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eCommerce Optimization Through the Cloud

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Executive Summary

As an eCommerce business matures, it is paramount to identify opportunities to improve efficiency so that revenue growth continues. Webstores need to leverage solutions that enable ongoing experimentation and that allow business platforms to make changes to key pages within eCommerce user experiences. The key is doing this in a way that is not resource intensive, is fast, and limits IT involvement.

As your business experiments with layout, promotional, and creative changes - the implementation of "winning" site designs can be delayed. Other technology projects may   have a more critical need. Or worse, the implementation may be at an extreme cost or delay from external platform or system vendors.

Solving this issue needs to be a focal point for eCommerce executives today. How does an online retailer experiment on an ongoing basis in a manner that does not break the bank? The solution is in the cloud.

Making eCommerce Smarter & Faster

Today within the eCommerce marketplace, the majority of retailers do not actively test page layouts and user interaction points. When retailers do test, they frequently realize large gains in efficiency, easily observed in the conversion rate metric.

As an example, let's consider a mid-market jewelry retailer that generates $20mm annually online with a current ratio of product page views to cart adds of 16% (100,000 total product views and 16,000 total cart sessions within a month).

Page optimization is primarily two things: the re-organization of content, and adjusting call to action elements. Through these changes we could easily observe the metric increasing to 18% (18,000).

By achieving this type of increase, the transactional funnel would have a 12.5% activity increase, likely driving a significant conversion increase.

Upon completion of the test, the winning variation is determined. These findings are then "coded" into the eCommerce template.

This is the point within eCommerce optimization efforts where we see the most delay and bottlenecks. Technology staff and stakeholders often delay the integration of these new designs due to other initiatives.

However, marketers clamor for the work to be done stating the fact that the new designs will allow the business to drive sales and profits.

This tug of war happens in organizations of all shapes and sizes. In the past, eCommerce marketers were unable to optimize on an ongoing basis without IT involvement.

Today however through cloud-based eCommerce, these obstacles have been eliminated.

Never Ending Improvement

The secret is utilizing the cloud and leveraging new technologies such as jQuery to render "winning" content variations to your users.   These technologies allow your pages to consistently deploy top performing variations so that your eCommerce template is a living and changing entity.

By using jQuery, the winning variations are dynamically inserted within the presentation layer using overlay technologies. This allows for the experimentation elements that out-performed control versions to be perpetually served via the cloud until either a new experiment is launched or the changes have been permanently implemented.

So what does this mean to an eCommerce marketer? By using cloud based eCommerce technologies, you are able to make page optimization a focal point of your efforts - without having the previous frustration of delays and external assistance.

When the winning product page variation comes to light, instead of passing the content to the IT team to be coded, the new variation is deployed without any impact to site or page level performance. These new technologies and practices streamline conversion optimization and provide tools for eCommerce businesses to construct more effective user interfaces.

The Foundation for Cloud eCommerce

Progressing to this type of eCommerce content delivery model is not as complex as you may think. The first step is to document the micro-conversion data for all of your key steps within your shopping experience. At the key transitional pages within your template, identify how many visitors progress to each successive step.

For example, how many users at the category level of your website progress to the sub-category level within standard browsing and shopping behaviors? Assuming that other page progression percentages stay constant, a retailer is able to calculate optimization driven ROI by using your average order value to decipher the financial impact of users progressing down the conversion path. Documenting these percentages is crucial since it serves as the primary gauge for your future ROI analysis.

Second, your business needs to have some sort of optimization system integrated into its site today. There are numerous solutions existing on the market that allow web businesses to segment traffic to experiment with variations as well as render content to unique demographics. Select one that provides flexibility and scalability.

Lastly, after deploying your experiments within your testing tool, your business will identify the winning variations and page layouts that drive the highest level of performance. These winning variations are then served to all visitors via the cloud and jQuery, providing an optimized version of your website that utilizes the never ending improvement approach that was discussed earlier.

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Your Site Can and Will Improve with Focus

eCommerce businesses should be looked at as entities that need to consistently evolve. Never in the lifecycle of an eCommerce business, either within merchandising or within site functionality, should a "set it and forget it" approach be embraced.

Instead of focusing on new incremental traffic, focus in on what you can do to make the site easier from a navigation and usability perspective. Too often eCommerce executives are so jaded by the lure of new traffic that they forget that the internal performance of their key pages can drive improvement that exceeds expectations.

Look to the cloud to drive these improvements and embrace the next generation of your eCommerce business through the deployment of optimization and conversion efforts.

About The Author

Craig Smith is the Founder and CEO of Trinity Insight. For over 10 years, Craig has been working with large retailers and brands to assist in maximizing revenue and driving performance increases through conversion and search optimization.

To learn more about Trinity Insight and our eCommerce optimization solutions, please visit us at www.trinityinsight.com

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