IBM Software
Industry Solutions

Drive site redesign success

Key ways to prevent costly site failures and achieve the ROI you expect

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Executive summary

If anything can go wrong, it will. That is Murphy's Law. It is also eerily familiar to many e-business executives who have been through a site redesign or two.

Today's sites have so much complexity that it is impossible – even with the most diligent testing and quality assurance – to ensure a flaw-free launch. Whether you inadvertently break existing functionality or introduce unexpected problems, the ugly truth about site redesigns is that many fail and even more only succeed after a prolonged period of poor user experience combined with unanticipated 'fire fighting' expenditures.

Of course, e-businesses continue to invest in site redesign projects for one simple reason: when done right, they can drive dramatic improvements including: higher conversion rates, incremental sales, lower customer service costs and increased customer satisfaction. Yet the risk a redesign will create new problems that degrade your business are very real. The last thing you need is to launch a site that increases calls to the call center or drives customers to your competitors.

Savvy executives know that the first few weeks after a launch can be hectic – packed with lots of unexpected issues and problems. Instead of trying to do the impossible (launch a site with no issues at all) – which too often leads to budget overruns and project failure – they have focused on what is possible, to establish a system that finds problems quickly and significantly reduces the post-launch stabilization period. However, the best e-businesses have learned to focus not just on reactive post-launch problem resolution, but rather on proactive discovery and analysis of customer experience issues throughout the redesign process. The IBM Tealeaf solutions can help you accomplish both goals.

Figure 1: IBM Tealeaf solutions can help you conduct proactive discovery and analysis of customer experience issues throughout the site redesign lifecycle.

As a market-leading Customer Experience Management solution provider, we afford world-class visibility into your customers' online behavior – valuable information that helps you identify and resolve issues quickly, make more informed site optimization decisions and, as a result, dramatically reduce the risks involved with site changes. In this white paper, we explain specifically how IBM Tealeaf solutions can be used to shorten the period of post-launch turmoil. Further, we describe how companies can integrate IBM Tealeaf solutions across the redesign lifecycle – and in doing so, save money and make better site decisions now and in the future.

If you are currently in the midst of a site redesign project, you may think that you do not have the time or resources to employ IBM Tealeaf solutions right now. However, this is the exact time when you can ill afford to operate without the critical data IBM Tealeaf solutions provide. IBM Tealeaf solutions require only a minimal resource investment to implement (there is no time-consuming page tagging required) and often show value within a few days.

Site redesign projects: high stakes for high returns

E-businesses have continued to invest in site redesign projects for one simple reason: when done right, they can offer very high return on investment (ROI). Projects that improve web usability or add new online capabilities can drive higher conversion rates and new sales. Further, they can significantly reduce sales and service costs by shifting more transactions to the site.

While many site redesign projects offer clear benefits, the stakes are equally high. With such large budgets on the line, the consequences for redesign missteps are great. And anyone who has ever launched a website knows, even with the most diligent testing and quality assurance, it is inevitable that some things will go wrong.

In fact, a survey commissioned by Tealeaf (now IBM) and conducted by Harris Interactive on customer behavior illustrated an alarming rate of website issues – with almost nine out of 10 consumers (87 percent) experiencing difficulties online.[1] It also shows that consumers do not tolerate these difficulties for long – 41 percent of online adults reported that they abandon their transaction or switch sites after experiencing online issues. This represents $57 billion in lost revenue for the retail industry alone, and that is just the tip of the iceberg. Furthermore, more than half of online adults (56 percent) said that if they experienced a problem conducting a transaction online, they would be less likely to buy from the same company offline. It is clear that the consequences of site redesign failure can extend not just to your online presence, but to your entire business.

Two weapons for avoiding site redesign failure: awareness and visibility

Over the last decade, the web landscape has been littered with site redesign failures, with serious consequences for the companies involved and even the people. But, savvy executives have avoided these catastrophes by arming themselves with two key weapons: awareness and visibility.

Be aware: things can and do go wrong

No e-business has launched a site redesign project that was 100 percent flaw-free. Today's sites have so much complexity that it is nearly impossible to test for every possible user scenario. Depending on the type of site redesign project you are undertaking, you may inadvertently break existing functionality, introduce unexpected usability problems or both. Common problems include:

- Site rebranding (look-and-feel changes) projects that introduce broken links and/or orphan pages, in addition to potential navigation problems.
- Many sites that enhance core applications with new technologies such as Ajax or Adobe Flash find that it is all to easy to break existing functionality.

- Adding a new feature or product offering to the site, such as online returns or new Health Savings Accounts, can be fraught with challenges caused by new processes, unexpected user behavior or simply the amount of new code that is introduced into the environment.
- Finally, back-end or platform changes can introduce data feed problems, server configuration issues, and much more.

With all of this complexity, it is unrealistic to think that you can roll out a perfect site on day one. The real question is: How big will the problems be and how long will they last? E-businesses that do not plan for these problems – by putting a system in place to find and stabilize site issues as quickly as possible – often end up with significant unbudgeted expenses, delays, or even a failed project.

Visibility is key to stablizing your new site

It is quite challenging to understand the online experience you are delivering when your "storefront" or marketplace is in the one place you cannot see – the browser of your customer. One of the chief reasons companies invest in IBM Tealeaf solutions is to have this level of visibility. As a market-leading Customer Experience Management solution provider, IBM Tealeaf solutions uniquely record and capture what each customer is doing and seeing in real-time on each page and across site visits. IBM Tealeaf solutions' visual replay capabilities are what enable you to take a deep, first-hand look into the experience your site is delivering. This is what takes you past just knowing there is a customer experience problem to understanding exactly what that problem is so you can resolve it as quickly as possible.

IBM Tealeaf solutions also provide the quantitative data (e.g., conversion rates, etc.) necessary to understand the business impact site obstacles are having on your business. Proactively monitoring these Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), coupled with visual experience reviews, allows you to make more informed site optimization decisions.
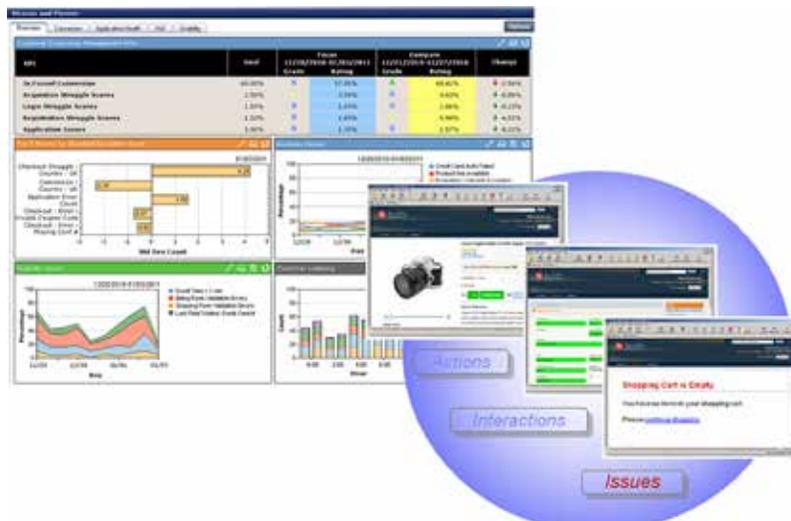
IBM® Tealeaf® CX

Figure 2: IBM Tealeaf solutions provide quantitative, aggregate metrics about your online business, as well as the ability to replay actual customer site visits – qualitative data of the real user experience.

With IBM Tealeaf solutions organizations have the qualitative and quantitative data that is essential to mitigating the risks involved with site changes and to improving the end results for redesign projects. For the majority of our customers, this data is most critical post-launch (or, for more fortunate companies, during the soft launch or stabilization period). During this time, IBM Tealeaf solutions provide some of the fastest means available to find and resolve a wide range of problems before they can degrade customer success on your site.

Reduce post-launch turmoil with IBM Tealeaf solutions

When your customers (and your executives) first land on your site to see a new look-and-feel or a new set of functionality, their expectations are high. Yet, at the same time the probability that they will encounter a usability issue or unexpected error is at its highest. While it is very hard to

release a site that is 100 percent flaw-free, IBM Tealeaf solutions provide the crucial support you need to stabilize a launch as quickly as possible. More importantly, they can reduce risks: risks of lost business, risks of higher customer support costs, and risks of higher site development costs. IBM Tealeaf solutions are even more essential in situations where a soft launch is not possible and each site error has wider impact.

Many of the errors or issues that crop up post-launch are either too infrequent to have been caught during testing and QA, involve user scenarios that the development team did not anticipate, or only occur in a production environment. As a result, they can be difficult to reproduce and fix without IBM Tealeaf solutions' unique visual replay capabilities. Without IBM Tealeaf solutions, e-businesses may find themselves pouring investments into the site, (trying to fix elusive problems) before they truly understand the root causes.

Figure 3: Customer experience management data is critical in reducing soft launch or post-launch turmoil

IBM Tealeaf use case: efficiently identify and resolve post-launch problems

Customers have found that IBM Tealeaf solutions dramatically reduce the time required to research, reproduce and resolve site issues. This is because IBM Tealeaf solutions not only capture the page-by-page, browser-level recording of each customer session, but also offer one-click access to the supporting HTTPS request and response code. This makes virtually any site problem instantly reproducible. In fact, Forrester Research[2] reports that Tealeaf customers reduce their "find and fix" time by at least 60 percent.

Case study: an international airline

A major international airline employs "Remember Me" cookies upon login so frequent site users do not have to re-enter their credentials every time they book online. After a recent release, customers began reporting via the call center, e-mail, and the site's feedback form that the site was no longer remembering them and they were forced to login every time. The product team immediately began to investigate the complaints but they were unable to reproduce the scenario.

Using IBM Tealeaf solutions, the airline was able to search for users who were logging in more than once during the same session on the site. After replaying and analyzing the sessions from this customer segment, the airline was able to pinpoint the problem. As it turned out, on the new site, if a customer changed their default country or language, then that action overwrote the previous cookie and the new cookie no longer contained the customer's user ID. Roughly 5 percent of the airline's international customers were being frustrated by this issue.

Without IBM Tealeaf solutions, the airline would have had to invest significant resources to uncover the problem with no guarantee the investment would lead to resolution.

IBM Tealeaf solution use case: cut site stabilization times through issue prioritization

Although a luxury for many companies, a planned "stabilization phase" as part of a site redesign can dramatically reduce the business impact of issues; but only if those issues can be found, prioritized and resolved before the full site launch. Yet, every business has limited time and budget, and often times these "soft launches" generate a laundry list of issues causing development teams to wonder where they should start.

With the help of IBM Tealeaf solutions, companies are able to quickly uncover the root cause of issues, but also quantify the business impact of each issue – how many customers have been affected, how much business is being lost every day because of this issue, etc. This information is vital if you want to prioritize the most important issues or even avoid addressing some issues at all. With the insight you gain with the help of IBM Tealeaf solutions, you can invest your resources where they can make greater improvements and dramatically reduce the time required for site stabilization as a result.

IBM Tealeaf solution use case: validate a/b test results

Our customers have also found it valuable to use IBM Tealeaf solutions as a means to investigate A/B test results of new site features during the soft launch phase. Traditional A/B testing has only considered one question: did the variable perform well or not? Using IBM Tealeaf solutions, you can conduct deeper analysis that might lead you to find unexpected behavior or unplanned results.

For example, if a site has redesigned its shopping cart, it may not be enough to know that people using the new shopping cart ("Test A") converted 2 percent more often than those using the old one ("Test B"). Using IBM Tealeaf solutions, you might discover a glitch that was forcing 20 percent of the "Test A" users to abandon, which once resolved, would actually improve the results of the new cart even more. IBM Tealeaf solutions enable you to look not only at which variable performed best, but also ask why a particular variable worked well or poorly. The insight you gain may lead to last-minute changes or resolutions that make your launch more successful.

Case study: an insurance price comparison site

In the UK, the leading insurance price comparison site deployed IBM Tealeaf solutions during a site redesign which involved migrating from a Java-based platform to an Ajax platform. The company conducted a soft launch, during which it used IBM Tealeaf solutions to validate their A/B test. The company used IBM Tealeaf solutions to detail visitor behavior on the old Java site (the "A" test), as well as on the new Ajax site (the "B" test) where some visitors were redirected. The information gleaned through this testing was critical to validate the new Ajax functionality and to help ensure that the new site created minimal business disruption when fully launched.

IBM Tealeaf solution use case: proactive, ongoing monitoring

The best e-businesses have learned to focus not just on reactive problem resolution but on proactive discovery and analysis of customer experience issues. IBM Tealeaf solutions support proactive monitoring with alerting capabilities for a variety of conditions and errors that can lead to poor customer experience, such as "Sorry, Page Not Found" errors and events that you define yourself for your business. When one of these errors occurs, the development team finds out about the problem immediately and has a way to investigate exactly what triggered it. The faster you can find and resolve issues, the less impact they will have on customer success and on your business, as measured by sales, call volumes to the contact center, etc.

Case study: prominent electronics retailer

A well-known electronics retailer was considering an IBM Tealeaf solution investment and was conducting a short "proof of value" (POV) before formally purchasing. On the last day of the IBM Tealeaf solution POV, the retailer happened to be rolling out a new release of its site. Coincidentally, the launch was on a Friday the 13th.

During the POV, we had worked with the retailer to create a number of alerts for common site issues, such as 404 and SQL errors. Three minutes after the launch, the web team received an e-mail alert from the IBM Tealeaf solution – error messages were skyrocketing! What had happened?

The IBM Tealeaf solution was the first system to notify the web team that there was a problem, and it also provided the visibility needed to get to an answer quickly. The web team rolled back the new site and used the IBM Tealeaf solutions to review select customer sessions that ended in error messages. They found a minor problem with the payment page in the checkout process. In record time, the team was able to resolve the problem and relaunch the site. Needless to say, the company quickly became our customer.

IBM Tealeaf solutions fully integrated into the redesign lifecycle

Besides the critical post-launch period, many organizations have found IBM Tealeaf solutions valuable throughout the site redesign lifecycle – whether in the planning phase, during development, or while conducting testing and quality assurance. The unique insights that IBM Tealeaf solutions provide deliver significant benefits in each phase.

Better redesign planning

Virtually every business is facing significant time and budget constraints today. If you are tackling a site redesign now, you need to be sure that you are addressing the most important problems, that you are creating the best solutions, and that you have a full picture of the results once the new site goes live. IBM Tealeaf solutions serve two important purposes during the planning phase: giving you real-world data you can use as you conduct research about your site and benchmarking your current site.
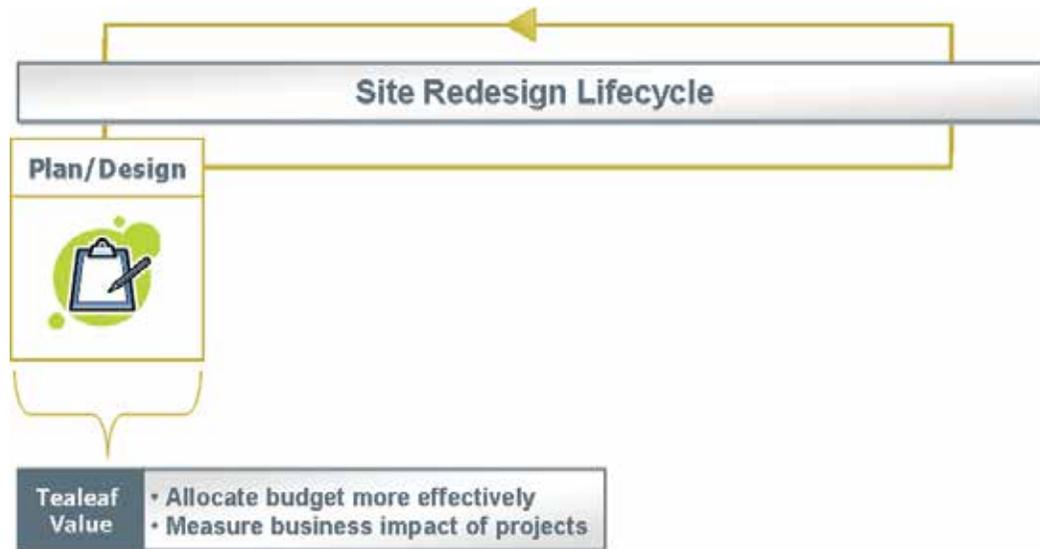
Figure 4: Customer Experience data helps afford better redesign planning

IBM Tealeaf solution use case: capture real-world customer experience data for research

One of the best ways to understand the challenges that your customers face than by actually watching them use your site. IBM Tealeaf solutions make it possible to put into practice the type of regular experience review that has worked so well in the offline world: direct customer observation.

Using IBM Tealeaf solutions, you can capture a robust set of real-world data about how people use your site – a focus group of your customers. This qualitative data gives you critical insights without the bias inherent in focus groups and usability testing; namely, people tend to behave differently in a lab environment. You also get valuable quantitative data on the business impact of each problem. What percentage of people experiencing a problem actually abandoned their purchases? Is a problem experienced by one-third of users decreasing sales by 33 percent or by 1 percent? IBM Tealeaf solutions can also be used as a complement to usability testing, quantifying the data you capture in the lab. Armed with this information, you can drive features into the site redesign that have the greater top- and bottom-line impact.

In fact, using IBM Tealeaf solutions during the planning phase could actually reduce the overall costs of a redesign. By knowing what the business impact is of each customer experience issue, you can focus your efforts on the parts of your site that really need fixing. You may find that you can make incremental improvements that drive bigger improvements in your business than a major site redesign would. And in this case, the savings from avoiding costly design and development cycles can offset the cost of implementing IBM Tealeaf solutions.

Case study: an insurance provider

A prominent insurance company conducted usability testing on its new "premium payment" process – the new application passed without incident. However, once live, the company experienced a lower than expected conversion rate. Using IBM Tealeaf solutions, a group of online stakeholders gathered together to examine abandoned user sessions which led to an interesting finding: many real customers were not seeing the "Make Payment" button placed at the bottom of the page, but instead were clicking on the "Payment" tab in the site's top navigation. On a daily basis, approximately 65 customers were clicking the wrong button and ending up in a frustrating endless loop. With the help of IBM Tealeaf solutions, the company was able to see why the navigation was confusing to customers and take the necessary steps to redesign the page to resolve this customer experience flaw.

IBM Tealeaf solution use case: thoroughly benchmark your old site

Because IBM Tealeaf solutions capture the data about what is happening on your site, you can use it to establish a robust, validated set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). In addition to conversion rates and task success metrics, some common KPIs that our customers use include:

- **"Bad behaviors"** such as multiple attempts of key processes without success or multiple attempts to submit a form without success.
- **"Bad experiences"** that can be tracked:
  - **Technical issues** such as slow page performance, global error pages, or unexpected error messages such as "SQL exception."
  - **Business issues:** These vary depending on the type of site and industry but could include seeing an out-of-stock message on a retail site, having an itinerary re-priced on a travel site, or having account qualification issues on a financial services site.
  - **Customer issues:** Actual customer behavior that indicates a bad experience such as going to the customer feedback form or help page.

These KPIs may be necessary to build a business case for your site redesign and they can prioritize where to invest. Further, once the redesign goes live, these KPIs give you a baseline for benchmarking the new site.

One of the biggest advantages of using IBM Tealeaf solutions for benchmarking is that they do not require you to add tags to your old site, "throw away" work that can be very time consuming. In addition, you can benchmark any number of customer experience factors without deciding in advance what needs to be tagged. All too often, it is the things that are not being tracked – that you have not anticipated in advance – that are the most likely to go wrong.

Case study: top US grocer

A leading grocer in the United States implemented IBM Tealeaf solutions in order to benchmark its old site and drive the new feature set for an upcoming redesign. The company wanted to better understand customer behavior on its current site so that it could build the new site more effectively in the context of two key goals: increasing conversion rates and decreasing customer complaints. The company considered using a web analytics vendor for the benchmarking work, but it estimated that it would have to spend 12 weeks on page tagging. The time and cost of this work would have put the project at risk.

Because IBM Tealeaf solutions could provide both quantitative and qualitative data with no page tagging, the company knew these solutions could help it truly understand customer behavior on the current site. With the help of IBM Tealeaf solutions, the grocer was able to document the current site's key metrics – conversion rates and complaint incidence – but also other KPIs that provided a fuller picture of the current online experience and greatly informed subsequent redesign decisions.

Faster and more effective development and quality assurance

Time is money when it comes to site redesign projects. The more efficiently you can get through development, testing and quality assurance (QA), the faster you can realize the benefits of the redesign and the faster your site team can move on to new projects. Just like during the post-launch period, many companies use IBM Tealeaf solutions to reduce the time required to research, reproduce and resolve issues reported on their development and staging sites. Further, IBM Tealeaf solutions have helped companies create better test scripts and make User Acceptance Testing (UAT) more efficient.
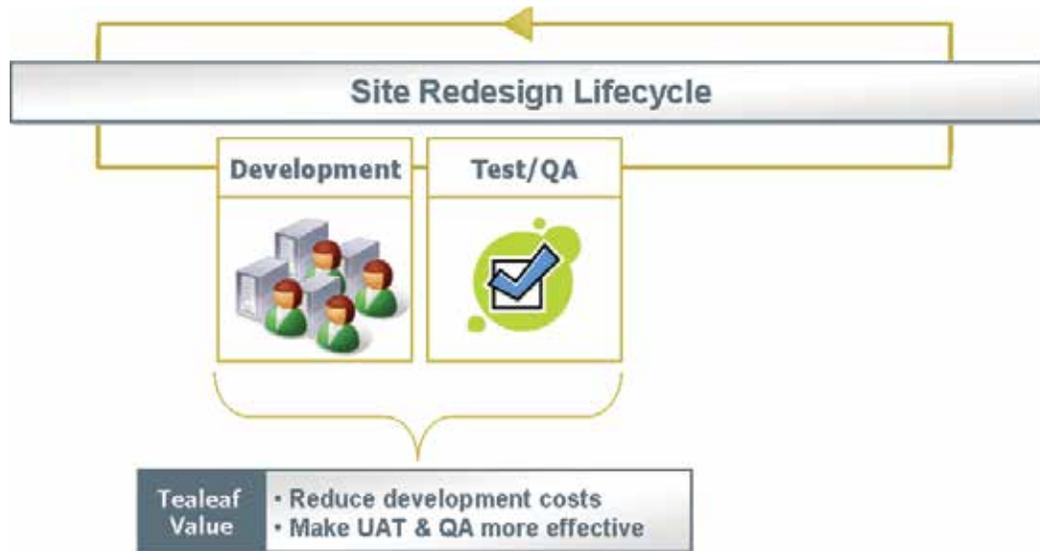
Figure 5: Faster and more effective development and QA with customer experience management data

IBM Tealeaf solution use case: improve quality assurance with better test scripts

Most QA processes depend on test scripts that are written based on predicted user behavior. However, today's sites are so complex and so dynamic that it is rare for a development team to be able to predict every possible path through the site. Because IBM Tealeaf solutions capture actual behavior, it enables you to capture scenarios that would otherwise be unpredictable and unobservable. Many IBM Tealeaf customers take these real customer sessions and convert them into future test scenarios for better and more proactive quality assurance.

Case study: online travel provider

With changing flight numbers, schedules, pricing and more, this online travel provider has an extremely dynamic web environment. The company routinely tests the site for as many user scenarios as possible but knows it will always be missing some subset of its customer experiences. However, with the help of IBM Tealeaf solutions, the company is getting closer. After each site release, the company uses IBM Tealeaf solutions to uncover new and unexpected user scenarios. The company then converts the click-paths from these real customer sessions into new scripts that it will leverage for testing during the next release.

IBM Tealeaf solution use case: make User Acceptance Testing (UAT) more effective

For many organizations, the User Acceptance Testing process is quite informal. Testers (often recruited from other departments) are asked to perform certain activities on the site and then are supposed to report back any problems that they encounter. Just as with real customers, testers often have trouble reporting the exact details of the problem they experienced. Too often, the issues that they report go unreproduced and unresolved.

Organizations that deploy IBM Tealeaf solutions have a way to reproduce issues – with visual replay of the actual session. Each issue reported by a tester can be examined in detail and resolved before the site goes live.

Beyond launch: the ongoing benefits of using IBM Tealeaf solutions

The potential benefits of using IBM Tealeaf solutions can extend long past your site launch. After launch and on an ongoing basis, IBM Tealeaf solutions help to mitigate risks, justify site redesign investments and prioritize future enhancements. IBM Tealeaf solutions help you invest your budget and resources to dramatically improve top- and bottom-line results.

IBM Tealeaf solution use case: benchmark the business performance of the new site

According to customers, IBM Tealeaf solutions are some of the most accurate they have for tracking a full set of site metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These metrics are what have enabled them to justify their site redesign investments by proving that the enhancements they made have actually led to improvements in conversion rates, completed transactions, and more. IBM Tealeaf solutions capture a robust set of metrics and KPIs that are available almost immediately after site launch, and at no extra cost. In contrast, organizations that rely on tools requiring tagging, such as web analytics, may wait months to get any data at all.

Case study: top five retailer in the United States

One of the five largest retailers in the United States came to us when it was almost ready to launch its newly redesigned site. The company wanted to be sure that the new site would be more effective than the old one in converting shoppers into buyers. Furthermore, it wanted to avoid possible disruptions from errors cropping up after site launch.

We were able to accomplish both goals. With our dashboard and scorecard reports, the retailer was able to validate that the new site's conversion rate was higher than the previous site's. The company even uncovered a few "surprises" along the way. For example, immediately following the site launch, we uncovered a problem on the "Billing/Shipping" page – the server was inexplicably crashing on approximately 15 buyers per day. Since the typical conversion rate from this step to completed order is 40 percent, this glitch translated into six lost purchases per day. By resolving this single issue, the IBM Tealeaf solution helped the retailer recoup $110,000 in otherwise lost revenue.

IBM Tealeaf solution use case: prioritize future projects according to business impact

Just as the insights provided by IBM Tealeaf solutions can help you to prioritize and focus as you plan your site redesign, IBM Tealeaf solutions also give you the data you need to evaluate and rank future customer experience and usability improvement options. As the case studies throughout this white paper demonstrate, this data may not be available from other sources. Without it, e-businesses tend to fall back on theories and conjecture when they make critical judgments about where to invest their limited resources. Or worse yet, they simply ignore suspected customer experience issues that they cannot explain and/or cannot quantify.

Organizations need a systematic way of knowing which problems to tackle and what the anticipated benefits will be. IBM Tealeaf solutions are essential to this process because:

- IBM Tealeaf solutions give you full visibility into the problems that you need to solve.
- IBM Tealeaf solutions give you the quantitative data you need to calculate the true business impact of each problem.

Drive site redesign success with IBM Tealeaf solutions

Site redesign is rarely a single project; it is a continuous process. Site changes – whether big or small – occur all the time. Sometimes, even the smallest changes can create unexpected outcomes. But regardless of size, today's site redesign projects have little room for failure.

IBM Tealeaf solutions provide e-businesses with critical customer experience information that helps them to make the right decisions and mitigate risks post-launch, as well as throughout the redesign process. IBM Tealeaf solutions offer an efficient way to find, prioritize and fix site problems – before they can have a negative impact on the business. As one of the most effective ways to verify that you prevent costly site redesign failures and get the returns you expect from your investments, IBM Tealeaf solutions are a "must-have" in today's economy.

About IBM Enterprise Marketing Management

The IBM Enterprise Marketing Management (EMM) Suite is an end-to-end, integrated set of capabilities designed exclusively for the needs of marketing organizations. Integrating and streamlining all aspects of marketing, IBM's EMM Suite empowers organizations and individuals to turn their passion for marketing into valuable customer relationships and more profitable, efficient, timely, and measurable business outcomes.

Delivered on premises or in the Cloud, the IBM EMM Suite of software solutions gives marketers the tools and insight they need to create individual customer value at every touch. The IBM EMM Suite helps marketers to understand customer wants and needs and leverage that understanding to engage buyers in highly relevant, interactive dialogs across digital, social, and traditional marketing channels.

Designed to address the specific needs of particular marketing and merchandising users, the IBM EMM Suite is comprised of five individual solutions. Digital Marketing Optimization enables digital marketers to orchestrate relevant digital interactions to attract and retain new visitors and grow revenue throughout the customer's lifecycle. With Customer Experience Optimization eCommerce professionals can turn visitors into repeat customers and loyal advocates by improving the digital experience of every customer. With Cross-Channel Marketing Optimization customer relationship marketers can engage customers in a one-to-one dialogue across channels to grow revenue throughout the customer's lifecycle. Price, Promotion and Product Mix Optimization allows merchandisers and sales planners to make price, promotion and product mix decisions that maximize profit and inventory utilization. And with Marketing Performance Optimization, marketing leaders, planners and decision-makers can model and assess mix, and manage marketing operations to maximize ROI.

Over 2,500 organizations around the world use IBM EMM solutions to help manage the pressures of increasing marketing complexity while delivering improved revenue and measurable results. IBM's time-tested and comprehensive offerings are giving companies such as Dannon, E*TRADE, ING, Orvis, PETCO, Telefonica | Vivo, United Airlines and wehkamp.nl the power and flexibility required to provide their customers and prospects with what they expect today—a more consistent and relevant experience across all channels.

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1 2008 Tealeaf Online Transactions Survey; Harris Interactive, September 2008

2 A commissioned study by Forrester Consulting, The Total Economic Impact of Tealeaf's Customer Behavior Analysis Suite. July 2010

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