

Traffic Conversion Insiders Newsletter

Issue #1 - July 2008

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Welcome to the premier issue of the Traffic Conversion Insiders Newsletter!

TCI Newsletter will reveal a variety of powerful tips, tactics, strategies, tools, and resources for effectively converting more online prospects into leads, buyers, and higher profit, and otherwise motivating them to take actions that benefit you.

To help you achieve these important goals, we'll cover topics such as:

- Web Analytics
- A/B Split Testing
- Multivariate Testing
- My Test Results
- Lead Generation
- Copywriting
- Usability
- Opt-In List Building
- Effective Email Marketing

You can profit from TCI Newsletter whether you promote your own products or services, those from other sources, or a combination of both.

Let's get started by diving right in to the first topic.

Copywriting Secret: The Zeigarnik Effect

The Zeigarnik Effect is the tendency of people to remember unfinished or incomplete tasks better than completed ones. It's an extremely powerful tool to have in your marketing arsenal.

Russian psychologist Bluma Zeigarnik studied this phenomenon after noticing that a waiter seemed to remember detailed orders only until they had been served, after which they were promptly forgotten.

Why is this? An incomplete task or unfinished business creates mental tension which motivates us to complete a task or finish the business. In other words, we tend to want closure.

You've no doubt seen the Zeigarnik Effect in action. For example, just before a commercial break on TV, an intriguing question may be raised to capture the curiosity of the audience. But there's a string attached: The answer can only be discovered by continuing to watch the show *after* the commercial. The mental tension created in viewers' minds compels more of them to stay tuned.

With so many other competing marketing messages vying for your prospects' attention, you can use the Zeigarnik Effect in various ways to make yours more effective.

For instance, you can use it to:

- Motivate more recipients to open your email messages.
- Prompt more readers to click links in your emails.
- Pull eyeballs deeper into your ad copy.
- Move more visitors to click through from one web page to another.
- Build greater anticipation in your subscribers, prospects, and customers, for future messages from you.
- Turn more of your prospects into customers.

I highly recommend that you exploit the Zeigarnik Effect to heighten your prospects' curiosity, compel them to pay more attention to your marketing messages, and ultimately, to move a greater percentage to act on them.

Tips for Minimizing Shopping Cart Abandonment

Shopping cart abandonment is a huge problem. It occurs when people start to place an online order but bail out before completion.

According to industry research, typical shopping cart abandonment rates (where web buyers start an online purchase and bail out before completion) range from around 25% to 75%.

Imagine that: Out of every 4 would-be customers who start an online purchase, an average of 1 to 3 of them don't complete the process. One study suggested that for every \$1 spent online, \$5 is left in abandoned shopping carts. Ouch!

Most online merchants would be stunned to discover how many sales they're losing in the online order process from this problem, just as I was. This is true not only for simple single-page order forms, but even more so for multi-page shopping cart systems.

Unfortunately, most online order systems have not been designed with maximum conversion rates in mind. They're poorly designed, require too many steps, and in other ways considerably harm conversion rates.

I can testify that it's a huge problem because I've spent considerable time and money in testing, research, and custom programming, to combat it myself. This has led to some very profitable discoveries which have meant countless extra sales for myself, some of my members, and others.

Two examples: I revealed some of my order conversion tips to a millionaire Internet marketer and he recently told me that just one alone helped him boost sales 10-15%, based on his rough estimate. I told a consultant some of them and he went on to help a well-known corporation salvage over 8,000 abandoned shopping carts, at last count.

Following are some tested and proven strategies for reducing shopping cart abandonment and thus boosting your sales:

- Step one is awareness. When you're focusing on improving conversion rates, don't myopically focus only on the sales letter or landing page, as many do. Remember that every step of the sales process, including your online order form or shopping cart, has a role in overall sales conversion rates.
- Tests show that single-column forms tend to have better completion rates than multi-column forms.
- Make it easy for users to recover from errors.
- Streamline the order process as much as possible to minimize errors from occurring in the first place.
- Minimize (or eliminate where possible) the number of required fields.
- Clearly mark fields as required or non-required.
- Minimize the number of steps in checkout. Ideally one, or at most two pages for the transaction, not counting the final "Thank You" confirmation page.
- If multiple steps are needed in the checkout process, show "progress indicators" on each page so users will know which steps they've already taken, which step they're on, and which steps remain.
- Avoid requiring customers to register (by providing their email address or other information) to start the checkout process. Although intended as a convenience for returning customers, it's a common obstacle to higher conversion rates for the larger number of potential new customers.
- Assure visitors of security. (You *are* using SSL encryption on your order forms, aren't you?) Assurance can be given through various means, via text, graphic images used in browsers to signify security (i.e., a padlock in Internet Explorer and FireFox, a skeleton key in Netscape), as well as graphics available from SSL Certificate providers (Verisign, Thawte, etc.)
- Assure visitors that you will respect their privacy. They don't want to be bombarded with spam, or telemarketing calls.
- Provide other common payment options to make it more convenient for

a wider percentage of customers. Examples: Discover and American Express, instead of only MasterCard and Visa, PayPal, etc.

- Provide multiple ways for people to give you their money. Examples: In addition to online ordering, where possible let them purchase by fax, postal mail, and telephone.
- Instead of manually processing credit card orders offline as many merchants do, online real-time credit card transactions not only make your operation more efficient, they also increase sales by offering immediate gratification to customers.

If you have any control over the content, design, and functionality of your online order forms or shopping carts, test various ways to help a higher percentage of customers successfully complete their online purchases. The profitable results may delightfully surprise you.

NOTE: If you are a merchant who uses the Amember Membership and Subscription Management script (from CGI-Central), I've developed a special plugin to slash Amember shopping cart abandonment and boost conversion rates, at: <http://EbizMastermind.com/amember/>

Usability: A Critical Conversion Component

When it comes to improving online conversion rates, usability is an important issue. It can have a major impact, for good or bad, on conversion rates and profitability.

What is usability? In simple terms, it's a measure of how easy something, such as a user interface, is to use. In other words, how user-friendly it is.

An area of particular concern to online marketers is *web* usability, the ease with which visitors use a web site. Another area is email usability. In fact, so is the usability of any other tool or interface your prospects use to gain information about, communicate with, or transact with, you and your business.

At a minimum, usability problems cause user frustration and confusion, and can hinder your prospects from taking, or completing, the actions you want them to take.

Improving usability involves discovering and correcting problems users encounter, thus minimizing frustration and confusion, and maximizing ease of use, task completion rates, and user satisfaction.

Since the design and layout of a web site can exert such a major influence on the performance and profitability of a web site, positively or negatively, in my opinion web usability should be required study for all webmasters, web

designers, and Internet programmers.

To improve conversion rates and sales, always ask yourself: How can we make it easier for our web site visitors (and other prospects) to perform any task related to learning more about us and our offers, communicating with us, or buying from us?

The answers can add up to better conversion rates, happier prospects and customers, and higher profit.

Future editions of the TCI Newsletter will reveal more usability tips to improve your online sales.

Test Results: AdSense on Salesletter and Squeeze Pages

For those who don't already know, Google's AdSense program allows website owners to monetize their traffic by running targeted Google ads on their sites. When a visitor clicks an AdSense ad, the website owner shares the ad revenue Google charges the advertiser for the click.

You may be as surprised as I was to learn the results of a related multivariate test I ran three different times, on sales letters and opt-in (also known as "NameSqueeze") pages.

I tested with and without a row of Google AdSense ads displayed at the bottom of the pages, where they'd be seen only after the visitors had a chance to read the main content. My goal was to see if AdSense ads would distract visitors from taking the primary actions I wanted them to take (either to opt-in, or to buy).

In two out of three tests, I had better conversion rates (as in sales conversion and opt-in conversion rates), *with* AdSense on the page, versus without AdSense. In the test where AdSense ads had a negative impact on the response, it was very minimal.

These counter-intuitive test results go against a common "rule" of web site conversion, which says to focus on one (or just a few) main actions you want visitors to take on each web page, and avoid anything else that can detract from taking such actions.

While I generally agree with that rule, this shows there can be exceptions. One possible reason was that AdSense ads helped lend a bit of Google's credibility to the site.

That's just one of many reasons it is smart to test. A key moral of the story is, "Don't knock it until you test it."

Cialdini's Six Weapons of Influence

Robert Cialdini's six "weapons of influence" are proven psychological principles used by master persuaders to influence others. You can use them to improve the ability of your ad copy to motivate people to take action.

The six weapons of influence include:

- 1) Reciprocation.
- 2) Commitment and Consistency.
- 3) Social Proof.
- 4) Liking.
- 5) Authority.
- 6) Scarcity.

In future issues I'll take each weapon of influence, one at a time, and go into more detail on how you can use them to improve your ad copy and conversion rates.

Why Scientific Ad Testing Is Critical To Maximum Profit

Since you're reading this newsletter you may already be convinced of the value of testing. Even if that's the case, reminders are important.

Scientific ad testing is the most efficient, accurate, and cost-effective method to developing advertising that earns maximum profit - for the smallest possible investment of time, money, and effort.

There's simply no better way to develop advertising that the market will most profitably respond to, than scientific ad testing. Lester Wunderman, referred to as the pioneering father of direct marketing, explained two reasons why in the following quote:

"To this day, I believe that the most important tool available to the direct marketer is the ability to test, a form of pragmatic research that doesn't just tell you how a consumer MIGHT react to an ad, but how consumers really DO react. Direct marketing makes advertising totally measurable and accountable."

Scientific ad testing reveals, through hard evidence, how consumers actually respond to an ad. Because scientifically conducted advertising is measurable, results can be tracked and tallied to show precisely whether an ad is a winner or a loser. Then important marketing decisions can be made based on facts, rather than theory or guesswork.

While other market research methods and tools may be useful, they fall short of testing because they are less accurate at measuring how the market will respond in real-life situations.

Scientific ad testing is truly one of the most valuable success "secrets" for online and offline businesses.

Counting Conversions By "Time on Page"

Not all conversions are associated with measurable actions taken in a browser. For instance, there's no event triggered in a browser to indicate when a person has finished watching a video, or reading an article or salesletter.

What's more, there's often a correlation between conversion rates and the time a visitor spends on a page or website. The more time they spend, the quality of the visitor tends to be higher and the more likely they'll take action that benefits you.

So it can be beneficial to count conversions by "time on page." In other words, when a user spends over a certain minimum amount of time on a given web page, count it as a conversion. (Good web analytics tools can provide "time on page" metrics for you.)

Counting time on page as a conversion can be especially useful if you have low levels of traffic and aren't getting a lot of visitors through your conversion funnel. By "lowering the bar" to also count versions by time on page, you can speed up your test and get results faster.

Coming In the Next Issue

- How to Find Your Prospects' Hot Buttons
- Boosting Opt-In Conversion Rates
- Yanik Silver Interviews Me About Testing In Dan Kennedy's No B.S. Marketing Letter.
- Weapon of Influence #1 of 6: Reciprocation
- And more!

Your Feedback Is Welcomed

You can help improve the Traffic Conversion Insiders Newsletter. If there are certain topics you'd like to see covered, or covered more often, or if you have any suggestion, comment, or other feedback, I'd like to hear from you.

Please submit all comments through my online contact form to help ensure your email gets past any email filters, at: <http://ProfitInfo.com/contact>

Profit-Building Resources

• Traffic Conversion Resources »

<http://EbizMastermind.com>

Assorted resources for turning more traffic into leads, buyers, subscribers, and higher profit.

• Adwords Maximizer »

<http://AdwordsMaximizer.com>

Discover the amazing breakthrough tool that blasts Google Adwords results through the roof!

• Faster Products »

<http://FasterProducts.com>

How to rapidly create or acquire your own successful products.

• Ebiz Mastermind Membership »

<http://EbizMastermind.com/index.htm>

Private membership site reveals how to turn more traffic into buyers, leads, and higher profit!

• ProfitInfo E-Courses »

<http://ProfitInfo.com/#e-courses>

Free email courses reveal tested and proven strategies for online business success.

• Amember Conversion Booster »

<http://EbizMastermind.com/amember>

Slash Amember shopping cart abandonment and boost conversion rates.

• ProfitInfo Affiliate Program »

<http://EbizMastermind.com/affiliates>

Earn commissions ranging from 30-75% just for telling others about our products and services!

• Traffic Conversion Insiders »

<http://ConvertMoreTraffic.com/insiders/index.htm>

This newsletter by Marty Foley is all about mastering the art of boosting conversion rates.