

THE POWER OF USER TESTING

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The power of user testing

When businesses think to improve their websites, decisions and actions are frequently made on random “gut” decisions by senior management.

Decisions into design, navigation, promotions, and service are structured internally, within the four walls of the company or retailer, and invaluable insights relating to customer preferences are left un-tapped.

This is sadly the case of most companies we speak with at Trinity. Conversion rates have been flat for countless months, while stakeholders are consumed with operational tasks that limit customer focused strategic thinking.

This does not have to be the case. Start with the basics - conduct a *live user test*.

A user test is a process of observing customer tendencies as it relates to key tasks on your website. Never done a user test before? Don't worry, its simple with the right process and tools. Its a matter of ironing out your gameplan and executing tasks in sequential order.

Leading the test is a moderator that walks test respondents through varied scenarios, observing behavior, while concurrently documenting navigation paths and verbal commentary. Running behind the scenes is screen-capture software that documents mouse movements and the verbal commentary.

This information provides primary research into the “why” behind site issues. It is invaluable for setting development priorities.

It's easy to start, here's a step by step plan to follow.

1. Define your demographic

Think your core customer. What's their age? Male or female? College educated or no? What is their level of comfort with the Internet? Defining all of these aspects are crucial to define before moving to your next step.

2. Map out your target paths

What are the most fundamental pages of your user experience? For retailers its usually search & checkout. For mortgage companies its lead forms and calculators. This is different for all businesses but a general rule is using your goals in your analytics. Understand the paths that you want users to take and document it.

A retail example is: “Find a black cashmere sweater in large, order it and ship it to your mom.”

3. Recruit your respondents

Next you have to assemble the individuals for which you will be testing. What works best is local classified advertising. A good number to recruit is 10-12.

When speaking to interested individuals, screen them by asking the questions that you have defined within your desired demographic (step 1). Schedule your respondents within 1 hour intervals and be sure to provide some sort of incentive. A \$50 payment works well.

4. Create the discussion guide

The discussion guide is the report for which the moderator utilizes when working with the test respondent. It is a document that outlines all of the scenarios outlined in step 2 and potentially include both pre-test and post-test questions to get verbal perspectives.

The document should leave plenty of room for note taking and be structured in a manner for which one scenario appears per page.

5. Test your software

This is simple but crucial. Make sure the screen capture software and microphone are synched and configured correctly. There are plenty of low cost options for screen capture on the market and any of these will be sufficient for your test.

6. Test Day

During test day, potentially schedule at least two extra respondents as often times users do not show. The day is managed by the moderator and this individual is be responsible for the written documentation, verbal task communication, as well as leading the technical capture within the software.

7. Review and analyze

At this point you have a mound of data. Read and review the answers to your verbal questions. Measure the path tendencies for which respondents took. Look for trends and patterns among users. Which types of behaviors did you see over and over again within your test? These are the nuggets of conversion intelligence that will make your project a success.

8 . Share your data

Share your learnings. Schedule a meeting internally to discuss the customer feedback and some potential ways to use this intelligence as a lever to grow. If possible, get cross-functional stakeholders (IT, Sales, Service) to be represented, so the entire company can have a pulse on how the website impacts customers.

Deploying a user test is a simplistic way to generating customer focused improvements. For any size company, with any size budget, it is an effective medium to acquire customer feedback.

If you are interested in learning more about how [user testing](#) and [ecommerce optimization](#) can be deployed with your organization, please [contact us online](#).

If you have any questions about eCommerce optimization and how to maximize your online opportunity please contact us at info@trinityinsight.com.



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