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Chapter 3: How to Reduce Clicks <u>And</u> Increase Sales!

Discover the Four Ways Site Owners Commonly Reduce Their Sales Unnecessarily, And What You Can Do About It

Now I realize this is somewhat controversial, because the least clicks don't always translate to most sales - it's all about how the entire shopping experience is arranged.

But as a general rule, ever since I learned this overarching principle from the erstwhile web usability guru **Jared Spool** in the 1990s, I've yet to see this major principle debunked in any meaningful way.

What less clicks *really* means is you **require less of your user or customer** in order for them to get to the desired information faster. Nothing much there to debate about really, am I right?

In essence, what you're doing is serving your customers and would-be customers better by giving them a chance to **get what you have in a much faster and much more convenient way!**

Again, I'm well aware that there are cases where, for instance, two-step and even three-step opt-in processes outperform a shorter one, especially where you are attracting entirely new visitors and luring them into your funnel without hitting them over the head with prompts, screaming headlines or overly perky video clips. The usual.

However. The fact remains though, that the VAST majority of web sites out there - e-commerce or otherwise - make it completely unnecessarily difficult and complicated to navigate their site and find the products and information they're looking for.

Here are some of the most concrete ways this need manifests itself, and how you can fix them:

The Order/Checkout Process Is Overly Long And Complicated

If you cannot institute a one page checkout for whatever reason, the least you can do is reduce the amount of steps required to an absolute minimum. You can do this by combining individual pages into logically coherent **stages** (**real world trumps online mental models**).

This will help your customer to actually understand more easily what it is that you require from them before they can hand you the money and start **anticipating product delivery**. Wouldn't you like the same, as a customer?

Yes? So just do it!

Your Navigation Structure Is Much Too Complex Or Technologically Advanced to Be Helpful!

This is of course a matter of opinion, and open to debate and testing. However, for your customers it simply tends to be an obstacle that stands between them and the product or other object they're looking for (and they always are).

They don't much care about how fancy programming goes into implementing a floating menu with another floating menu that opens on top. *"Whoop-de-doo. Just show me where to go."*

With the advent of mobile and especially tablet based e-commerce, patience is wearing thin at a rapid pace! When your customers use their thumb to get around… make it simple!

So what you should do is take a close look at everything you have in terms of navigation on your whole site, and rearrange the architecture in such a way that people **see related products without having to click through** to related products.

Visual hierarchy is something of a hot topic in Conversion Optimization right now, so there's plenty to explore when it comes to navigation as well!

Your Link Naming Is Too General to Communicate Anything Meaningful

There is a misconception around that general links are comforting for consumers because they understand words like SHOES or SPORTS.

However, let me assure you: you do NOT have to treat people like they're morons. :)

Go ahead, be brave and try using some more descriptive links that **actually communicate in more detail what they ultimately want.**

So try a few things in your links such as ***Top 10 Shoes in May, High Fashion Pumps, Runway Incoming, Track and Field Confidential.*** … I'm sure you get the idea.

It is not uncommon to see **bounce rates plummet** and **checkout rates increase** in double digits when you make the necessary task of navigation actually becomes a compelling one!

Seeing highly descriptive and engaging links is SO unbelievably rare, you will absolutely delight your customers when you go through this trouble for them, and also make the whole experience a little more FUN.

Despite all the hype of late, it's not necessary for you to *gamify* the whole process in order to provide a little fun. Some extra thought is well enough to increase customer happiness and increase conversion.

Now, for the last one on our list…

Your Category Pages Communicate Too Little!

You should consider your category pages as an **opportunity to write really compelling copy** to show just how great a selection you have, how well it matches your customer avatar, and how crazy they would be to shop anywhere else for what you've got.

Seriously. Come out with it and say it!

Do not fool yourself into copying the big players blindly, because they have the authority and you for the most part, do not have it yet.

You might be well known and have a solid customer base, but unless you're Wal-Mart or Amazon.com, you need to constantly **communicate your positioning, benefits** and everything else at every opportunity you can get.

Category pages are fantastic for doing just that, so don't pass up the opportunity!

Now, lest you forget...

Things online evolve at a rapid pace, so **implement fast and keep on testing** new variations, as always.

Today's trend may be tomorrows truism, and tomorrows common practice may be obsolete the day after.

Most importantly for the topic of this chapter: **Do NOT underestimate your customers!**

They came to your site for a reason, they stick around, for now, for a reason, so you might as well <u>meet them half-way and do some of the work for them</u>!

For instance: Chew up the information into smaller chunks, sprinkle it around the site, making it compelling to consume.

Above all, just don't force them to work too hard to shop around for what you have readily available. They wont stick around for long if there's an option elsewhere of equal or even worse quality IF the **experience** is better somewhere else.

True story.

Takeaway: Your customers want as much descriptive information as they can get at a glance, to stay interested and be 'pulled in' towards the action you want them to take. It would be wise to not force them to click around much.

Example: Instead of naming a link on your site SHOES, name it Shiny Shoes: Fashion Week Arrivals… and they will love you for it.

What you can do right now: Scan your site for bland titles and links, confusing or complex navigation elements, and artificially conceived categories. And get to work.

Chapter 6: Never, <u>Ever</u> Confuse Your Customer!

How to Avoid the Pitfalls of Site Design That Routinely Cause Confusion, Poor Conversion And Turn Away Paying Customers

Now here's a CRO truism if ever there was one: **A confused visitor will NOT act.**

Specifically, they will not opt in to your email list for further communications and offers, and they will definitely not buy from your site if there's half a chance they'll get confused.

Unless of course you're selling Viagra or something else that people will jump through ANY hoops to get... you must realize confusion MUST be avoided like the plague.

Confusion can come about due to many different reasons:

• Your site is **not congruent** with the ads, articles or videos they came in through.

• Your **visuals are confusing** and/or too flashy, making the look & feel more important than functionality (believe me, this is a conversion killer).

• You are providing **confusing options** to choose from - people exit due to sheer frustration (and rarely ever come back, they look for ease elsewhere).

• You **don't provide a clear path of action** all the way to checkout, even if your overall site structure is solid. If it feels 'engineered', the *buyer's desire* will turn into letdown.

And there are many more ways confuse, these are just some of the more common ones... :-)

All this is probably quite evident in your web analytics if you were to take a closer look.

And let's be honest, you probably already KNOW those pain points. If <u>you</u> haven't copped to them, your customers, friends, colleagues, or even spouse may have commented on them. Then you either filed them away or made a note for later. It's quite understandable.

For some reason you felt it's not important or urgent to change. Or maybe you did, but deemed it too difficult, too time-consuming or too expensive to fix.

Fear not, it's not that bad. There are several things you can do even today to avoid confusing your visitors, and in almost all cases you can do it without effecting a total overhaul of your site. Now, let's begin with the first un-confusion tip…

Do <u>Not</u> Provide Too Many (Or Unclear) Options!

This may be counter-intuitive, but it is also one of the SINGLE BIGGEST flaws I constantly run into on e-commerce sites especially, and supposedly goal-driven sites in general.

If you provide **too many options for what to do NEXT**, people easily get confused as to what they came in for to begin with, and what to do right now.

Sure, it's good to show them you have lots of products, lots of variety and lots of reasons to stick around. But be careful <u>how</u> you do this - you may and almost invariably do end up looking like a hodgepodge of options to choose from. This is generally not a good thing.

This is an unfortunate outcome that in software is called 'feature creep'. You may be listening to your customers a lot and catering to their slightest wishes, but in doing so it is easy to lose the big picture.

A similar phenomenon happens in site design as well; you keep adding more and more elements as customers request them, and over time lose effectiveness if you're not keeping track.

And when that happens, especially those who don't visit regularly - and indeed those who come in for the first time - will be utterly confused because they don't have the sense of history the (loud) minority of your visitors have.

Ideally, each page on your site would CLEARLY have only ONE action that is expected of them. Note that I didn't say only one action is possible, but **one action clearly stands out** as the one expected of them.

Now, for the next action item on your list…

Make Choosing Between Options Super Clear & Easy

If you MUST place the visitor in a situation where they need to choose between options as to what to do on any given page, at least make it crystal clear how to choose! And what to choose from.

In other words, you can go as far as to tell them directly: `"If you're a builder, click this here link to get in touch for a free consultation."` or `"Developers, go here to download a free SDK"`.

Something along those lines. No chance for anyone to get confused as to who it's for and what they should do first, next and after that.

Or you can be a little more subtle and give them visual cues to head over to various sections of the site. Arrows, images of people who look in the direction of the action element, and so on.

Just remember though, subtle may not be enough if you need to provide a clear path. It depends on the sophistication of your target market as well. Ultimately, as always: test, test, test to find what works best in your particular setup.

Okay, let's see the final tip to un-confuse your site…

Use Clear, <u>Active</u> Voice Copy - Always!
(No Exceptions, Please)

As often as possible, use actual commands to tell your visitors and prospects what they should do. Do NOT assume they know, that they should know, or that they should remember. Just TELL them, plain and simple. They'll thank you for it with their actions.

There is comfort in being told what to do, in order to get what you want. So don't shy away from not only `"Click here to read more"` but clear, specific labelling such as `"Start your 1-minute checkout here"`.

The more you can tell them in **one** label, **one** prompt or **one** Call To Action, the better.

And the more direct you can be in leading them to what they want (usually the eventual purchase) the better. You may hear opposing views on this - you should tempt them with content, give them the freedom to browse… yadda yadda - I say forget all that.

If you got them on your e-commerce site or, now it's time to SELL. Be assured: they are ready for it. No need for beating around the bush. Get to the point and directly.

It's time to lead them all the way through to what you BOTH want - the sale, closed right there, online. There's much more to talk about the online close, but that'll have to wait for another chapter.

This concludes this section, let's see what we have learned…

In Closing... Clarity Equals Sales!

You must **get inside your customer's head** and find out what it is that they'd expect at each stage, what they are looking for, at which point are they prepared to expend personal energy, what do they expect in terms of experience; is this fun, is this boring, is this taking way too long to complete...

Keep asking yourself those kinds of questions and you'll eventually know how to not only prevent confusion on your site, but to **anticipate your customer's** every move and provide a clear path for them to tread upon.

Role-play pays handsomely. You can also call it empathy. It's well worth it, believe me.

Implementing just a couple of these principles in your conversion tests will soon show you **the raw power of having a site that's clear to navigate, clear to act on**... All because: clarity equals sales!

You'll love it.

Takeaway: Confused people do not act, they want to get out of confusion. Avoid confusing your visitors at all cost!

Example: Your product has three different options, but their differences aren't made clear, or who should buy each option. The solution: use customer examples to show for whom each version is ideal, and write more specific copy for each version, increasing contrast *(Increased contrast increases the tendency to act!)*

What you can do right now: Get into the shoes of your customer, and go through the entire site experience, making notes of where you stopped, were confused or your attention veered elsewhere. Better yet, hire someone who is unfamiliar with your site to do it for you. This will get you even more insights relevant to new visitors.