

# 10 Tips to Start Optimizing Your Website

Optimizing a website doesn't have to be a complex task and, in fact, is more of a continual improvement process. You will never be "done" improving your website.

You can start with just a few of your site's pain points and begin helping your visitors convert. The following is a list of 10 common problems we find everyday when analyzing websites and some tips on how to solve them. Enjoy!

Visit us to learn how to  
further optimize your site:  
[www.FutureNowInc.com](http://www.FutureNowInc.com)

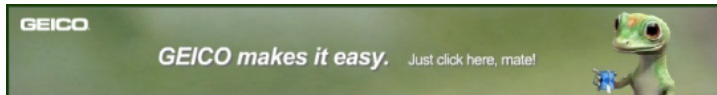


## 1. Find Trigger Words That Excite Your Visitors

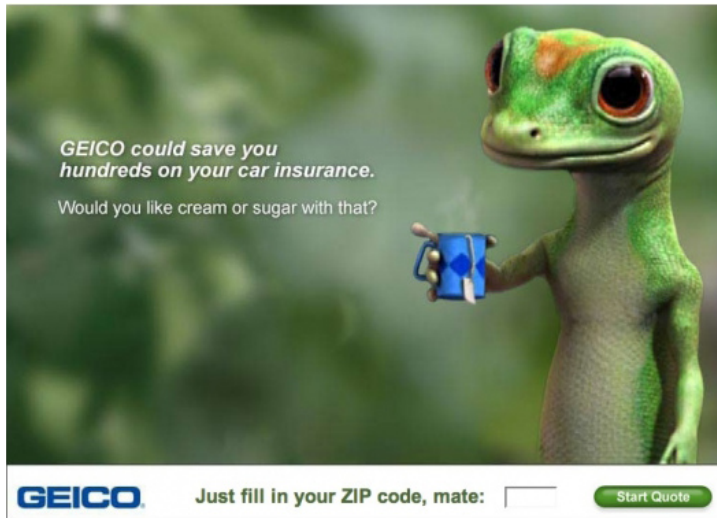
People navigate the web by “scent.”

Scent was first described by Xerox Parc to describe the parallels between human’s information-gathering techniques on the web and animal’s food-gathering techniques in the wild.

*Banner*



*Landing Page*



People seek information through the “scent” given off by their **trigger words**. According to research performed by usability guru Jared Spool, when a visitor found the trigger word on the landing page, they were successful at completing their task 72% of the time; if the trigger word wasn’t on the page, they were only successful 6% of the time. The scent of the key words kept them on the right path; lacking that scent, they stopped searching that particular “trail.”

This means your visitors are on a mission, they are goal oriented, and if they don’t see the trigger words they came to the site with, they are likely to move on to a site that has the right scent. The solution is not that difficult. If a prospect arrives at a landing page having used a term like “buy baseball cap”, they must see “buy baseball cap” on the page.

### Now Take Action

Make sure you have your visitors’ triggers words are visible, even use the scent for copy on each major button or link:

- Complete this sentence: “I want to \_\_\_\_.”
- Includes trigger words / strong scent

## 2. Call Your Traffic to Action

If you don’t ask someone to do something, the odds are they won’t do it.



Every good salesman knows that you have to ask for the sale.

Online, it is essential that a website present its visitors with visible and enticing calls to action. Calls to action must be meaningful concise links that tell the visitor

**where they are going** and **why they should go** there. Avoid cliches and overused links like “read more,” “click here,” “learn more,” and “submit” buttons. Replace them with something persuasive to get your traffic off their butts taking an action!

This technique is simple and very valuable.

### **Now Take Action**

Build calls to action by combining an imperative verb and an implied benefit.

Example - Which hyperlink is more persuasive: a or b?

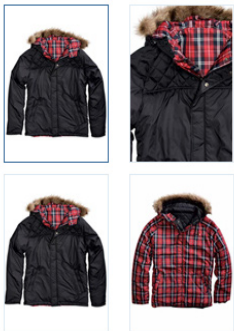
- a) George found an investment secret that changed his life. Read More
- b) George found an investment secret that changed his life. See how George doubled his income in one year.

## **3. Better Product Images Are Worth A Thousand Calls to Action**

Having better-looking product images than other sellers will do wonders.

If recent research is any indication, product images are a major factor in converting visitors. In fact, 83 percent of eBay shoppers skip listings without images, while sites with galleries get 15% more activity and those with so-called super-size photos show a 24 percent spike in sales.

Click on one of the images below for a larger view:

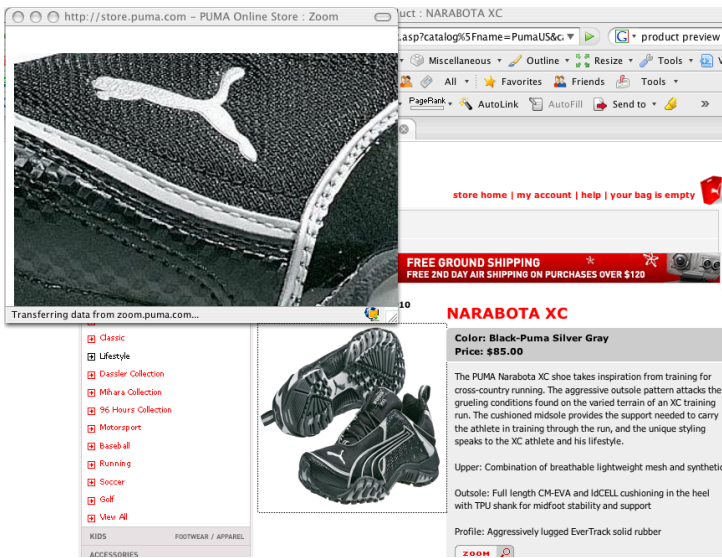


*Good example from Swell.com showing larger images and different views.*

The better photo wins every time.

Most visitors have spent many more hours shopping offline, where the sensory experience is superior. We can touch, hold, smell, and feel products before we buy them. So it is a little puzzling why so many companies have done little to try to recreate the visual aspect of the offline experience by providing better, more and more detailed product images. Many skimp on the quality of their product images and use manufacturer supplied images. Ouch.

Want to see a another great example of product images used well. Check out TigerDirect.com. Not only do they show multiple product images they also redline the features for their visitors. The extra effort is worth it.



*Puma allows people to navigate around a high quality image of any product.*

Companies with thousands of skus cringe at the idea of taking and managing a whole new database of product images. No need, you don't need 7000 new images to make a different.

The same holds true if you are in B2B; better product images are worth a thousand calls to action. Many B2B site offer downloads of whitepapers or demos for completing a form but fail to make the most basic of efforts to persuade them. Don't just tell them about your whitepaper; merchandize it. Show a cover; show them how easy it is to read with all your pretty charts. Test to see which pieces matter the most.

### Now take action

- a) B2Cs can start by taking their 25, 50, or 100 top trafficked/popular products and upgrading those images. Consider this a marketing expense rather than a development expense.
- b) B2Bs can merchandise their offerings better. Don't just tell visitors about your whitepaper. Show a cover; show them how easy it is to read with all your pretty charts. Test to see which pieces matter the most.

## 4. Headlines Must be "Made to Stick"

The headline on your page is the one thing that about 80% of your visitors will read. Most headlines (and copy for that matter) suffer from what Chip and Dan Heath refer to in their book, Made to Stick, as "the curse of knowledge"—once you know something, it's difficult to imagine what it is like not to know it.

### Now take action

*Good*



*Bad*

**Integrate Your Flights and Your Sleep Patterns with Applied Scientific Research to Travel Without Jet Lag**

- a) Make sure that everyone understands what your headline is about, even if they have no reference to understand it.
- b) The headline should set expectations about the content it is referring.
- c) When sitting down to create headlines be sure they are clear, enticing, and relevant. Then invest as much time as possible testing your headlines' abilities to both (1) gather attention and (2) entice visitors to invest the next 30 seconds on your page

by explaining what's in it for them—in language they can understand!

## 5. Don't be indifferent to reviews

Reviews have been all the buzz the past couple of years. If you recently purchased something online, has a review influenced your purchase decision?

New research further illustrates their value:

### Latest Owner Reviews

Value		3.6
Features		3.6
Quality		3.3
Performance		3.3

- 77% of online shoppers use reviews and ratings when purchasing (Jupiter Research, August 2006)
- 63% of consumers indicate they are more likely to purchase from a site if it has product ratings and reviews. (CompUSA & iPerceptions study)
- 86.9% of respondents said they would trust a friend's recommendation over a review by a critic, while 83.8% said they would trust user reviews over a critic. (MarketSherpa)

Most people don't seem to focus on all the factors involved in implementing reviews to enhance conversion. It's important that you test and optimize for conversion and persuasion by focusing on the following areas:

#### Placement for Visibility

- Above the fold
- Size
- Stars or other graphic
- Near point of attention or action

#### Review Interaction

- Ease of reading
- Sorting
- Rating Distribution
- Use across the site

#### Single Dimension versus Multi Dimension Reviews

- What are the key attributes across different categories
- Can review content influence purchase decision

### Credibility Factors

- Negative and Positive reviews
- Review Approval policy
- Reviewer Characteristics

### What does a review mean

- Number of Reviews
- What questions are you asking
- Qualitative versus quantitative

### Average customer ratings

Based on 213 ratings

Sound quality	★★★★☆
Durability	★★★★☆
Ease of downloading music	★★★★☆
Cost-Benefit	★★★☆☆

Reviews are just one trend of the market demanding more authenticity and transparency and these are key factors in getting your visitors to take action. Anytime you have a choice between opening up more or less always opt for giving your customers more. Many companies have an unsubstantiated fear of “negative” reviews. You shouldn’t. Negative reviews don’t mean lower conversions. Research from BazaarVoice indicates that negative reviews can increase product conversion. This is likely due to the fact that customers realize that products are not perfect and want to know a products flaws as well as weaknesses. In addition, overwhelmingly negative reviews can help you pull bad products from your offering and merchandise better.

### Now take action

- Enable customer reviews on your site. Don’t know how? Contact a 3rd party, like Bazaarvoice.

## 6. Point a critical eye to your check out process



Getting the visitor to “add to cart” is only half the battle. You’ve got to keep the momentum going throughout the checkout. A simple checkout is a good checkout, but you also have to answer all of the visitor’s questions as they’re going through the process. There are a few rules that all sites should adhere to when trying to put together an easy checkout that gives the visitor the information they need to make the purchase.

### Now take action

- Eliminate unnecessary steps. Don’t put too much focus on upselling (upsell in the cart, or upsell on the confirmation page and retro-add it to the order for bonus points) and only ask for information that is completely necessary in completing the transaction.
- Let the visitor know that you value their privacy and you have a secured site.

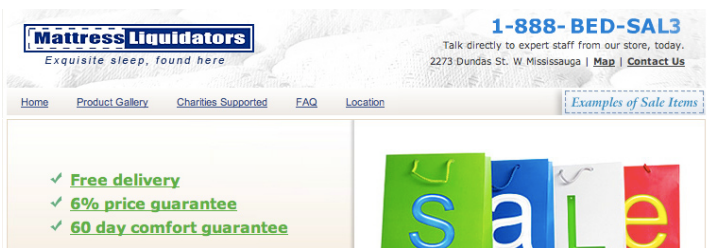


- c) Don't keep the visitor in the dark about anything—clearly let the visitor know about shipping, return and tax issues.
- d) Remind them what they're buying ;)

There are many other things that you have to take into account but these are the high level items that you should focus on most when putting together an efficient cart.

## 7. Be ready and willing to help

In the e-business world, your customer service, the degree to which you keep your customer delighted, starts the instant he or she lands on your web site. Online, customer service isn't where you go when you have a problem, and it certainly isn't what happens after the sale is completed. It is everything that goes into creating a superior online shopping experience from start to finish.



During the buying process, there are a host of questions that are raised. Answer these questions even before your customers think of them. Incorporate it into your selling process so that customers won't have to leave their buying process in search of answers. In combination with prominent customer service contacts, visitors will gain confidence with their purchase. Reassure your customers that you are there, ready and

willing to assist in all questions and concerns and longing to build a relationship with them.

### **Now take action**

- a) Keep the visitors engaged with the active window and the buying process, providing an easy and smooth path to the checkout and you'll surely see higher conversions.

## 8. Always be Testing



Doing A/B or Multivariate testing to optimize your site used to require some in-house programming expertise or expensive 3rd party software. Thankfully, Google has provided us with a free alternative, Google Website Optimizer. While it may not offer every feature some of the other solutions provide, it is quite an elegant solution and getting better regularly. Since Google Website Optimizer is free, there is no excuse for not testing regularly. Rather than



spending money on more expensive testing tools, focus those resources on creating better copy and imagery. So there are no more excuses for not testing regularly. Remember what Claude Hopkins wisely said in 1923, “Almost any question can be answered cheaply, quickly and finally, by a test campaign. And that’s the way to answer them—not by arguments around a table. Go to the court of last resort—buyers of your products.”

### Now take action

- Do not be afraid to test.
- Sign up for and set up Google Optimizer
- Write down the 5 things that concern you most about your site and then test them.

## 9. Improve the form of your web forms

Complete this quick easy form and get matched with lenders!

Powered by Securix.com

**Tell Us About Your Loan Needs**

What type of loan do you need?

**Tell Us About Your Property**

Where is the property located?

Property ZIP code

Home description

Purchase year

Property use

**Tell Us About Your Loan**

Purpose of loan

Estimated home value

First mortgage balance

First mortgage interest rate

Existing rate type

Do you have a second mortgage? ☐ Yes ☒ No

How much additional cash would you like to borrow?

**Your Contact Information**

First name

Last name

Street address

City

State

Zip

Email

Primary phone

Secondary phone

Best contact time

**Get Quotes Now !**

Web forms create an exchange of information and value. If people must spend any amount of time filling out a Web form, you must offer something in return. Narrow the form fields to only what’s absolutely required. Many marketers just love data, so they ask more questions than are truly needed. Other forms are built by techies who show little consideration for marketing, and even less for the end user.

### Now take action

- If you are collecting leads, ask for only the data that you need, don’t get greedy by asking for more than you need.
- Include visible point of action assurances like security logos and privacy statements near the call to action
- If your checkout process includes several steps, include a visible and prominent progress indicator
- Your calls to action should tell the visitor exactly what they are doing next ie: “Go to Shipping and Billing”. Avoid “submit” or “proceed to next step”. Tell the visitor what is in it for them.
- Avoid drop downs like the plague. Drop downs are evil.
- Error handling. Your visitors will make errors filling out your forms, but instead of flashing red error messages accusing visitors of not filling out something, write friendly copy that actually helps them fill out the form. After all they want to be done with this process faster than you want them to.

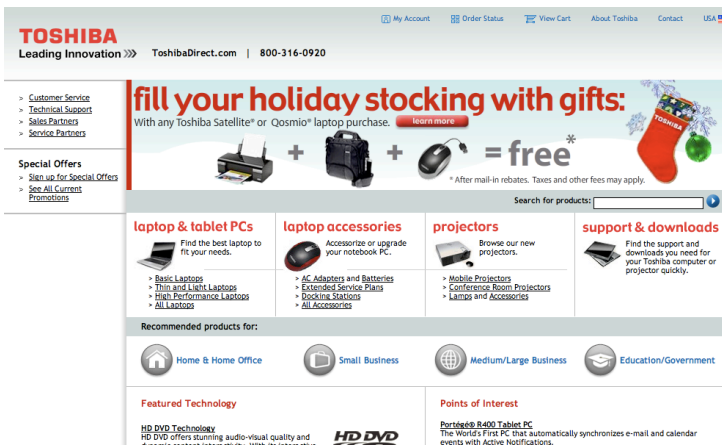


## 10. Appeal to different customers and stages in the buying process

Since individuals each go through their own personal buying process, any sale has the potential of being a complex sale. The shift between a customer's buying modalities, and the failure of a website to address them, can cause the buying process to break down. Companies must invest in understanding and planning for how these different modalities influence the buying process. This

is why many companies have chosen to use customer Personas through Persuasion Architecture to help plan, not just their websites, but entire multi-channel strategies.

*Example of appealing to different customers from Toshiba.com*



You don't know where your visitors are in the buying process when they land on your site, so you've got to plan for each possibility. You've got to help the folks who know exactly what they want get to it quickly; make them jump through too many hoops and they're gone. You've got to help the ones still mulling it over by offering pertinent information where and when they are most likely to need it, as well as persuading them you're the logical business choice. You've got to be most engaging and appealing for the window shopper, and you've got to let the lost soul quickly figure out he doesn't belong there.

The trick to making your conversion rate soar is to construct your sales process so it is in tune with how folks decide to buy.

### **Now take action**

- Commit to learning more about your customers, not just demographics but their emotional motivations for buying.
- Provide more content.

### **Bottom Line:**

Optimization is a process of continual improvement. There are many things to focus on and it can feel overwhelming but just realize that it's important to start somewhere and that you shouldn't wait. Every day you are not working on optimizing your site is another day you are leaving revenues on the table that are rightly yours.

While most of these tips focus on conversion, you should know that there is a difference between conversion and persuasion.

Conversion typically happens in the later stages of a customer's buying process. Conversion is not something you control, it's a decision your visitors actively make. Visitors who make a decision to convert on your site, but then encounter a number of stumbling blocks are likely to abandon the follow through of their decision—i.e., you LOSE revenue that's RIGHTFULLY yours.

Now, improving your focus on persuasion will help you improve your marketing and get more people to move from early in their buying processes further along in their buying process. Conversion is about improving leaks in your sales funnel and persuasion is about increasing the size of your sales funnel. Reduce friction first, then focus on persuading more traffic to get further along in the process, then go get more traffic. It's bad math to do it any other way. Baby steps. Eat the elephant in pieces.

Not sure where to start? We would be glad to help. Our expert conversion analysts are available to do a basic conversion optimization analysis to help you discover the basic profiles for your visitors and what simple changes can be made to optimize your website.

Visit us to learn how to further optimize your site: **[www.FutureNowInc.com](http://www.FutureNowInc.com)** or reach us anytime by calling: **877-643-7244** or emailing us at: **[Info@FutureNowInc.com](mailto:Info@FutureNowInc.com)**.

## About Future Now



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