Measuring and Perfecting the User Experience
Digital marketers are inundated with user data, and today have the ability to measure nearly every interaction that users have with their websites. More than ever before, you know what a site user is doing, when they are doing it, and how long they are doing it for.

But the question that needs to be answered is not “What are users doing?” It is “Why are users doing it?” Why are users abandoning their shopping carts just one click away from confirming an order? Why aren’t users converting at higher levels after an expensive site redesign?

For example, nearly half (41%) of adults report that they abandon transactions or switch sites after experiencing online issues, according to a Harris Interactive survey. Complex and overwhelming navigation schemes, cluttered and busy page layouts and seemingly slow-loading pages all can negatively impact user satisfaction. How do marketers identify the ‘why’ of the action – and improve the overall site experience to entice, convert, and retain customers?

This ebook provides a three-step roadmap for tracking and perfecting your website’s user experiences. It discusses the role of data collection and measurement in creating an engaging user experience, and explains the benefits of using digital and usability analytics to do so.

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Step One: Develop an organizational strategy for tracking and analyzing user data

Most marketers still struggle with understanding how to optimize their site’s user experiences based on the data they collect. Many site issues have no obvious explanation. There could be a usability issue in the conversion path or an overlooked quality control problem.

The reality of omnichannel marketing is that it is more difficult to know what site data to measure, analyze and optimize to attract, convert and retain the most valuable users.

A critical first step is to establish a data collection and analysis strategy that is supported at your organization’s highest levels. Begin by undertaking a comprehensive self-assessment of your business needs, staff capabilities, management support and financial resources. This process will help you identify -- from a strategic standpoint -- the data you need to collect and measure, as well as the analytical tools or engines that will best serve your organization’s needs. Use the following questions as a guideline.

What are our business objectives? Establish your goals for data collection and analysis upfront. Are you seeking better brand consistency and awareness across multiple sites? Better page performance (i.e., faster load times)? New leads? More direct sales from your site? Each of these goals may require a different set of metrics and analytics tools.

Do we have C-level buy-in for our goals? Success requires commitment from all levels of the organization. Do you have a structured approach and a plan in place for answering high-value and strategic questions from senior executives? Without them, your funding may dry up before results are achieved. Without commitment from mid-level managers, resources will not be properly allocated to see implementation through. Without the dedication of those doing the actual work, success is not possible. You must be ready, willing, and able to embrace a data-driven culture for any value to come from your efforts.

What level of data and data access do we need? Are you collecting all the data you need and do you trust its accuracy? Does your organization have a clear governance system to provide accountability and data security?

Can we integrate the data we collect across the enterprise? Enterprise marketers increasingly need a single interface to track, measure and optimize data from a growing number of digital and offline channels. You may also work with different partners for email, ecommerce, social media, tag management, search, video and display advertising. Investigate your marketing ecosystem to ensure that data can be integrated across platforms and provide seamless reporting and/or execution capabilities.

What are our reporting needs? What information does web development, IT, marketing, sales and customer support need to improve decision making? Do your stakeholders have the appropriate reports, dashboards and visualizations to drive their decisions?

How will we define success? What key performance indicators do you want to measure and what decisions will you be making based on analytics data that will improve the user experience and site performance? Set in advance your businesses’ goals for the data you will collect and the analytics tools you will use to be able to benchmark success later on. Without them, justifying to C-suite executives the expense of the website redesign or usability changes that result will be difficult.

Step Two: Decide what user behavior to track and analyze

Clicks, views, downloads, time on site, form fills, purchases….your organization can track nearly every interaction that users have with your site (see Figure 1). Analytics tools can show you where users come from geographically, and how they found your site online (e.g., a social network, search engine or email). You can identify the devices, browsers and operating systems mobile visitors use, as well.
All of these data points can be measured and analyzed to track their impact (both positive and negative) on site usability and marketing goals. Some metrics will turn out to be more important than others. The true value of each metric is not in the number itself, but in how it contributes to the KPIs you have established to measure the success or failure of your specific business objectives.

Prioritize each data point or metric based on where your organization will see the biggest return on investment. For example, measuring and analyzing site elements closest to the transaction, i.e., the shopping cart. Is it easy to add items to the cart? How simple is it to edit an order or selection? When you begin with the shopping cart conversion process, you are focusing on users that have demonstrated a commitment to doing business with your brand. They want to make a purchase, but something is stopping them. If you can identify and correct a transaction process issue it will provide your organization with the most noticeable lift in site performance.

**Step Three: Implement analytics tools to improve user experiences**

Marketing organizations that recognize the importance of analytics in uncovering data insights move more quickly from merely collecting data to acting upon it.

Digital analytics solutions have been the go-to solution for monitoring website health, providing data on traffic sources, click activity and other baseline statistics. The software can show you how long pages take to load, and whether some pages, traffic sources, regions or devices are slower than others. You can use this information to improve page load times and identify pain points through testing to optimize specific features and increase ROI.

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**Travelocity recaptures $1MM in site revenue**

Online travel giant Travelocity employed usability analytics to identify and resolve website issues at the individual level. Sessions were replayed at the browser level, enabling the company to identify complex issues that customers were unable to adequately describe. For example, feedback came in on an error message but it wasn’t clear what the error was. By replaying the sessions, Travelocity was able to see that the system couldn’t process special characters entered by customers and that was breaking the checkout process. The fix took one hour, with conversion rates rising immediately. The company estimates this quick fix recaptured $1 million in revenue.
But users sometimes behave unpredictably and it is often difficult to identify all the obstacles that impede conversion. Digital analytics may tell you that shopping cart abandon rates are rising, but they don’t tell you why.

Usability analytics provide site owners with more information about user intent and behavior. For example, the tools can reveal that a user clicked several times on a form button or abandoned a form in a specific field. Usability analysis looks at visual design and layout, the site’s ease of use and the overall brand experience. Using tools such as heat maps and click maps, usability analytics can provide specific metrics that will allow you to track how changes to site design and layout impact business outcomes.

When used together, digital analytics and usability analytics provide a more complete picture of the user experience and offer the following benefits:

Real-time problem resolution
Analytics provide immediate visibility and rapid solutions for website usability problems. This can strengthen user relationships with the brand and increase the value of engagements.

Site/page optimization
With a better understanding of user behavior, you can optimize individual landing pages, page flows and navigation. Analytics can help you segment the user experience into various phases and then identify problems along the navigation path that may be causing conversion issues. For example, does your site map work? Can users find the information they need? Are navigation menus consistent across the site in both content and placement? How simple is it for a user to change an order or cart selection? All of these questions are testable questions for which analytics can help you find the answers.

Improved bottom-line results
A positive user experience leads to increased attention to content (including ads), more conversions and a positive interaction with the brand. It can also reduce your customer service costs because users are finding the information they need and don’t need to call or email your company – saving agent time for more complex issues.

Conclusion
Creating a positive user experience is critical to the success of your website. Many of the tasks marketers perform today – implementing tag management or responsive design, for example – are done to improve page load times or the quality of mobile content with the goal of forging a more lasting brand relationship.

But marketers also are collecting, storing and analyzing an unprecedented volume of user data. It’s become difficult to know what data to measure and act upon to attract, convert and retain your most valuable users. A negative user experience can lead to costly losses of customers and revenue.

By understanding what and how much data to collect and track, as well as which digital and usability analytics tools will most benefit your organization, you can reap the rewards of creating a compelling user experience.
About Crossview

CrossView is a global cross-channel commerce solutions provider delivering strategy, technology and services for a connected commerce enterprise. Our cross-channel commerce solutions unify marketing and technology for more personalized, profitable customer experiences. We build, integrate, launch and manage technology across all devices and touchpoints, partnering with clients to understand, engage and delight customers.

About IBM ExperienceOne

IBM ExperienceOne solution sets are crafted by business objective, making it easy to find what you need to address your most pressing challenge. IBM ExperienceOne solution sets are flexible, interoperable and extensive, supported by services and solutions of more than 1,200 business partners. IBM ExperienceOne is available in cloud, on premise and hybrid options to protect your security and customer privacy according to your business, location, and industry requirements.

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Digital Marketing Depot is the premiere resource center for digital marketing strategies and tactics, providing whitepapers, research reports, and webinars for digital marketers and advertisers.

Digital Marketing Depot is a division of Third Door Media, Inc. Third Door Media's mission is to empower interactive and search marketing professionals by providing trusted content and community services they need to be successful.

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