font, the more less you should use it, even if it works well for your brand (e.g. a horror font for a Halloween store, or a fun font for a toy store). Both can work quite well for page headings, but certainly not other content.
- Any fonts you do choose should match the mood and message of one's brand and products, even the "normal" font you use for most of your text.

The whitespace aspect of page layout applies to text as well. There should be adequate line space between each row of text, and avoid bad kerning that pushes your letters too close together. One should avoid any font that have a strong association with an existing brand. At best, using another business's famous font can confuse customers or make you look like a copycat and ultimately, it can get you sued for trademark rule violations.

#### **8. Make your product the focus**

When building the website, keep your goals as a business in the forefront. Website objective is to make sales. To meet this goal, it's crucial that the website is build around the products. Your website's layout should support your products and your ability to get the customer to see them.

Categories should be immediately accessible from your front page, whether in a sidebar or a dropdown menu, and every product page should be laid out to grab attention. If it takes too much clicking and scrolling to see what you have to offer, customers will stop caring about your store long before they give your products a fair chance. Website's content should be product-focused.

#### **9. Follow the brand identity**

The branding should be apparent throughout the website. Choose colors that reflect the brand, and set the style in order to make clear what type of products are sold. Ensure brand experience is consistent across all channels - whether online, in-store, or on a mobile device. This will help build a strong brand-customer relationship.

#### **10. Stick to known symbols**

Use icons or symbols that are easy to identify. Unfamiliar icons will only confuse the shoppers. A good way to avoid any possible confusion is to provide labels for icons.

#### **11. Avoid popup windows**

Popup windows are a distraction. Even if they contain valuable information, shoppers are more than likely to dismiss them immediately - once gone, even if they want to, it's hard for shoppers to find the information again.

### **C. Function**

Function describes how the website works. If website doesn't function well, it will fail no matter how beautifully - designed it is.

Your ultimate goal is to make it as easy as possible for customers to buy from you, from beginning to end of their purchasing journey. This means every aspect of your website needs to behave perfectly and be as convenient as possible. Shopping should

never feel like work, even if your customer is a B2B buyer choosing products for their business.

#### **1. Easy checkout**

Customers like to shop online because it's convenient. If your website takes any of that convenience away, they're likely to decide to do their shopping elsewhere. Since the checkout process is the most technical part of your site, it's the leading cause of "friction," i.e. loss of convenience.

In order to boost sales and conversions, you must reduce friction at every opportunity. Your checkout is one of the most important functions on your website and should be optimized in every way possible.

#### **2. Add to cart**

Every product page needs a visible Add to Cart button. This may seem obvious, but there are definitely ways to do it wrong. The customer should be able to see the Add to Cart button instantly, without scrolling, and with no question in their mind that it's the right button. Make sure your Add to Cart buttons are in a prime location on the page, clearly labeled, and easy to spot.

To accomplish this, test every product page layout on multiple devices so you can discover if a smaller screen size pushes the button too far down. Since Add to Cart buttons should catch a customer's eye without effort, try testing your store by showing your product pages to friends or colleagues. You already know where the Add to Cart button is, so it's better to get feedback from fresh eyes. If your testers have too much trouble finding it, change its color to achieve better contrast with the rest of your page. Contrast is even more important if you have other buttons nearby as well, as it will prevent your Add to Cart button from blending in with the rest.

You can give your Add to Cart button an extra boost by spicing up its design with a slight gradient or shadow to make it look 3D. Buttons that look more "real" are more likely to be clicked because human brains still live in a real, 3D world and are constantly seeking tactile feedback, even while one is looking at a flat surface like a computer screen. You can also make the button more appealing (and even increase sales) by adding a small arrow to it. This subconsciously tells people that the button "does something" which makes it more tempting to click.

All your buttons should always communicate their function to the customer very clearly. So be careful if you decide to alter the text of your Add to Cart buttons. "Add to Cart" is a perfectly familiar phrase that customers have no trouble deciphering.

### 3. Adding to wish lists

A wish list lets a customer select products they want to purchase later on. This is a great convenience for customers (and a great sign that they intend to come back to your store!) and can also draw word-of-mouth attention to your business. This is because customers often share wish lists with others to help friends and family shop for gifts for them.

To get wish lists on your online store, your eCommerce software will need to support them. For best results, choose a platform that supports multiple wish lists per customer (e.g. so they can make a personal shopping list alongside a "birthday list" to share with others) and has built-in social sharing capabilities. Your "Add to Wish List" buttons should be placed on product pages in an easy-to-spot location near your "Add to Cart" button.

### 4. The actual cart

Customers must be able to view and edit their cart at any time, so make it accessible from every page on your website. Most online stores place a "View Cart" link near the top right side of the website, so that's where customers will usually look for it. Adding a small shopping cart icon can make it even easier to find, and as a bonus, you can add a small overlay that will display the number of items in the cart.

Carts can also be made more convenient and useful in a couple ways, both of which customers will appreciate. The first is to make your website's shopping cart persistent. This means the cart will be temporarily saved in the customer's browser through use of cookies. This prevents loss of the cart if the customer should close their browser, restart their computer, or otherwise leave your website before completing the purchase. This is a very helpful feature because it prevents customers from needing to pick out all their items again if they happen to have a browser mishap while shopping. If they have to start all over again, they may give up.

The second convenient feature is the ability to save a cart for later. This means the customer can save the state of their shopping cart, complete with all items, to be accessible from their account when they return to website.

### 5. Checkout

Checkout is where the customer enters their payment and shipping information and completes their order. It's critical that your checkout runs smoothly and doesn't lag, freeze, or otherwise fail to work - if it does, you can be sure that customers will abandon their carts and your business altogether. Checkout must be bug-free and run smoothly at all times on all devices.

### 6. Mobile-friendly design

Beyond the technical side, you can improve your checkout by ensuring that all the text fields and checkboxes a customer needs to fill out are presented in a straightforward manner so none can be easily missed.

Apart from saving information for later, give customers the chance to sign up for a store account near the end of the checkout process. At this point, the customer has already decided to buy from you and enter their data, so they're more likely to sign up just for the convenience of saving it. Don't force customers to sign up before checking out - or at all, for that matter, unless your business's structure absolutely relies on customer membership with website.

### 7. Easy shipping process

Across the globe many people still use desktop computers, e-Commerce statistics show an ever-increasing number of consumers who prefer to browse and shop from mobile devices. To compete in today's internet, your website must be friendly to all devices including desktops, smartphones, and tablets.

A mobile - friendly design doesn't just mean the page is the right size and proportions for a phone. It needs to take into account how the device is held, which places on the screen are easiest to reach with thumbs, and more. This means some of the conventions for desktop design don't work very well at all for mobile, and even different mobile devices have different needs.

This is why responsive design is considered the best approach to making a website mobile-friendly. A responsive website adapts to different devices of different sizes, which makes it easy to use whether the visitor is browsing from mobile or desktop. Responsive design also prevents the problem of a website's "mobile version" only looking its best on one particular device size.

### 8. Easy navigation

Unless you only sell digital downloads, shipping is the only way your customers can receive the products they purchase from you. Just like everything else on your website, shipping needs to be "done right." The customer should not be worrying about the general shipping issues and delays.

### 9. Human navigation

For human navigation has always been essential for travel across land, sea, and air. And the same way it's just as essential for websites.

**i. Categories**

Product categories are an obvious navigation aid that you can find in both eCommerce and brick-and-mortar stores. In the physical world, stores enhance navigation by breaking up their product types into different sections and aisles for easier browsing. Online, you do the same thing with product categories and subcategories.

**ii. Menu**

Your online store's menu is another essential navigation tool, in which you can list your categories (and other website sections) to be viewed at a glance. The brick-and-mortar version of a menu can best be imagined as the signs that hang in front of every aisle, letting customers know which products can be found in each.

**iii. Breadcrumbs**

Breadcrumbs are a secondary navigation aid that helps users easily understand the relation between their location on a page (like a product page) and higher level pages (a category page, for instance). The term is borrowed from the tale of Hansel and Gretel where the kids drop a trail of breadcrumbs to trace their way back.

Breadcrumb navigation provides a website visitor with a means to quickly backtrack through a category without needing to hit the "back" button in their browser, and is especially important when you consider that a customer may not have traveled through your category structure to get to that product page in the first place. For example, a customer may find one of your products through a Google search and then decide to see what else you have to offer. Breadcrumb navigation allows them to do so easily. It looks like this :

Home > Category > Subcategory > Product

Each of those entries is a link the customer can click to be brought to the relevant page.

**iv. Search**

The internet is built for convenience, and searching exemplifies that. With a search bar on your website, customers can plug in a product name or related keywords and be brought straight to the relevant results. This is the online version of asking a store employee for help finding a product !

- Make search omnipresent** : Put the search box on every page and in familiar locations. The box should be visible, quickly recognizable, and easy to use. Standard positions to implement the search box are the top right or top center of the pages, or on the main menu.

- Support all kinds of queries** : Searches need to support all types of queries such as product names, categories, and product attributes, as well as customer service related information. It's a good idea to include a sample search query in the input field to suggest to shoppers the use of the various functions.
- Have a search auto-complete functionality** : Auto-complete functionality makes it easier for shoppers to find what they are looking for and increases sales potential by suggesting things within the area they are already searching.
- Allow sorting and filtering of results** : Let shoppers sort search results based on various criteria (best sellers, highest or lowest price, product rating, newest item, etc.) as well as eliminate items that do not fit within a certain category.

**9. Site Speed**

Humans and in fact internet users have notoriously poor attention spans. One may get overwhelmed with choice, so one needs to be selective. If a website doesn't load fast enough, one should understand that there are others out there that won't waste our time.

Google reports that most internet users will wait no longer than 3 seconds for a website to load enough to become usable. If the website takes any longer than that, the visitor will most likely abandon it in search of another. This is why your site speed is crucial.

Website speed is influenced by several factors, including the efficiency of the coding in your store's layout, the capabilities of your e-Commerce software, the power of the server where your website resides, and more.

**10. SEO-Friendly**

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is essential for helping customers find your website. Paid advertising and word-of-mouth can only go so far in a world where the majority of online purchases begin with an internet search.

SEO revolves around getting your website to show up in search results for users who are looking for the types of products or services you offer. This primarily takes the form of adding relevant (and appropriate) keywords to your website, but there's a technical side to it as well.

**• Use searchable tags**

One should assign useful keywords and phrases to products. Use the ones with high search volume. Your website's pages need unique titles and descriptions, which you define through meta tags. The meta title and meta description tag help search engines

understand and display your content correctly, so it will appear in the proper searches and users will be enticed to click on it.

- **Optimize to rank**

Optimize the web store for better search-engine discoverability and ranking on S.E.R.P.s (Search Engine Results Page s).

- **Apply e-Commerce rich snippets**

Rich snippets are smart ways to beat your competitors in search results. Add a bit of code and help search engines organize & display your product on the top.

#### D. User Experience (UX)

User experience (abbreviated as UX) is where aesthetics and function come together in perfect harmony. UX describes how it feels for the user to "experience" your website, just as you might guess from the name. Everything you do to improve your website's appearance and functionality is with the goal of providing the best user experience possible.

- **Everything must be easy to find**

To provide the smoothest user experience possible, your website must make everything so easy to find that customers stand no chance of getting lost or confused. This is where reducing friction comes in again - every extra step a customer needs to take will harm your conversion rate.

Great navigation and site design are essential for helping your visitors stay interested in your website and converting them into customers, and by providing an easy shopping experience, you'll get those customers to keep coming back.

- **Share product reviews**

Provide product reviews to help shoppers understand more about the product; this will help alleviate any concerns they may have and provide great e-Commerce UX. Take it a step further by offering product reviews along with additional information about the reviewers, or by summarizing the reviews.

- **Be particular and careful about site presentation and contents**

Make the website look legitimate and professional by avoiding typos, missing images, broken links, 404 errors (page not found), or other e-Commerce UX-killing mistakes.

- **Trust logos and reviews**

Trust logos tell customers they can believe in the integrity of your business. There are several types you can use, including security logos to communicate to customers that their data is safe with you, and reputation logos to prove that your business is honest and

your customers are satisfied. Security logos include PCI compliance and fraud protection logos, and reputation logos include BBB accreditation and the Google Customer Reviews badge.

Google Customer Reviews allow visitors to opt in to receive a quick survey in which they can rate their satisfaction with your website overall. Displaying a five-star rating from Google is sure to increase trust in your website.

Your trust badges and reviews should be easily visible to help ease any customer concerns immediately. The footer of your website is a great place for trust logos, and the Google Customer Reviews badge can slide in on the side of your website, where it's easily seen but out of the way.

Product reviews play a part as well. Customers nearly always turn to product reviews to help them with their buying decisions, so having a prominent review section on each product page can boost your sales. This also shows customers that you care about their feedback and invites them to share their thoughts.

- **Calls to Action**

The Call To Action (CTA) is how you tell customers the next step to take. Each CTA is dependent on what you want the customer to do, whether it's to sign up for your newsletter, create an account, or add an item to their shopping cart. CTAs are most effective when there's a single one on any given page, because this allows the CTA to draw the maximum amount of attention. They should also be placed prominently on your website so the customer can find them instantly.

Creating effective Call-To-Action buttons is an art. They must stand out sufficiently from the rest of your website's design that they draw customer attention effortlessly. Contrasting colors and descriptive button text are vital, as is their placement on a page. If you have other graphical elements that lead the visitor's eye towards the button, even better.

- **Provide unique offers to the customer**

E-Commerce website customer should feel engaged and valued as the sales person is not actually lively present in front of the customer. They need to know you see them as an individual person with needs and preferences of their own, not as a number or a demographic. By providing personalized offers, you can demonstrate to customers that you're paying attention to who they are and what they want.

Upselling is the practice of offering upgrades or accessories for a product a customer is buying. Many store owners don't realize that some customers want the upsell, especially those customers that buy more often than browse. These customers want to see the other

products that will enhance their purchase. If there are great accessories to complement their latest purchase, they appreciate knowing about them!

Recommended items, based on a customer's browsing history, can also be very helpful. Even though on a base level, customers know these recommendations are automatically provided based on settings in your store, it still makes them feel like you're paying attention. You can bring this up to the next level by personalizing your email marketing newsletters to include **product recommendations** based on past purchases. Provide coupon code, and your customers will happy.

#### Take them on a journey

In a online store it is crucial that the customers should be treated as humans, not just the numbers, you can structure their entire shopping experience to reflect this relationship. Essentially, you want the whole experience of being your customer to be pleasant every step of the way. Respecting the customer's time and effort by providing them with an easy-to-use website is part of this, but one can go far beyond that. Be available through live chat to help them at any time. Send them a reminder (with a coupon) if they abandon their cart. Give in a small, free bonus with their order, and ship it to them in careful, attractive packaging. Even add a handwritten note, if you have the time. This way one can earn customer loyalty.

#### Conversion-friendly

Conversion is the act of getting a visitor to do what you want them to do, whether it's to sign up for a newsletter, or more commonly, buy a product. In short, the entire purpose of eCommerce is to convert.

Trust, simplicity, and ease-of-use must flow through every aspect of your website. You can improve your conversion rate in other ways, too.

- Write compelling content without being pushy. The quality of your content is important,
- Use lifestyle photos to help customers picture themselves using your products. Lifestyle photos show your products being used by people or kept in homes.
- Use subtle design elements to draw attention towards your call-to-action buttons. A simple pattern in the background, with lines that converge on the button location, can do wonders. Likewise, if the people in your lifestyle photos are looking in the direction of the CTA, visitors are more likely to click it. This is because the human brain is primed to look at other people for cues.
- Use cart abandonment tools to recover purchases that customers did not complete. In some cases, the customer got distracted and simply forgot, and will be happy to

come back and finish their purchase. In other cases, you can use the customer's reason for abandonment to help identify and improve a problem with your store.

- Hold promotional events, like storewide discounts, limited-time group deals, daily countdown deals, and more. There's no such thing as a customer that doesn't like to bargain, and the additional time limit will create a sense of urgency customers wants to buy actually.

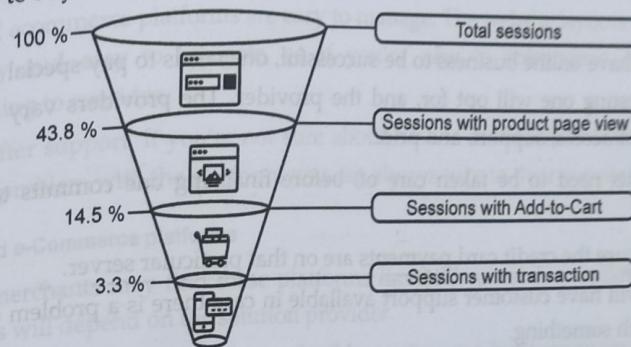


Fig. 3.2.1 : The conversion rate cone

#### Post-Purchase Treatment

One should **improve customer retention** as much as possible, because it's more expensive to gain new customers than to keep existing ones.

The way you treat customers after their purchase can determine whether or not they come back. It's crucial to have a means of getting in touch with them so you can provide post-purchase care. In e-Commerce, you're almost certain to have their email address - you needed it to send them their order confirmation.

Send an email to request a product review for the item they bought after enough time has passed for them to use it and form an opinion. This will encourage them to provide you with valuable feedback, as well as entice them back to your website. If you include a coupon, they're even more likely to return, especially if it applies to a product related to their purchase or even an item on their wish list.

If the customer has opted website's email newsletters, that is good. They'll be reminded on a regular basis about your business. If you have a few customers who made an order long ago and haven't bought anything since, but have remained subscribed, create a special email marketing segment so you can send targeted offers to this group and potentially earn them again.

Sometimes, customers will be the ones initiating contact - perhaps to ask for help with their purchase, or maybe even to make a return. This is a great opportunity to show them

just how much you care and are willing to help. Provide the customer service they need, whether it's through a quick support email or an easy returns process. Customers who have never had a problem with your business are great, but the ones who have had a problem can be even better because if you solve that problem to their satisfaction, they'll definitely remember that they were valued customer and cared for them.

- Hosting and Domain Registration
- Hosting

In order to have online business to be successful, one needs to pay special attention to the type of hosting one will opt for, and the provider. The providers vary in terms of features, ease of access, support, and price.

Below points need to be taken care of, before finalizing one commits to a hosting option,

- How secure the credit card payments are on that particular server.
- If you will have customer support available in case there is a problem or you need help with something.
- What would be the maintenance costs.
- The storage capacity of the selected server.
- If there will be any additional costs.
- Further support by the hosting service.

#### • Domain registration

Usually one may already have a store name in mind. Perhaps you have your brand and domain name ironed out. If so, then you can proceed to register your domain. However, if you're still on the fence or have no clue on what domain name to use, think on below points,

- Pick a name that communicates what is being offered.
- Keep domain name short and sweet.

Once you've chosen a domain name, you have to register it through an accredited domain registrar. Some of the widely used are,

- Bluehost
- HostGator
- GoDaddy

#### • Choose your e-Commerce platform

This is the point where you'll decide which platform will power your store. There are two main categories when it comes to ecommerce solutions : hosted and self-hosted.

#### 1. Hosted e-Commerce platforms

Hosted ecommerce platforms take care of your hosting and server maintenance for you. These solutions are more user-friendly and are the preferred options for non-technical people who want to build websites themselves.

##### Pros of hosted e-Commerce platforms

- Hosted ecommerce platforms are easy to manage. The website layouts are beginner-friendly and easy to navigate, so if you're new to ecommerce, it's definitely something to consider.
- They offer support. If you're not sure about how to use a certain feature, or if you have a problem with the platform, you can always turn to their support team.

##### Cons of hosted e-Commerce platforms

- Some merchants may find these platforms limited because any updates or feature releases will depend on the solution provider.
- Their online store may not be as flexible as the ones built using an open-source platform since the look, feel, and capabilities of their site will be dictated by its specific theme.
- As for integrations, many fully-hosted platforms have preferred add-on providers, so your choices when it comes to third-party solutions may be limited.

#### 2. Self-hosted e-Commerce platforms

Self-hosted e-Commerce solutions are open-source platforms that require you to host, implement, and maintain your store. Unless you have a technical understanding of web hosting and e-Commerce, you'll need to hire a developer to help you get your e-commerce shop up and running.

##### Pros of self-hosted e-Commerce platforms

The significant advantage of using a self-hosted ecommerce platform is flexibility. Open source solutions give you more power over the look, feel, and behaviour of your store. You're not limited to out-of-the-box features or integrations, and you'll be able to implement advanced features and customizations.

##### Cons of self-hosted e-Commerce platforms

- Self-hosted platforms are typically more complicated to set up and run.
- Any features or designs must be coded in. And while open-source software may be free, you'll need to factor in costs such as server fees as well as any spending related to the development and maintenance of your store.

Some of the widely used open-source ecommerce platforms are,

- Magento
- WooCommerce
- OpenCart

### 3.3 Website Jump Start Guide

#### 3.3.1 Website Definition

Website is a set of related web pages located under a single domain name, typically produced by a single person or organization. It is a group of World Wide Web pages usually containing hyperlinks to each other and made available online by an individual, company, educational institution, government, or organization.

Website is most commonly recognized and used as one word, NOT two words web and site.

#### 3.3.2 Different Types of Websites

##### 1. Homepages

The homepage is your site's main hub and serves as the face of a brand.

Your homepage helps site visitors get to different areas of the site, and it can also serve as a conversion funnel. Because most people come to you through your homepage, this is where design matters most.

A homepage can take on many different forms, but while designing it's important to remember the purpose of the homepage as the main navigation and point of interest for site visitors. Make it clear what the business is and offer the unique value proposition (UVP) upfront. Establish the site's hierarchy and navigation structure on the homepage. Utilize your brand's color palette, logo and images highly relevant to the business. The homepage sets the tone for the business' image, so it should tell a story about who you are through images and words.

##### 2. News or magazine websites

News and magazine websites need little explanation. The primary purpose of a news website is to keep its readers up to date on current affairs, whereas online magazines will focus more on entertainment.

A magazine website features articles, photos and videos that are informational and educational. In the last twenty years, the magazine industry has changed from a

print-only platform to largely digital format. The magazine website type works well for informational websites, particularly publications from universities and organizations.

##### 3. E-commerce websites

An e-commerce website is an online shopping destination where users can purchase products or services from your company.

A robust e-commerce web page makes it easy to browse products, filter by categories, highlight special sales and make purchases.

##### 4. Blogs

A blog features regularly updated articles, photos and videos. Blogs started with more casual, personal content compared to magazines. But since then, the lines have blurred, and now it's extremely common for major brands and businesses to have their own blog. Adding expert content improves the overall credibility of a company or an individual. Blogs also provide material for social media posts and email campaigns.

However, a blog can also become cumbersome for smaller companies. Make sure you have a team and strategy in place to keep content fresh before you consider launching one. It's actually better not to have a blog and instead offer a few videos or guides, than to have a hopelessly outdated blog.

Typically managed by an individual or a small group, a blog can cover any topic - whether it's travel tips, financial advice, or doughnut reviews. Blogs are often written in an informal or conversational style, but learning how to monetize blogs has become a popular venture for many writers.

##### 5. Portfolio websites

A portfolio website allows creative professionals a place for showcasing their best work. This is perfect for artists, writers, designers, filmmakers, furniture builders - you name it.

As you build a portfolio, there's no need to add every single project you've ever worked on. Instead, focus on creating categories of items and highlighting the best work from each category. A portfolio website is a bit more creative by nature, so this is the place to try unique layouts and add in interesting features.

##### 6. Landing pages

A landing page is a specific page type created for a marketing campaign that drives visitors to take a specific action.

The content on a landing page should be limited and point toward the Call-To-Action (CTA) you'd like the user to take. Allow plenty of white space around your CTA and save elements not related to the purpose of that campaign for other pages.

## **7. Social media websites**

There are approximately **some billions of people on social media** with dozens of different platforms available. No matter who your target audience is, you'll probably find them on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram or Snapchat or LinkedIn or similar. Although you can't redesign the platforms themselves, you do have some control over the look of your page, and you can create content that impacts on social media.

## **8. Directory and contact pages**

A directory or contact page is a place where users can connect with you or others.

This type of website works well when you want to list a repository of businesses or people within an organization. For example, a local restaurant directory features eateries in the area with menus, price ranges, phone number and reviews.

## **9. Corporate**

Less than two-thirds of small businesses have a website. That's an astonishingly low figure, given how important an online presence is for a company's credibility. And luckily for you, this means you can build a website to give your business the competitive edge.

You may not sell directly through a corporate website, but you can use these sites to provide information about your business, and to let potential clients or customers know how they can get in touch with you.

## **10. Brochure**

Brochure websites are like digital business cards. Mainly used by small businesses, these types of websites are used to advertise services, and to display contact information, with just a few pages.

## **11. Crowd funding**

Crowd funding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from lots of different people. These types of websites are becoming a go-to resource for new startups.

## **12. TV or video streaming**

Netflix, along with similar sites like NowTV, have revolutionized the way the world watches television. These video streaming sites have seen their popularity soar in recent years, with catch-up sites like BBC iPlayer and All 4 representing more traditional examples of this particular website theme.

## **13. Educational**

Educational websites are also quite self explanatory. These websites are designed to display information on certain topics, either using interactive games or engaging designs to keep the user hooked. If you're looking to build one of these websites, you should think about hiring a freelance web developer to create some fun tools, games, or quizzes.

## **14. Portal**

Portals are primarily used for internal purposes within businesses, schools, or institutions. These websites often involve a login process, allowing students to access the school website, or granting employees access to their emails, alerts, and files all in one place.

## **15. Wiki or community forum**

A wiki website allows people to collaborate online and write content together. The most popular example is Wikipedia itself, which allows anyone to amend, add to, and assess the content of each article.

### **3.3.3 Choosing the Right Website Type**

Apart from good design, web designer should pay attention to what other companies have done with their website design and quickly identify which format works best for each requirement.

#### **Properties of best designed website**

##### **1. Content**

###### **• Well planned information architecture**

How information is organized and presented on your website is vital for good usability. However, it is often neglected. It has become even more important today as websites offer a wide range of information and resources to attract their target market. Plan your website sections and categories carefully and present information in a way that it is easy for users to find. Always think from the perspective of your users. This is particularly important if you offer a lot of content on the website.

- Relevant content

One should never put the content on a website that is not relevant to the users. You do not want to put laptop details on a job board. If your website is a job board, it should have content and tips related to being a good candidate such as how to create a professional resume and how to behave in an interview.

## 2. Appearance

A site must be visually appealing, polished and professional. An attractive site is far more likely to generate a positive impression and keep visitors on your site once they arrive. Below are key appearance elements,

- **Good use of color and contrasting colour schemes :** An appropriate color scheme will contain 2 or 3 primary colors that blend well and create a proper mood or tone for your business. Don't overdo the color, as it can distract from the written content. The right contrast between the background of the website and content is one of the most basic yet most important web design principles that should never be overlooked. Good contrast between background and text e.g. black text on a white background makes your content legible and easy to read. Lack of contrast, on the other hand, makes it very difficult for visitors to read your content.
- **Text that is easily read :** The most easily read combination is black text on a white background, but many other color combinations are acceptable if the contrast is within an appropriate range. Use fonts that are easy to read and are found on most of today's computer systems. Depending on your audience. Keep font size for paragraph text between 10 and 12 pts.
- **Meaningful graphics :** Graphics are important, as they lend visual variety and appeal to an otherwise boring page of text. However, don't over-use them, and make sure that add meaning or context to your written content. Don't overload any one page with more than 3 or 4 images.
- **Graphics and quality photography :** A simple way to increase visual appeal is to use high quality photography. High quality product images are especially important for online retailers. Only use graphics if they help a user complete a task or perform a specific function.
- **Simplicity :** Keep it simple and allow for adequate white space. Uncluttered layouts allow viewers to focus on your message. Don't overload your site with overly complex design, animation, or other effects just to impress your viewers.

- **Typefaces :** The typefaces you choose should be highly legible, so nothing too artsy and very minimal script fonts, if any. For text color, again, keep it minimal and always make sure it contrasts with the background color. A common recommendation is to use a maximum of three different typefaces in a maximum of three different sizes.

## 3. Usability

A critical, but often overlooked component of a successful website is its degree of usability.

Below are key usability elements,

- **Functional :** A website is designed to serve a purpose, usually to solve a problem. For example, a job board has a purpose where employers can post jobs and job seekers can find and apply for jobs. Once applied, there should be a way for candidates and employers to communicate and keep up to date with a job application. If you build a job board and it only lets you post jobs, that's not enough.
- **Simplicity :** The best way to keep visitors glued to your site is through valuable content, good organization and attractive design. Keep your site simple and well organized.
- **Accessible to all users :** A user-friendly website should also be accessible to everyone including blind, disabled or the elderly. These users typically use screen-readers to access the Internet. The 508 website accessibility guidelines highlights simple web design techniques that can be applied to make sure your website can be accessed easily on-screen readers, making your website available to a larger audience.
- **Minimal scroll :** This is particularly important on the first page. Create links from the main page to read more about a particular topic. Even the Search Engines will reward you for this behavior.
- **Consistent layout :** Site layout is extremely important for usability. Use a consistent layout and repeat certain elements throughout the site.
- **Effective navigation :** Place your menu items at the top of your site, or above the fold on either side. Limit your menu items to 10 or fewer. Remember, your visitors are in a hurry -- don't make them hunt for information. Good navigation is one of the most important aspects of website usability. Simple HTML or JavaScript menus tend to work best and appear consistent on all browsers and platforms. It is equally

important for the navigation to be clutter-free. Try to limit the number of menu items as far as possible. A drop-down menu or sub-navigation may work better on large site with many sections and pages.

- **Descriptive link text :** Usability testing shows that long link text makes it much easier for visitors to find their way around a site. Long, descriptive link text is favored by Search Engines, too. Back links are important to give users a sense of direction and to keep them from feeling lost. Use a site map, and breadcrumbs, if necessary.
- **Cross-platform/browser compatibility :** Different browsers often have different rules for displaying content. Even the websites of some of the most reputable companies suffer from this problem due to neglect. This is bad for branding and has a negative effect on website usability. Although modern browsers have evolved and become more efficient, some inconsistencies still exist in how a website is interpreted by different browsers. It is important to ensure your website appears and behaves consistently across all major browsers such as Chrome, Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari and Opera.
- **Easiness :** A website should be easy to use and navigate. When users visit your website, do they find the information they are looking for, without struggling? Does your website provide easy navigation to jump from one page to another and go back?
- **Modern :** You want to make sure your website is using current trends and technologies. You do not want to build a website that does not support today's needs. For example, responsiveness and fluid web designs are the key requirements for modern websites. You do not want to create fixed page layouts for your website that doesn't support mobile readability.
- **Screen resolution, responsive and device compatible :** Responsive web design is a modern need. A responsive website changes its layout and options to fit the device and browser size. For example, a website may provide more options on a large PC monitor compared to on a mobile phone.
- Screen resolution for the typical computer monitor continues to increase. Today, the average web surfer uses a resolution of 1024 x 768 pixels. However, you need to make sure that what looks good at this setting will also work nicely for other resolutions.

- **Usable forms :** Forms are a very important element on business websites. They allow users to interact with the site. Forms are also very useful for generating leads for a business.

- To get the most out of your site, it is important to ensure the forms are easy to use and accessible to everyone.

- **Good error handling :** Good error handling and description on-screen messages are very important for good usability. However it is often overlooked. Correct handling of errors at a code level ensures the website is robust and free from bugs. Displaying the right error message improves the user experience and overall usability.

- **Conventionality :** A big challenge in web design is balancing originality with your expectations. Most of us are expert internet users, and there are specific conventions that are used to with over the period. For example,

- Placing the main navigation at the top (or left side) of a page.

- Placing a logo at the top left (or center) of a page.

- Making the logo clickable, so it always brings a visitor back to the homepage.

- Having links and **buttons** that change color/appearance when you hover over them.

#### 4. Speed and performance

- **Optimized** - Website and its content should be optimized for different devices, browsers, data speed, search engines, and users. If your website is not optimized for mobile data users and their download speed, users may leave your website. If your website does not support common modern browsers, you may be missing out on some users. If your website is not optimized for popular smartphones and their sizes, users may not want to visit your website.

- **Fast-loading pages** - A page should load in 20 seconds or less via dial-up; at more than that, you'll lose more than half of your potential visitor. Does your website load fast enough to show visitors what they are looking for? Your website can't be slow when presenting content to its visitors. If your website takes more than two seconds to load, it is probably too slow.

- **Scalable** - Do you have sufficient infrastructure to support your website and its visitors? A website should be able to scale to a number of potential visitors. Not only should the website's user interface be scalable but the back-end database, APIs, and services too should be able to scale.

## 5. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

For effective search engine optimization there are well formed guidelines few of which are mentioned below,

- Include more than enough of written content in HTML format. Don't use Flash, JavaScript or image-only objects for your navigational items.
- Make use of your important keywords frequently and appropriately in your copy.
- Minimize the use of tables and use Cascading Style Sheets for layout and positioning; keep your HTML code clutter-free.
- Use appropriate links -- make them descriptive and use your keywords in the link text

## 6. Security and credibility

### • Credibility

Sticking to web conventions lends your site credibility. In other words, it increases the level of trust your site conveys. And if you're striving to build a site that provides the best user experience possible, credibility goes a long way.

One of the best methods to improve your credibility is to be clear and honest about the product or service you're selling. Don't make visitors dig through dozens of pages to find what it is you do. Be up-front on your homepage, and dedicate some real estate to explaining the value behind what you do.

### • Reliable

Is your website reliable ? If one applies for a job, does your website send on-time notifications and messages to keep applicant posted with the updates ? Can one access your website whenever and wherever ? Is your website up and running 24/7 ?

### • Secure

Security is a major concern to today's web visitors. You need to make sure that your website follows industry standards and guidelines. For example, if you have user registration feature, you want to make sure that user passwords are encrypted and not displayed in plain text. You also want to ensure that the website is secure and uses SSL encryption. If you've forgotten a password feature, you do not want to provide a reset password feature without asking the security questions to the user.

### • Valid mark-up & clean code

A website that follows to the relevant web design best practices and standards is often more robust and dependable. It also ensures the website will load faster and appear

consistent across browsers and devices. It also makes it easier to locate problems and troubleshoot if required.

## 3.3.4 Steps to Build a Website

### 1. Determine purpose and understand your audience

The first step in coming up with a strategy that would change the way your business runs is to learn and understand about the **needs of your audience**. Your study could help you know their demographic concentration, preferences, and even age group, so when creating campaigns you will be able to target them more precisely. You could be targeting different groups using the same message and this will not bring results. For different audiences, you can create personas that appeal to the audiences based on what they would prefer to associate with.

A business website generally serves as a space to provide general information about your company or a **direct platform for e-commerce**. Whether you create a simple website that tells a little about your company or a more complex e-commerce site, the most important thing you must do is say what your company does on the homepage in plain terms. Don't make customers root around to discover if your company can do what they need, warned Erin Pheil of website design company Followbright.

### 2. Evaluate your website design and SEO

- Also important in the digital space is website design. You need to ensure that your business has a professional website that will inspire visitors to take action. Many people will leave your site when they find that it's not designed to speak about your brand well.
- Tailor the content on your website to reveal the things users would like to get when they visit. You can use Jumpfactor's professional SEO services to ensure your site is also optimized for search. Install Google Analytics to collect important information like the bounce rate of your website as well as the kind of traffic you are getting.
- Submitting your website to major search engines will help direct potential leads to your page, as will deploying a strong SEO strategy across your site. Shaolian said that defining title tags, meta descriptions, and Uniform Resource Identifiers (URIs) that are relevant to your company and aspects of your industry can boost your rankings in search engines for the products or services you're trying to market.
- "Building relevant keywords into your content from the very first phases of your website, and having a strong focus on SEO from website launch, will help you generate traffic early on," he said.

- Publish fresh content. Regularly publishing on a blog, adding to your website and updating your content all signal to search engines that your site is relevant for the chosen keywords. Choose topics that are relevant to your business and exciting for your industry to position yourself and your business as thought leaders in the space.
- Place internal and external links. Internal links are the links on your website pages that lead to other pages on your site, while external links are your links to other popular, high-authority websites. Place these links strategically throughout your website. Make sure that the links make sense, fit the context and provide value to the reader; otherwise, linking may count against you.
- Optimize images. Compress images so they don't slow down your site's loading time. Take the same approach with video, making sure that any clips load quickly and don't slow down how your site moves overall. Images' metadata, such as tags and captions, is also an opportunity to work in your keywords and tell search engines what the images are about.
- Maximize your site speed. Pages should load as quickly as possible; within a few seconds is ideal.

### 3. Study your competitors

Unless you understand who your competitors are, you could be stuck in using the wrong strategies to promote your online business. Competitors who are doing well should be a case study for the improvement of your business. Investigate what they are doing different and also look for the gaps they have not been able to fill then chip in with offers for the market. Some marketers take the strategy of their competitors then modify it to drive better results, and it works well if you understand how to approach your target market.

### 4. Get social and be live on social media

Don't forget that engagement is a key component of driving decision making and building trust. Your business should have a clear social presence that will allow you to engage your audience and also learn about the inadequacies that have to be addressed to make products better. Create business profiles on leading social media platforms and be part of the conversation to ensure your business is among those contributing in leading discussions. Many people discover new products through social media, so you could also leverage interesting content to get more shares and boost visibility.

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Pinterest is the best way to increase your audience reach and alert customers to what's going on with your company. Whenever you update your website, post about it on your social media outlets, but balance that with genuine, nonpromotional engagement.

Also include links to your social media on your website. The most common places to do this are the footer or the ancillary bar (the extra menu in the top right that often holds login or contact links).

### 5. Actually building a website

1. Choose the suitable website builder.
2. Sign up for a plan that suits organization needs and budget.
3. Choose a unique and relevant domain name.
4. Design the website effectively.
5. Develop superior contents and convert them to web pages.
6. Choose and download appropriate app for the website.
7. Choose a web host.
8. Set up payment system (if any).
9. Preview and test the website.
10. Publish the website on the internet.

### 9. Maintain your site

Staying relevant is important, so update your website frequently with blog posts on current industry events, new products and offers, and company news to keep visitors coming back to the site.

You should also check at least monthly to ensure your software and all add-ons are up to date. Pheil said that if your software is not up to date, it's in danger of being hacked, even if your website host's security is strong. If you don't have time to do this yourself, delegate the task to a trusted employee or a freelance website manager.

Starting a website for your business is a low-cost investment that can help you establish credibility and reach a wider customer base than you ever could through traditional marketing techniques. If you keep your website updated with fresh, current content and are quick to address technical issues, you'll never have to worry about "not existing" to your current and future clients.

### 3.4 Measurement Jump Start Guide

For a website to make it perform well and be productive, the key is to look at the appropriate KPIs. If your website objective is to increase total number of leads, you obviously want to know the number of leads your website has generated. By measuring and analyzing the KPIs, it becomes easier to determine what areas of your website are functioning better than others.

#### 3.4.1 Measurement Goals and to do Aspects for Measuring the Metrics

##### A. Marketing goals

1. Generate More Qualified Leads - Measure Conversion rate
2. Improve Lead Conversion Rate - Measure number of leads , Lead quality and sales closing rates
3. Increase awareness - Measure awareness Level

##### B. Sales goals

1. Generate more sales - Measure sales conversion rate, number of purchases, revenue

###### i. Measure conversion rates

Getting people to your site is half the battle. In order to increase conversion rates, you need to have clear Call-To-Actions (CTA) on your site in the places where people are likely to look for them. Using the medical device industry as an example again; if you have a page focused on the benefits of a particular medical device, you may want to encourage visitors to "Learn More", "Request a Quote", "Contact Us", or "Download" content such as an e-Book or whitepaper.

###### ii. Measure bounce rate and average session time

In general, the longer a user spends on your site, the more likely they are to make a conversion of some sort. If a person visits your site and then immediately leaves (bounces), it is unlikely that they found what they were looking for, or that they will return to make a purchase or convert in some other way.

As long as your website is relevant, user-friendly, and easy to navigate, a user will likely stay for longer, and may view several pages on your site. They may not make a purchase right away, but the longer you are able to keep them on your site, the more likely they are to eventually make a purchase. In addition, lower bounce rates and longer sessions times increase your search engine ranking statistics which increases the likelihood of your website being reached.

2. Improve sales rate - Measure average order amount, product performance
3. Improve sales support - Measure sales closing rate, sales team satisfaction

##### C. Customer satisfaction goals

1. Improve customer satisfaction - measure user satisfaction.

Below are some of the crucial metrics to be measured for measuring user satisfaction.

- i. User satisfaction or Apdex Score (Application Performance Index), is a measurement of your users' level of satisfaction based on the response time of request(s) when interacting with your website.

$$\text{Apdex}_T = \frac{\text{Satisfied count} + \frac{\text{Tolerating count}}{2}}{\text{Total samples}}$$

Where, T is desired or defined latency of request,

Satisfied count is number of samples (or requests) that received a response in T or less,

Tolerating count = Number of samples (or requests) that are 4 times T or less,

Total samples = Total number of requests used to calculate your Apdex score,

###### ii. FP/ FCP

First Paint (FP) and First Contentful Paint (FCP) is a performance metric that refers to the first pixels that are getting rendered after the users access your website and how long it takes for the user to see them. The difference between the two is that FP is the point when the browsers draw anything on the page, while FCP is the point where browsers start displaying pieces of content like text or images.

The most important parts of the website need to load first and fast. Google describes these parts as First Meaningful Paint (FMP) or hero elements and they need to be the priority.

###### iii. Time to interactive

The next thing you need to look for is the Time To Interactive (TTI) which measures the time until the application is rendered and can respond to user input.

TTI optimization can be as simple as only loading scripts that provide interactivity only to the elements that have been loaded already.

Nevertheless, there are certain things you can do to lower your TTI.

- **Minifying and compressing your code :** It's easy enough to do there's really no cost involved.

- Using preload :** When one uses preload in the link tag it makes an early fetch request to get the resource. Mostly used to fetch high priority resources that are used in the current route.
- Minimize the main thread work :** The main thread is what turns code into a visual, interactive web page. It creates the DOM, parses the CSS and HTML and executes Javascript. To reduce load on the main thread you can remove unused code, minimize your code and use code splitting to make sure you are only running the code you are actually needing.

## 2. Reduce time to complete task - Measure time to complete a task.

Below are some important metrics need to be measured concern with time.

### i. Page speed and load time

The document.readyState has a status of "complete". Page speed measures the time it takes to download and display the entire content of a web page. Overtime, the page speed threshold has changed and it differs based on what type of site or webapp one is looking at. For an e-commerce website, the accepted load time is between 2 and 3 seconds.

### ii. Time to first byte

Furthermore, the speed at which the first bits of information reach your users is not consistent in all locations across the world. Your users from the United Kingdom will have a different experience than people in the United States.

To measure this one can use a metric called Time To First Byte (TTFB) which is the time the first byte of each file reaches the user's browser after a server connection has been established.

### iii. DNS lookup time

DNS Lookup time is the time it takes for a domain lookup to happen while the browser loads the resource. DNS lookups can add a significant amount of load time to your browsers especially if your app loads a large number of third party scripts.

### iv. Peak Response Time

Peak Response Time (PRT) measures the longest response time for all the requests coming through the server. It will give you an idea of where your web application is underperforming or having difficulties fulfilling requests and also help you pinpoint the culprit easier.

### . Hardware utilization

You may be under the impression that hardware utilization does not fall under your responsibility and the hosting company or the service provider has to keep

tabs on their machines themselves, but in reality, this is going to directly affect your website performance so keeping tabs on hardware is going to be a priority. Three main components to focus on,

- The CPU
- RAM Utilization
- Disk space

### D. Webmaster goals

1. Improve webmaster or content contributor satisfaction - measure user satisfaction and time to complete a task.

Webmaster should take care of below metrics for better website performance,

i. **Error rate** - Error Rate is a performance metric that tracks the percentage of request issues you have in relation with the total number of requests. It's important to keep an eye on this number as any spike will mean that you are looking at a major failure at some point soon in the future.

ii. **Uptime** - This is not a performance metric per se, but nonetheless, it's a crucial aspect of your website or application. Remember that little number that you saw on your hosting company pricing page and it was around 99 % ? That decimal is extremely important and you really need to pay attention to it. It looks as,

- 99 % : means around 7 hours of downtime
- 99.9 % : means around 45 minutes of downtime
- 99.999 % : means around 30 seconds of downtime

ii. **Measure your audience** - One of the most important things webmaster can measure on website is your audience reach and impact. This can be done by tracking your visitors, which is typically done using Google Analytics or some other analytics tool. By measuring users and sessions and comparing your numbers periodically (monthly, quarterly, annually), you can determine if your audience is growing, and if so, how quickly (or slowly). It's crucial to have a mix of new and returning users, though the exact percentages vary by industry, goals, and more.

iii. **Analyze your traffic sources** - It's important to determine how your visitors are getting to your website. Are they coming through Google ? A social media marketing campaign? A directory listing ? An email blast ? A Pay-Per-Click (PPC) ad ? What specific keywords are leading potential customers to your site?

Google Analytics automatically groups visitors into different categories based on demographics, geography, interests, etc., in addition to segmenting visitors by

traffic channels source/medium, referrals and more. Analyzing your traffic sources and audience behaviors allows you to get to know your potential customers better to improve the marketing techniques.

Traffic sources can be,

- **Organic** - Traffic generated by relevant keywords and/or your business name.
- **Referrals** - Traffic that comes to your site through websites that link to your site.
- **Direct** - Traffic generated by those who type your exact URL into their browser.
- **Email marketing** - Traffic generated by links in email marketing campaigns.
- **Paid traffic** - Traffic generated by PPC search engine ads, retargeting ads, etc.
- **Social media** - Traffic that comes to your site through social network links or ads.

#### **E. IT goals**

1. Reduce website management cost - Measure maintenance cost.

#### **F. Operations goals**

1. Optimize workflow automation - Measure operational cost.

#### **G. HR goals**

1. Increase employment applications - Measure number of applications.
2. Improve employee satisfaction - Measure employee satisfaction.

#### **H. Executive goals**

1. Maximize ROI (Return On Investment) - Measure ROI.

Determining the cost of your conversions and overall return on investment is the most important KPI of all. If one is spending more to get conversions than one receiving in profits, then of course one is having an issue in hand to be deal with. Maybe you are just breaking even as well. But by measuring and analyzing all of the other KPIs for your website listed above, you can learn how to increase your overall profits by adjusting the results of these performance metrics.

### **3.4.2 Blog Measurement Jump Start**

#### **3.4.2.1 Definition - Blog , Blogging, Blogger**

A blog is a regularly updated website or web page, typically one run by an individual or small group, that is written in an informal or conversational style.

A blog (a shortened version of "weblog") is an online journal or informational website displaying information in reverse chronological order, with the latest posts appearing

first, at the top. It is a platform where a writer or a group of writers share their views on an individual subject.

Blogging is a collection of skills that one needs to run and supervise a blog. This entails equipping a web page with tools to make the process of writing, posting, linking, and sharing content easier on the internet.

A blogger is someone who runs and controls a blog. Blogger shares own opinion and knowledge on different topics for a target audience. Bloggers are individuals who love sharing parts of their lives with people. They post on various topics from arts, home designs, carpentry, and finance articles. Bloggers are mobile and don't need to be in one place and they are internet living beings.

#### **3.4.2.2 Difference between Blog and Website**

The primary difference between a blog and a website is that a blog is a specific type of content displayed on web pages on a website.

Blogs are a type of website. The only real difference between a blog and other types of website is that blogs are updated on a regular basis with new content, which is displayed in reverse chronological order (new blog posts first).

Typical websites are static in nature where content is organized in pages, and they are not updated frequently. Whereas a blog is dynamic, and it is usually updated more frequently. Some bloggers publish multiple new articles a day.

Blogs can be part of a larger website. Often businesses have a blog section where they regularly create content to inform and educate their customers.

All blogs can be a website or part of a website. However, not all websites can be called blogs.

Non-blog websites, such as individual personal interest and biography or business sites, typically only update their news and blog content at that frequency and then add new pages or update some content as needed.

In terms of content, a website has "pages" - think of these as pages or sections in a brochure. Webpages can be sorted into different categories based on their content. For example, one page can contain the homepage - general information about the organization. Another page can contain the list and descriptions of products and services. And another webpage can list down contact information or have an email contact form.

"Posts" on the other hand are updates or unique perspectives, meant to be bite-size reads, can be composed of one or a combination the following media : a text article, images (like photo journals or infographics), videos, podcasts, and even social media feeds.

### 3.4.2.3 Blog Posts Vs Pages - What is the Difference ?

The blog content that you pull up in your browser appears on a web page. The term "page" describes the document and the location.

It is important to note that the term "blog" is also frequently used to describe a collection of web pages that specifically share blog content, especially on blog-focused websites.

Blog content is updated frequently but many websites have non-blog pages that contain content that rarely changes, such as a company's history page or contact page. Some web pages have not been updated beyond a few tiny refreshed and new content changes in years.

#### Blog and vLog

A vlog is a short video blog that explains video content. A vlog can be of short duration or it can be long videos depending on topics and coverage. Blogging and vlogging are now common forms of earning money by writing content or producing videos. The key difference between blog and vlog is that blog is similar to a website where one can get any subject's written content. On the other side, in a vlog, the video is posted on particular topics.

### 3.4.2.4 Measuring the Blog

If you are in the process of beginning a blog, you should have a goal or two in mind that what is the purpose of your blog. May be you want to increase your website traffic, or more thoroughly engage your returning site visitors, or create a digital resource where customers can find answers to their commonly asked questions. Whatever your goals may be, they should be measurement of success. Before jumping into these metrics, write out one or two of your goals, so that you have some idea of how measurement can help to make your blog successful.

#### Measuring Blog Traffic Metrics

Traffic measures the number of people who visit your blog. Keeping tabs on all of those visitors can provide you with valuable information about the demographics of your site's users, as well as how you can drive more traffic to your blog.

#### Page views

A "page view" is a measure of any time a user views a page on your website. This includes multiple visits and page refreshes as well. That means you'll need to look deeper

into the numbers to find out specifics about who's visiting your blog. Page views can often be tracked through your hosting provider. There is no one correct number when it comes to page views. It will differ radically depending on your goals, audience, niche etc.

#### Blog homepage visits

Of your overall blog visits, how many can be attributed to the homepage of your blog? Knowing this will give you a sense of whether your visitors use your blog as a destination site (i.e. direct traffic is a big driver of your visits, and visitors typically enter your blog's URL into their browser to get to you) or in contrast, one that gets found through indirect sources. This will also give you a sense of the type of visitors you typically attract.

#### 2. Traffic by channel

When it comes to marketing and analytics, a "channel" is any path visitors take to reach your blog and other content. For example, some users may arrive at your blog through your social media profiles (one channel) while others may get there via paid search (a second channel).

One should look at all the traffic that comes to own blog via social media links.

#### 3. Time spent on page

How long your blog's visitors spend on the pages they visit can be a complicated metric to track. With that being said, Google does provide a solid breakdown of the averages for each page on your site. If your average "time on page" is low, you might want to look to see whether your marketing is pulling in the right kind of traffic. While the average time users spend on a web page is around 15 seconds, a well-designed page with valuable and relevant content can hold someone's attention much longer. Also if this metric is quite low, you could have a technical issue, such as a page that loads slowly. This can lead visitors to exit as soon as they try to open that page.

#### 4. Bounce rate

Your blog's "bounce rate" is a measurement of how many viewers came to your site, took a look, had no interaction with your blog post, and then left.

Bounce rate can be a much more effective measure of reader interest than traffic stats. While a count of aggregate page views might tell you how many people visited your website, it doesn't tell you how many stayed and explored further. A bounce rate in the range of 25 percent to 40 percent is considered excellent. Anything higher than 70 percent probably indicates that your audience-building approach requires changing.

A high bounce rate may indicate that your content isn't resonating with your audience. Alternatively, it could also be an indication that your traffic sources aren't very good. If you're blogging about food items and your traffic is coming from sites about atm card, for example, you may have high traffic, but it's unlikely to be traffic that is meaningful in terms of true audience building.

#### 5. Pages per visit

When you measure "pages per visit" on your blog, you'll typically start with an average of the number of pages viewed over a given hour or day, divided by the number of site visitors during that same time frame. This can give you an idea of how users are interacting with your blog.

If you have pretty substantial traffic overall, but your pages per visit average is on the low side, you might want to investigate your linking strategy.

#### 6. Returning visitors

When you look at your "returning visitor" numbers versus your "new visitor" numbers, there are some assumptions you can make about your blog's overall traffic. You'll be able to see whether your readership is growing, staying steady mainly due to loyal regulars, or declining.

If you aren't seeing a lot of return visitors, you may be attracting readers but struggling to really catch their attention. In that case, you'll want to work on improving engagement on your blog.

#### 7. Top traffic posts

Tracking your top posts can tell you what kind of content is hitting home with your readers. This can help you determine where to focus resources or how to best increase your content output.

For example, your audience might respond more favorably to video than text-based content or vice versa.

One of the ways you can use "top blog post" data is by guiding visitors to content that others have found valuable.

#### 8. Number of posts published

Tracking the number of blog posts published in a given time period is simple and handy metric for identifying correlations between blogging volume/frequency and other results like traffic and leads. Statistics shows that more blog posts leads to more traffic and leads.

## Internetwork Security and Web Analytics

### Measuring Blog SEO Metrics

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) unfolds various strategies that work together to improve your blog's rankings in Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs). A variety of elements on your website contribute to its SEO. One can measure most of these elements.

#### 9. SERP rankings

SERPs are the lists of results returned by search engine queries. Each of blog's pages will fall on different positions in SERPs for relevant keywords and phrases.

#### 10. Average inbound links per blog post

Inbound links are links to your blog from other websites. Are you creating content worth linking to? Inbound links are extremely valuable currency in the land of search engines. It indicates to search engines that your content is valuable to others and worth ranking well in search results. Keep track of your average inbound links so you can keep tabs on the quality of your content there by your inbound links impact on your search authority.

## Measuring Blog Engagement Metrics

Blog engagement comes in various forms. It is a way readers interact with your blog (besides simply reading its content). Establishing what you consider to be valuable engagement is key - this may include clicks, comments, social shares, and further communication.

#### 11. Average comments per blog post

On many blogs, one of the most significant forms of engagement is comments. Although many consider the number of comments to be mainly a vanity metric, tracking engagement and sentiment among your readers definitely has its place.

#### 12. Social shares per blog post

Social media engagement is also crucial, although your target platforms and numbers will be specific to your individual marketing strategies. There are tools to help you to track all of your social media engagement in one easy-to-use dashboard. Since engagement online is not always linear, one should check with other tracking methods.

#### 13. Clicks from social platforms

The referral links are one of the best ways to measure user engagement. If you're running a marketing campaign that's heavy on social media, then this metric can be used to show plenty of clicks from your social content.

## Measuring Blog Conversions Metrics

Conversions are helpful to track sales, but a "conversion" can be any action you'd like to encourage on your blog. For example, you may measure subscriptions to your blog news letter, or downloads some brochure. Understanding conversion rate helps you implement Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO), in order to make positive changes for your blog.

### 14. New blog leads and customers

Using your blog to drive traffic and gain customers can be a crucial part of any content marketing strategy. To measure blog's performance you need to track how many new leads are generated by your content. One way to do this is to use trackable links throughout your blog, especially on Call-to-Action (CTA) buttons and links to associated internal content of the blog.

### 15. Posts that bring in the most leads and customers

Once you establish a way to track the leads generated by original content, you can aggregate and filter that data in your chosen analytics tool. This will help you determine which posts and pages are generating the most leads and driving customers to your blog. Knowing what kind of content gets people to take action is the central aspect to work on. Conversion-generating posts on your blog let you know what strategies are working, so you can redo such content/activity further.

### 16. Conversion rates

Your blog's channels, post views, page views, leads, and so on are often tracked with a primary goal in mind - improving conversion rates. Fundamental way to determine your rate without a built - in tool is to divide the number of conversions you're getting by the total number of site visitors in the same time frame.

### 17. Lead source breakdown

The goal is to find out not only what sources or channels are leading readers to your blog, but which ones are ultimately generating the most conversions. If your social media posts attract many visitors, but almost none of those visitors convert, it's time to consider whether you're focusing on the wrong audience or failing to provide they want.

## Measuring Blog - Email Marketing and Subscription Metrics

Marketing through Email is one of the earliest and still handy for online productivity. Communication by email as a marketing tool is a highly - recommended approach. Plus, it also provides a great amount of trackable data about users.

### 18. Total email subscribers

Creating an email newsletter for the blog is an excellent strategy for giving readers a way to engage and provides a useful metric to track. Here the basic metric to track is the number of subscribers, the more subscribers you have, the better you are doing.

### 19. Email open rates

An email's "open rate" represents how many recipients actually opened it in their inboxes. To encourage people to open your emails, one of the best options is to try a variety of strategies and keep an eye on the numbers to see which ones result in the most engagement.

### 20. Email click-through rates

Click-Through Rates (CTRs) represents how many people not only opened a given email but also clicked on one of the links it contained. This can include links back to your blog and social media platforms, as well as all kinds of direct CTAs. A poor CTR on a given link may mean you need to spend some time developing stronger CTAs that focuses on your audience's interests and requirements.

### 21. Active RSS subscribers

It is useful to find out many people are subscribed to your blog via RSS (Really Simple Syndication). It is important to know how many of those subscribers actively check your feed? The number of active subscribers you have is a great metric for evaluating how many loyal, dedicated readers you've attracted and retained. It's also a great indicator of your blog's stickiness. Generating such loyal visitor indicates that you're growing a group of content lovers who are more likely to share your content and expand your reach to wide audience.

## 3.5 Competitive Benchmarking and Reflections

**Competitive benchmarking** is the continuous process of comparing a website's performance with that of their counterparts or **competitors** in the industry using a set collection of metrics.

The **website benchmarking** is how one knows where own website stands in relation to others. That knowledge helps you assess one's position in the marketplace. It can also provide invaluable information about how and why you and your competitors stand at your current position.

### 3.5.1 Benchmarking Purpose

Keeping tabs on your competitors isn't just a smart business strategy, but it's essential if you want to be on top of world. While you should never base your entire website strategy on what your competitors are doing, having knowledge about their tactics is strong tool.

When you benchmark your website's performance metrics with those of similar websites in your niche, you easily discover ways to enhance the user experience to better cater to prospects and increase conversions.

To begin with one should take a snapshot of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for website and benchmark it. That's what KPIs are for. They help you monitor your results by alerting you to trouble spots and highlighting the things you're doing best in at.

Benchmarking is an essential management tool. If you don't know how fast (or slow) you're going and which direction you're moving, then it will be tough to reach your desired destination within stipulated time.

Competitor benchmarking for the website would help in below points,

1. Allows to establish baselines that give a place to measure own website.
2. Define best practices for the website.
3. Identify areas of the website that can be improved over.
4. Create a competitive environment within the business.

#### Top areas to track for a website competitor analysis

- Benchmarking for website performance
- Benchmarking for marketing team performance
- Benchmarking for financial aspects performance
- Benchmarking for searching performance
- Benchmarking for website usability

### 3.5.2 Critical Website Metrics to be Benchmarked

- **Page load time** - Statistics show visitors begin getting anxious after waiting two seconds for a webpage to load. After three seconds, 40 % of those visitors will head elsewhere. USA retail sites currently average 4.09 seconds in load time. So the benchmark shows a potential way to get an edge on the competition.
- **Bounce rate** - measures how many of the visitors to your website go deeper than the page they enter on (the landing page). From statistics indicates that median bounce rate for all website visits originating from Google search is 42.9 %. Any page on the

website can be the entry page for a visitor. If that page is engaging and leads prospects further down the sales journey, the bounce rate will decrease. If not, it will increase.

- **Bounce rate from email campaigns** looks at the traffic you get from email marketing. One online survey had revealed that 42.9 % of those visitors leave before going any further than the landing page. Assuming your email campaigns are properly targeted and your mailing list well-pruned, then the ROI leverage from getting your email campaign bounce rate down to 20 % or under definitely.
- **Lead generation channel** benchmarks indicate how well each component of your lead-generation marketing mix is working. The statistical report found that most of the respondents (77 %) saw email marketing as the top channel for early-stage leads, 56 % said SEO leads the pack, and 41 % turn first to social media. According to which of lead-generation efforts pay off the best, investment can be done on those channels.
- **Website visitor metrics** indicates how effective your site is at drawing traffic. Total website traffic is an important component of bounce rate and conversion rate computations. By comparing own website traffic against that of one's competitors, one would get a measure of how well your SEO, advertising, and inbound marketing efforts are doing.
- **Being - responsively designed and mobile - friendly** for competitive purpose should make sure that website is built with responsive design in mind and is mobile-friendly. Users are increasingly spending time on their mobile devices and it has become their default device for browsing the web and hence should be comfortable enough to view your website.
- **Usability and design** needs to be evaluated by using combination of observational analysis and survey results (ideally from customers). Usability can include several different components, such as intuitive navigation, visitors being able to search for and find specific pieces of information, clear Call-To-Actions (CTAs), and the absence or presence of broken links or other malfunctioning content. Loyal customers should be offered discounts or other incentives if they are willing to use your website (as well as your competitors' websites) and then answer survey questions later on. Some aspects of the overall user experience are also open to interpretation, but asking users for their thoughts after navigating your site is fruitful.

- SEO Benchmarking needs critical analysis which needs to check earlier defined keywords. It is very important to use the right keywords in a competitive analysis. If you insist on using your, possibly branded, company outing as one of the main keywords, you might not even have any competition, let alone any decent organic traffic to your website. Always use common terms and not own choices. Proper keyword research will be of help, not just for competitive analysis, but for the entire SEO optimization of website. Once the keywords are defined then check against your competitors, the next step is obvious: do a search for these keywords. See who your competitors are by writing down who ranks higher than your website.
- Check technical differences of the website - One should check a number of things to determine on which aspects your competition is ahead of you. The next step of your competitive analysis, after listing the keywords you'd like to perform this analysis for. Site speed is one technical aspect to check. In a competitive analysis, speed insights will tell you if there is a huge difference between you and your main competitors in terms of serving the website and the user experience difference that goes with that. The faster the site, the happier the visitor, and the happier the search engine too.
- Https and SSL are about serving a secure website to your visitor. It's becoming the default and for a good reason. Serving a secure website is about delivering the best user experience and gaining trust from your future customers.
- Acquisition source metrics indicates from where visitors are arriving. Similar to lead-generation channel tracking, acquisition source informs time and budget allocations. They can also shed light on which channels your particular audience(s) prefer. As with all benchmarks, real insight comes from observing changes in metric movement over the period.
- Conversion Rates (CR) are business makers and breakers too. They indicate the effectiveness of your strategy and tactics by gauging everything from how many people opt-in to your mailing list to the number of people who come to your site as visitors and leave as actual customers.
- Cart abandonment rate tells how many prospective buyers select one or more items to buy, begin the checkout process, but drop off before completing the purchase. It's a heartbreaking metric - your efforts got someone that close, then failed and needs critical attention to improve.

- Products per transaction is an excellent benchmark to consider in tandem with cart abandonment. One should not just drop the abandonment rate (increase your sales percentage) but simultaneously increase products per order too.

### 3.5.3 Website Benchmarking Best Practices

Just like pretty much everything else, there are certain benchmarking pet peeves that you should be aware of, little details that you should keep in mind when performing a benchmark analysis.

#### 1. Compare with similar web pages

When picking pages, you want to benchmark against, make sure you pick similar ones. Testing a product page vs. a category page of an ecommerce website will get you some really skewed results and might not provide the valuable information you were looking for.

#### 2. Test your website from multiple locations and devices

Your users will use your website from different locations around the world and your website needs to be able to serve people in India just as fast as people in the US. Some may use mobile devices while others will use laptops, so keeping this in mind will provide a better understanding of how latency affects their user experience.

#### 3. Benchmark your website against competitors instead of averages

Averages can be misleading when you compare sites from different industries. If you take the average page speed of google.com and compare it against your e-commerce store that has 100K+ products, it will make you think your site is way off in terms of performance even though this might not necessarily be the case.

Instead of just looking at averages, you should compare your performance with that of your competitors. This provides a real industry average that what you are probably used to.

#### 4. Dig deeper

Load time is a good general indicator of website performance, but it might not be the right thing to look at. You'll want to dig a little deeper to understand how your users are experiencing your website, and the first metrics to look at is time to first byte and time to interactive. After you've established these two, you can move on to others like round trip time, request numbers, etc.

## 5. Understand what your site “does” when you are not looking

You can't run manual tests on your website all the time. Instead, you want to schedule these tests to make sure your performance remains consistent throughout the day. Scheduling tests at specific times and from different locations will give you a better idea of how your website performs.

## 6. Monitor third-party APIs

Actually, they can be trusted but as the Russian proverb goes, “Trust but verify.” So, make sure you monitor your APIs because they can heavily impact **how users experience your website.**

### Review Questions

1. Write a note on web analytics dashboard. (Refer section 3.1.2)
2. Explain anatomy of e-Commerce. (Refer section 3.2.4)
3. Discuss webmaster's goals. (Refer section 3.4.1)
4. What are various blog traffic metrics ? (Refer section 3.4.2.4)
5. Brief about critical website metrics to be benchmarked. (Refer section 3.5.2)