



Analytics + UserTesting: The Secret Weapon of Conversion Rate Optimization



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Introduction

In the world of online sales, nothing can be more troubling than low conversion rates. Customer purchases come at a premium, and online marketers lean on social media, retargeting, word of mouth, and plenty of other channels to entice visitors to visit their sites. However, much to our chagrin, website traffic alone is not enough. **Having a thorough understanding of your site visitors’ intent can open a lot of doors for site optimization, ultimately leading to an increase in conversion.**

If you find that, even though you're constantly making changes to your website, the work that is done isn't changing your conversion numbers for the better, it's time to take a step back. It's time to gather some user feedback. It's time for UserTesting.



But wait—who's UserTesting? Simply put, we're a cloud-based usability testing platform that captures video feedback of real people using your site or app so you can see and hear what works and where they get stuck or confused. User testing can be a secret weapon for anyone responsible for improving the conversion rate of a site.

User feedback is one of the few techniques that marketing and product teams have that can actually tell us *why* things are happening on our sites.

- Why are people abandoning their shopping carts?
- Why are people more likely to bounce from a particular landing page?
- Why aren't people subscribing to the blog?
- Why aren't people registering for our webinar?

By watching people use our sites, and listening to their unbiased feedback, we can start to answer these questions and gain an advantage over our competition.

In this eBook, you'll learn

- ✓ How to access conversion data in your Google Analytics account
- ✓ What to look for as you analyze your data
- ✓ What to test in a UserTesting study based on your analytics

We'll also cover the basics of structuring an optimization roadmap to help you implement the changes you identify to improve your site.

Using Analytics to Understand What is Happening on Your Site

Here at UserTesting, we often talk about the fact that usability testing allows you to learn more than what analytics alone can teach you. What we don't talk about enough is that analytics can—and *should*—guide usability testing efforts.

{ “You can't know why things are happening if you don't know what is happening.”
— Louis Rosenfeld, *Founder of Rosenfeld Media*

Exploring analytics is a great starting point that you can use to reveal what's happening on your site and to pinpoint problems that interrupt functionality and user intent.

By combining analytics and UserTesting, you'll be able to learn why problems are happening. In this eBook, we've outlined an analytics research plan to help you uncover **who** to test, **what kind of tests** you might want to run, and the added context your tests might require depending on where those people are coming from.

Analytics Part 1:

Identify Users and Devices to Test

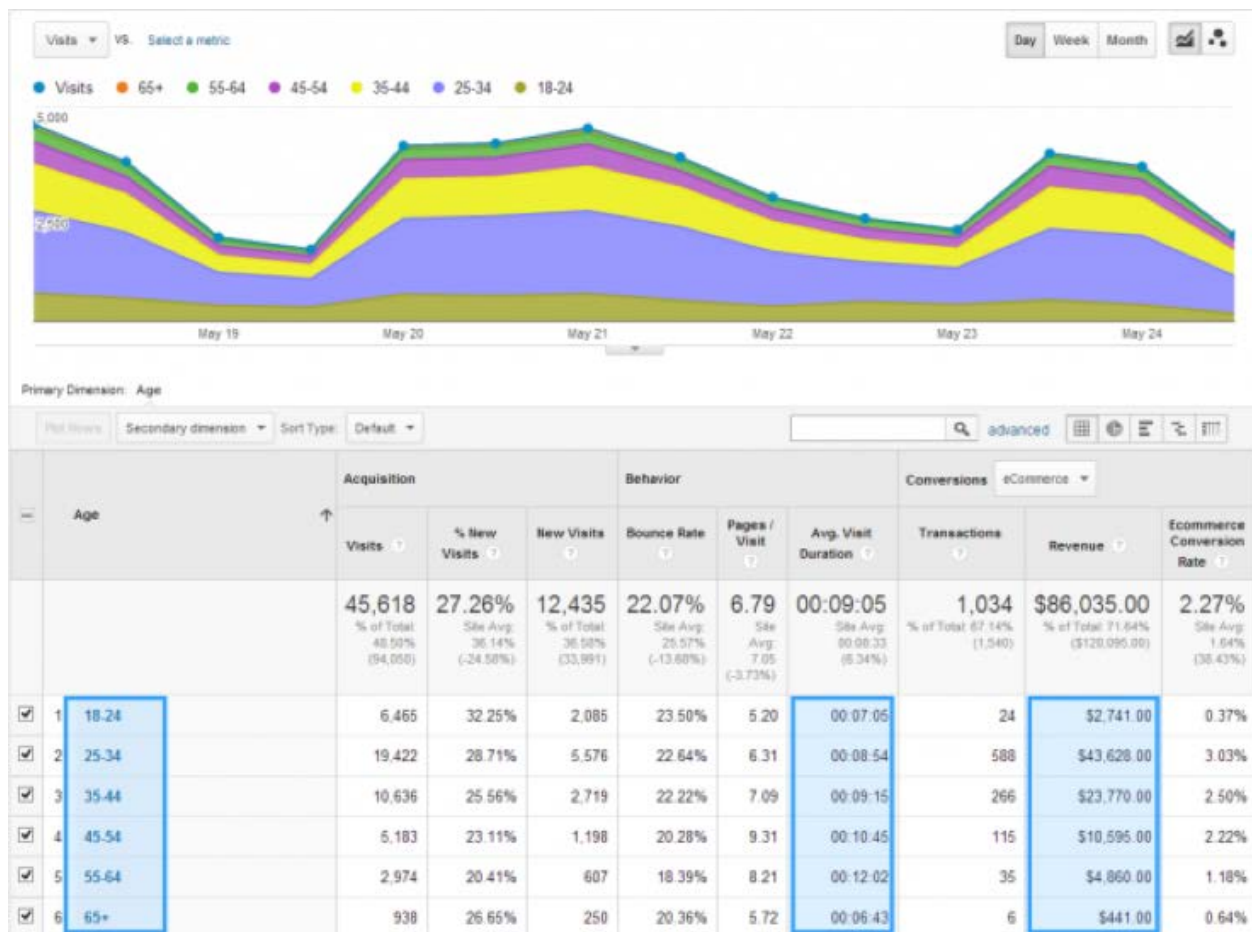
You already know who your target audience is, but within that group, there are a number of subgroups, and many of them can be identified using analytics. Segment your data by the following metrics to further drill down and identify the types of people you want to solicit feedback from and which devices you'll want them to use.

Gender, Age, and Interests

Google has been rolling out Demographics and Interests reports in their analytics product. This promises to be one of the best ways for marketers, product owners, and UX specialists to determine which audience segments are not performing well for certain pages or flows.



NOTE: You'll need to take an extra step to [enable Demographics and Interest reports in Google Analytics](#), if you haven't already.



In this example, the strong correlation between age and visit duration, and a strong disparity among Revenue, for certain age groups, begs for qualitative testing.

You can access this report through **Audience > Demographics > Age**.

In the analytics of a bookstore above, notice the strong correlation between Age and Average Visit Duration. Are younger visitors simply finding what they're looking for more quickly? Possibly, but there's something else going on here. Looking at the revenue numbers, and calculating Revenue Per Visit, we find that the **Revenue Per Visit is 500% higher among visitors in the 25-54 age range than in the 18-24 age range**. For some reason, this bookstore is not connecting well with their youngest adult visitors.



What to test: After defining the participant's age range for your next study, consider testing various groups with similar tasks. Ask them to describe what they would expect from a site like yours, what would convince them to purchase, etc.

Devices

It's imperative today to have brand consistency across device types, and you've no doubt made some efforts toward that goal. Has your testing plan caught up to your intentions? Are you looking at bounce rates, exit rates, time on page, pages per visit, and flow reports across device types to see which devices need extra testing?

Page	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate
Desktop	3,245 % of Total: 0.98% (339,740)	2,535 % of Total: 1.01% (252,940)	00:01:37 Site Avg: 00:01:50 (-11.28%)	343 % of Total: 0.34% (100,604)	31.20% Site Avg: 52.58% (-40.87%)
Mobile	1,165 % of Total: 0.34% (339,740)	1,019 % of Total: 0.40% (252,940)	00:01:19 Site Avg: 00:01:50 (-28.49%)	264 % of Total: 0.26% (100,604)	53.41% Site Avg: 52.58% (+1.59%)
Tablet	384 % of Total: 0.11% (339,740)	303 % of Total: 0.12% (252,940)	00:01:22 Site Avg: 00:01:50 (-25.75%)	57 % of Total: 0.06% (100,604)	43.86% Site Avg: 52.58% (-16.88%)

In this example, mobile visitors are staying on the page nearly as long as their tablet and desktop counterparts, but they are bouncing at a much higher rate.

Also, watch out for rapid changes in mobile devices. We're still seeing **new screen sizes** as manufacturers bridge the gap between tablets and phones, which can affect the user experience. And even **operating system upgrades** can impact your stats.



When iOS 7 came out, the updated operating system introduced a new level of “[swipe ambiguity](#),” as the Nielsen Norman Group recently highlighted. Safari now supports horizontal swiping to navigate to the previous page, so website owners who already employed in-site swipe navigation may notice an increase in pages per visit from iOS while simultaneously seeing a drop in time on page.



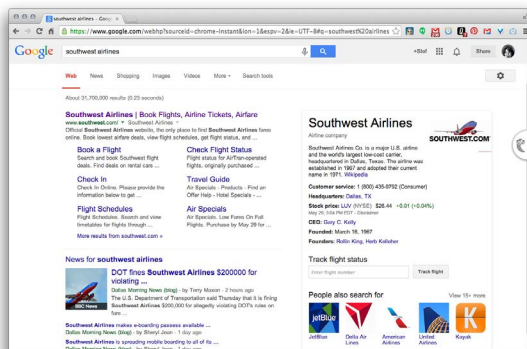
What to test: User tests are excellent at uncovering the reasons for statistical changes that might not be immediately evident from analytics alone. If you run a study of participants using your website on their mobile device, you can learn a lot about different use cases, and the intent of a mobile visitor—which may be very different from someone visiting from their desktop.

Analytics Part 2:

Use segmented flow reports to determine where to start user testing

OK, you know **who** you're going to test. This will come in handy when setting up your study in UserTesting since it's really easy to specify the age, gender, and type of device of participants.

Now it's time to determine which page of your site you want user tests to start on! While starting off your study from the homepage might seem like a natural and obvious choice, your visitors aren't always starting on your homepage, so your tests shouldn't either.



Site links



Social posts

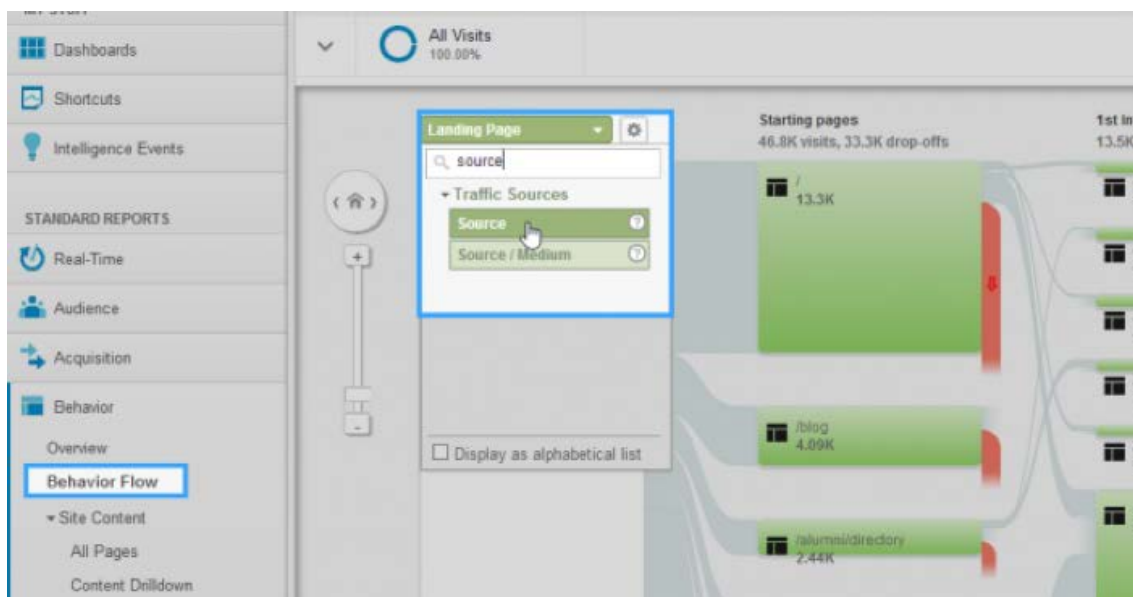


Ads

Starting your tests from various locations throughout the Web will lead to rich insights about a site visitor's expectations and intent.

By running a **Behavior Flow Report**, you can see where your visitors are coming from. A visitor coming from a social network vs. clicking on an ad vs. running a branded search query will have different expectations, and those expectations will shape their perception of your site, as well as the path they take.

To access a Behavior Flow Report showing traffic by source, see **Behavior > Behavior Flow**.



Accessing a Behavior Flow Report showing Source data.

The report shows a great view of data by source, your most popular landing pages, where drop-offs are occurring, and the paths that users are taking through the site.

In the example below, you can see that the football home page is a popular starting point, and that most of the visitors who start on that page are coming from Google. But many of those people are not visiting any other pages on the site. This seems like a problem worth investigating!



Don't trust intuition for determining which pages to start your tests on. See what the real starting pages are, and identify the ones that are underperforming.

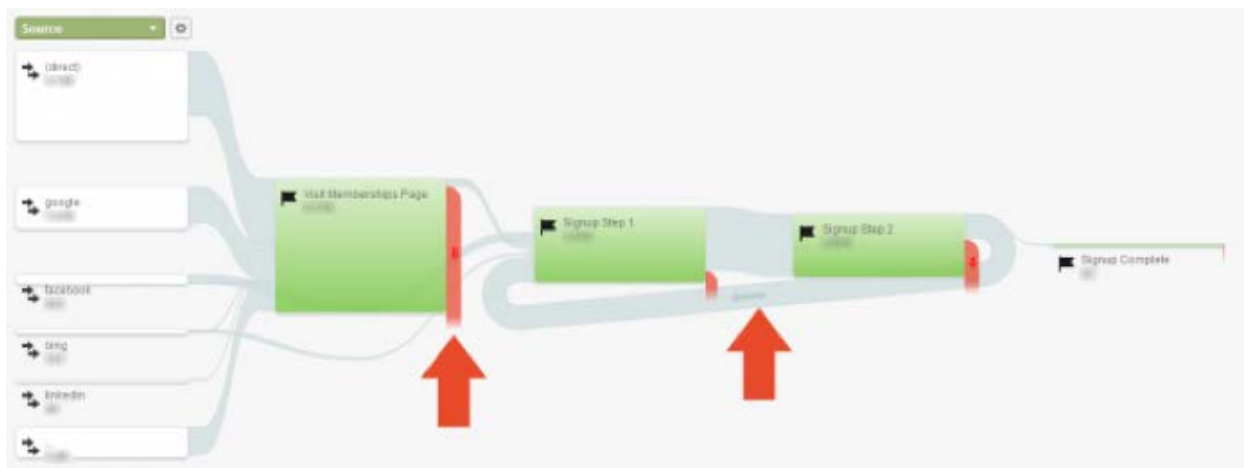
Primary Dimension: Keyword Source Landing Page Other		
Secondary dimension		Sort Type: Default
Keyword		Acquisition
		Visits
		48,154 % of Total: 12.71% (379,016)
1.	(not provided)	38,791 (80.56%)
2.	usertesting	1,407 (2.92%)

Google Keyword (not provided)

A possible next step would be to find out which search queries are bringing people to that page (which will be more difficult given Google's shift to **(not provided)** – shown to the left, but [alternative methods](#) exist), and have testers perform the same query, starting at google.com.

Another flow report, **Goal Flow**, provides a great visualization of what might be going wrong with a campaign or any other conversion path (as long as your goals are configured properly). In the example below, showing a campaign-filtered view of a gym membership conversion funnel, three issues are instantly visible:

1. The conversion rate on the landing page is terrible.
2. Something is causing people to backtrack to Step 1 when we want them to be completing signup.
3. Those who don't backtrack are dropping out of the funnel when they're close to completing the purchase.



This sample Goal Flow report for a gym shows a very weak landing page, but also a problem with a huge number of visitors backtracking or leaving the funnel right before they should be completing signup.



What to test: We could immediately run some tests to watch what's happening to cause people to backtrack. Another opportunity would be to identify which source has the highest dropoff rate from the landing page, and start a test at that source. *Bonus points for combining that source data with age or gender data to be even more focused!*

Analytics Part 3:

Find Pages with High Optimization Potential

While looking at the flow of visitors on your site should give you plenty of testing ideas, it's also smart to take a look at pages that have a high chance of boosting your optimization rates.

Three simple stats to look at:

1. A high number of pageviews could indicate that a page is important to your visitors. The sheer volume of visits means that the page should be thoroughly tested and optimized, even if it is just for micro-conversions.



What to test: You could ask people to explain what they would expect from these landing pages and then ask them to proceed with that logic and see whether their expectations are met or exceeded. Or, ask them to explain what the page is for based on what they see. You'll learn a lot about how people digest information.

2. An unexpectedly low number of pageviews could indicate that a page is difficult to find. This is obvious, but identifying such pages isn't. Noticing that something is missing (e.g., a page that should be in the top 10 for number of visits) is more difficult than seeing something that's there.

To find out which pages are difficult to find, list the pages that you think should be among the top 10 or 20 most popular and then compare it against your analytics. When you notice what's missing, you've found something worth testing.



What to test: Have participants visit your website. Ask them to navigate to one of the pages that you *think* should be among the top 10 or 20 most popular. Can they find it? If they do, is it a page they seem to think provides them with value?

3. Internal Search Data

Another way to identify difficult-to-find pages is to look at your internal search data. Find out which queries are occurring most frequently. Analytics is telling you that plenty of people are resorting to search to find certain information, but why is that happening?



What to test: Are visitors browsing first, or are they immediately relying upon search? During the test, have them try to find the items that the queries suggest they're looking for. Find out where they're looking, and why and when they're giving up.

Analytics Part 4:

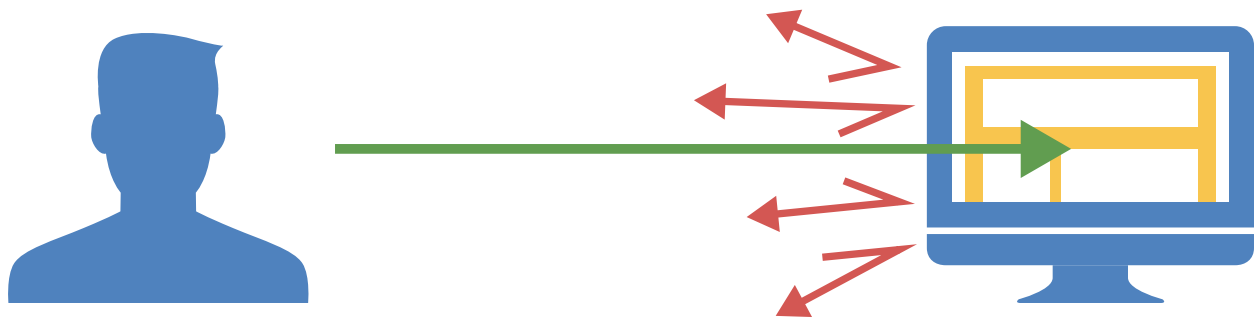
Rethink “Positive” & “Negative” Stats

When you’re assessing performance, stats like high bounce rates, high exit rates, and low time on page are often considered bad. In fact, there are times when a high bounce rate is just fine, but a low bounce rate needs to be investigated. We can look past the surface to find out which numbers—high or low—reveal important testing opportunities.

High Bounce Rates and Exit Rates

To find testing opportunities around bounce or exit rates, look for two things in particular:

1. User intent
2. User expectations



Consider User Intent

What is a good bounce rate? This common question is usually met with an accurate but frustrating answer: “It depends.” And typically that means, “Find out whether the page is supposed to be retaining visitors.”

For example, the page listing your store hours is likely to have a higher-than-average bounce rate, since the visitor intends to find the store hours and then leave. So it’s not necessary to test all pages with high bounce rates.

On the other hand, if you see a low bounce rate for a page that should be answering a very specific question, the page might be worth testing. If your store hours page has a very low bounce rate of 12%, it’s time to learn why.

Look at a flow report to find out where visitors are going after visiting that page, or run a user test to determine whether something is going wrong.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Page	Pageviews ?	Unique Pageviews ?	Avg. Time on Page ?	Entrances ?	Bounce Rate ?	% Exit ?
<input type="checkbox"/>	25. /features/	10,672	9,142	00:00:21	2503	41.48%	36.37%
<input type="checkbox"/>	26. /about-us/location-and-directions/	2,067	1,820	00:00:11	559	87.51%	79.01%

A simple evaluation of bounce rates can reveal great testing opportunities. The high bounce rate on the Directions page isn’t of much concern, due to the visitors’ intent. But a bounce rate of 41% on a features page—which should be sending visitors further down the sales funnel—is cause for alarm. This page should be tested.

Be Mindful of User Expectations

Unless a page is meant to have a high bounce rate (as in the store hours example mentioned previously), an unexpectedly high bounce or exit rate can typically be traced to the page not meeting the visitors’ expectations.

Before we figure out *how* to run a test, we first need to determine *which* pages to test.

Look for high exit rates on pages that are intended to convert, such as signup pages, checkout pages, and middle-of-funnel pages. You’ve worked very hard and likely paid a lot of money to get visitors to this point, so it’s smart to protect your investment by testing to find out whether (or why) these pages aren’t paying off.



What to test: Here’s the key to learning how to improve those pages: When running the test, start the test prior to the problem page, so that the testers’ expectations can be developed organically.

You might consider analyzing your traffic sources for a page and finding out which sources are causing the highest bounce rates. (*See the earlier section on Flow Reports.*)

Example:

Here, we’re looking at the sources for a company’s Features page. It turns out that traffic from Facebook is bouncing far more than traffic from other sources.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Page	Source	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate	% Exit
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. /features/	(direct)	2,354	1,989	00:00:24	186	7.74%	6.89%
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. /features/	google	2,144	1,874	00:00:14	111	6.33%	6.27%
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. /features/	facebook	1,562	1,255	00:00:10	988	34.16%	27.19%
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. /features/	bing	598	512	00:00:04	76	12.00%	8.26%

Look for differences in bounce and exit rates among traffic sources. Then start the test there, to help testers adopt the same expectations as the visitors that are bouncing.

Perhaps the test would reveal that one of the company’s Facebook posts or campaigns was telling people, “See why we beat the competition,” only to drop the visitors onto a Features page with no competitive comparison. These visitors were approaching the page with an expectation that the page isn’t meeting.

Analytics alone can’t give you this kind of insight, but analytics plus testing (and in this case, even just some analysis of the Facebook posts and campaigns) can steer you in the right direction.

Examine Time on Page

Look for an unusually **short time on page**, combined with a **high bounce or exit rate**. Maybe you’re simply overwhelming your visitors, or maybe the page lacks credibility.

For pages with a **long time on page but a high bounce rate or exit rate**, evaluate the page’s purpose. If the goal of the page is to move visitors further along in the funnel, find out why they’re spending time on the page but ultimately deciding to leave. If the page is just a content piece intended to serve very top-of-funnel visitors (such as a blog post), perhaps a long time on page plus a high bounce rate isn’t a problem, but check out your micro conversions.

Pageviews ?	Unique Pageviews ?	Avg. Time on Page ?	Bounce Rate ?	% Exit ?
1,676	1,194	00:07:46	55.07%	68.26%

If this is a blog post, these numbers aren’t necessarily a problem. If it’s a page closer to the middle of the funnel, we’d want to test to see why people are leaving after spending so much time on the page.



What to test: If you’re not getting comments, newsletter signups, or white paper downloads, run a user test to find out why. Is the content ultimately not convincing enough? Is the call to action (CTA) not clear and compelling? Is there any concern about privacy or how easy it will be to cancel a free trial?

* Bonus Section!

The Analytics That Matter for Optimizing Your Advertising Campaigns

Advertising campaigns can cost a lot of time and money. The good thing is that they offer so many data points to analyze for testing and optimization opportunities. While this eBook doesn't focus specifically on optimizing your advertising campaigns, we think it's important to give you a brief overview of what to look for and some general pointers on campaign optimization. *Especially* since looking at the original source of your traffic can result in insights that may affect your onsite optimization.



Clickthrough Rates

Clickthrough rates can help you determine which ads are working and which aren't, but they don't tell you why (at least not explicitly). This ends up making it a bit of a guessing game to determine your next steps, other than disabling poorly-performing ads.



What to test: It's a good idea to get several ads in front of real users (you can do this in a one-at-a-time, slideshow format, or present all ads on the screen at once), and have them answer questions like, "Which ad makes you most interested in this product or service, and why?"

By combining this qualitative data with your click-through data, you can start making better decisions about which direction to go with your ads, and which messaging (or color schemes, CTAs, etc.) to keep or drop.



Landing Page Stats

Look at both time on page and bounce rates to determine what context to provide for the tester and what questions to ask. A landing page with an unusually high bounce rate—especially with a low time on page—might point to a mismatch between the expectations that the ad is producing and what the landing page is delivering.

Sample test with tasks and follow-up questions:

1. **[task]**

View this Facebook ad for 2-3 seconds: [www.\[company\].com/images/bahamas-sun-350.jpg](http://www.[company].com/images/bahamas-sun-350.jpg)

2. **[question]**

If you were to click on this ad, what would you expect to see on the page you are sent to?

3. **[task]**

Visit [www.\[company\].com/BahamasVacation](http://www.[company].com/BahamasVacation). Look at the page for 5 seconds.

4. **[task]**

Is this what you were expecting? Is it better or worse? How does the page differ from what you were expecting?



Conversion Rates

If you like to get straight to the bottom line, you might be in the habit of skipping past intermediate stats like CTR, visits, and bounce rates, jumping straight to your conversion rate. After all, that's the only number that matters, right? But low conversion rates are only a starting point for identifying important user testing opportunities.

Once you've identified a poorly-performing campaign, use some of the other techniques from this article to determine specifically where things are going wrong. For example, a segmented **Flow Report**, mentioned earlier, is a great way to visualize the conversion path to find out where problems are occurring.

Create a User Testing Plan

UserTesting

Worksheet: Create a user testing plan

Who

Gender: % male _____ % female _____

Age range: primary _____ secondary _____

Interests: _____

Devices: _____

Social networks: _____

TIP: You'll use screener questions when lining up participants so you can focus on your target audience.

What

Top 3 referral sources: _____

Top 3 landing pages: _____

TIP: By starting your study from different referral sources or landing pages you'll learn about the mindset and expectations your site visitors have when moving throughout your website.

Where

Website goal #1: _____

Website goal #2: _____

TIP: By watching your study's participants attempt to complete your website's goals you'll identify gaps in content, functionality or messaging that will help you complete your conversion optimization roadmap.

Study #1 Notes	Study #2 Notes	Study #3 Notes
What do you want to learn?	What do you want to learn?	What do you want to learn?
Who: _____	Who: _____	Who: _____
What: _____	What: _____	What: _____
Where: _____	Where: _____	Where: _____

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We've created a handy worksheet to help you formulate a plan for gathering user feedback based on your analytics analysis.

While defining the “who, what, and where” of your site traffic, it's important to jot down what you're learning so you can reference these notes once you're ready to run a study with actual visitors.

➔ [Download the worksheet now](#)

As you fill out the worksheet, you'll start to see your first study take shape. Take note of any ideas you have around the kind of information you'll want to learn by watching someone use your website.

Since user testing is based on participants performing a series of tasks, you'll be able to set up your study to focus on specific problem areas that you have identified through your analytics. Then, once they have completed a task, you can ask them follow-up questions to dig into their thoughts on what they did or what they might expect next. Then, you get the video results!



1. Easy test creation

You specify the tasks you want users to perform.



2. We recruit participants

We recruit your target audience from a panel of a million users.



3. You get results in 1 hour

Watch videos of users on your site or app explaining where they get stuck.

We've created a [*Complete Guide to User Testing Your Next Project*](#) that goes into specific details on how to structure a test, the types of tasks and questions that are most commonly used, expert tips from our Research team on how to avoid common research errors, and much more.

Create Your Optimization Roadmap

An optimization roadmap doesn't have to be fancy. In its purest form, the document should highlight your key business needs and indicate which findings you plan to take action on in priority order.

Once you've assessed your site's analytics, and run a series of user tests, you'll have a solid foundation for your optimization roadmap. You may find that some of your research will lead directly to no-brainer website updates, whereas some changes may cause you to take a more measured approach.

Shopping Cart	Single-Page Checkout <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduce number of required fields - show shopping cart total in sidebar - do not require registration to purchase 	PayPal Integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - set up PayPal account - implement one-click purchase - add to inventory management 	Upgrade Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make it easier for people to add related items - highlight products typically purchased with shopping cart items
Landing Pages	Affiliate Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make the registration area easier to find - add a list of other affiliates - show sample ad creative in a gallery 	Product Pages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - move product details right below the price - show shipping costs - indicate if product is out of stock 	Careers Section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - highlight employee benefits - add social sharing buttons to each listing - add the LinkedIn profile of hiring managers
Registration Flow	Calls To Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make Register buttons more prominent - A/B Test Sign Up Now vs. Register Now - Add pricing link below button 	Registration Form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporate tool tips - Add a password strength indicator - Remove phone number as a required field 	Onboarding Emails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - send confirmation of registration with login link - reduce frequency of tips - include links to FAQs and Customer Support

This is an example of a simple roadmap, created with LucidChart. It features the most important needs in the top swim lane and, when read left to right, indicates the highest priorities first. (In this case, the shopping cart's checkout flow).

Creating an organized Optimization Roadmap will give your team and other departments within your company insight into your plans and a common language around their action items.

When it comes to meeting with stakeholders, this can be an incredibly valuable tool for justifying resources, fighting for reallocation of budgets, or simply showing your long-term plan in an organized way.



When you use a combination of data and user testing to power your roadmap, you'll be able to navigate questions raised during executive reviews by backing up your presentation with tested certainty and build a business case (complete with video examples!) for the more skeptical stakeholders.

Conclusion

So, what next? Crunch the data, determine the gray areas, using our worksheet as a way to document your learnings, and start to test out your website! Once you dig into the nitty gritty of your conversion rate dilemmas, you'll be excited by the insights provided by user testing, and that once-daunting optimization roadmap will become your new best friend.

The main goal of using customer intent to optimize for conversion is to reduce the amount of friction your product puts between visitors and their must-have experience. This is a tried-and-true way to ensure that what you deliver is exactly what your customers are hoping for. Do this well, and you'll reap the benefits: **satisfied customers** and **higher conversions!**



User Research Results in 1 Hour

Get videos of real people speaking their thoughts as they use your website or mobile app.

The top-ranked user research platform:

- Receive your test results within an hour.
- Reach your exact target audience.
- Access an expert research and testing team.
- Annotate, bookmark, and create clips of your videos.
- Easily share results with your team.
- Save time with test summaries and reporting features.
- White-label your videos and reports.



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