



The Complete  
**Conversion Rate  
Optimization**  
Process



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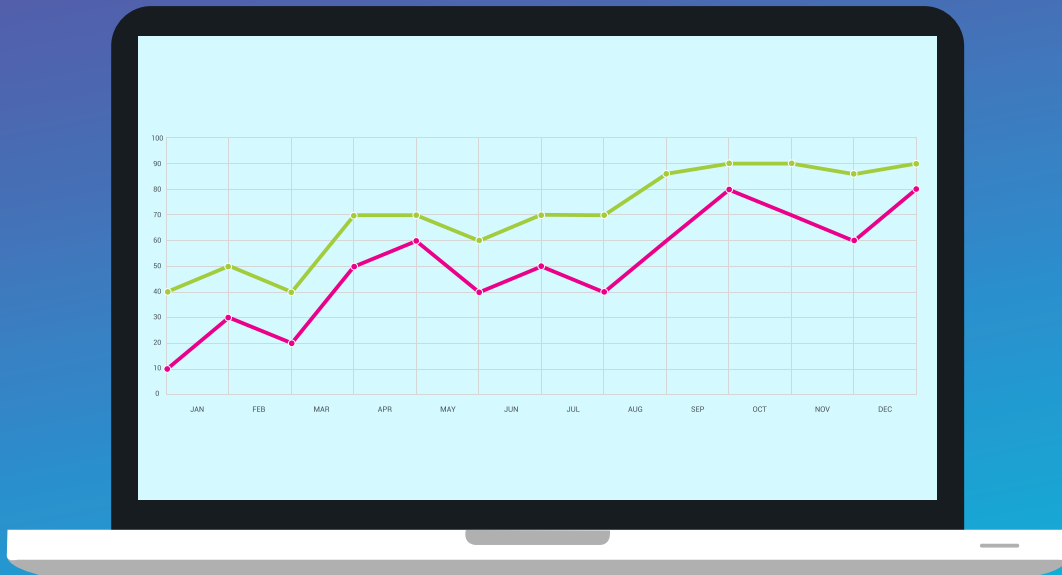
What is CRO?

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## What is conversion rate optimization?

Well, in the beginning, the internet was created.

Since its humble beginnings, the internet has expanded like nothing else the world has seen, with millions and millions of websites. They've delighted us and helped us out with various aspects of modern life. It's safe to say we'd be lost without them.

But websites, like everything else in the world, have their own inherent purposes. They're not just there for the quirky designs and witty text, or the banners or even the pesky loading times. They primarily exist to deliver their owners certain goals. These goals are 'conversions'.

Conversion in this context means anything the website is built to deliver its company, in other words, the actual *raison d'être* of the website. It could be anything from getting signups, getting subscribers, getting video views, getting clicks on cat images, getting purchases, or even just getting link clicks.

Every website has its own conversion rate, which is the rate of the total visitors who make decisions and convert (or become customers) on the website.

Conversion rate optimization, or CRO, is the process of testing and improving numerous aspects of a website - design, content, performance, user experience, etc - with the end goal of boosting its conversion rate, which in turn validates the site's main purpose.

Conversion rate optimization represents a break with traditional marketing, both in its digital and offline forms.

In traditional marketing, you try to drive eyeballs to your offering, in the form of leads. Not all of these leads might be interested in what you have to offer, though. Additionally, these leads might wander away right after you bring them there.

In conversion rate optimization however, you work with your existing website traffic, and improve their rate of conversion by making changes to your website based on data from user insights, thus improving the site and capitalizing on the factors that make your leads stay and convert on your website. You don't necessarily look for new visitors and drive them to your site.



## But why should you optimize for conversions?

Conversion rate optimization can be invaluable in significantly boosting your overall conversions, which in turn help your website stay competitive, and, well, relevant. Every website is built with a purpose, and CRO can only help your site achieve its potential.

Speaking in general terms, there are two ways to increase overall conversions on your website, as we mentioned earlier.

1. You could bring in more traffic.
2. You could increase your website's conversion rate.

Let's try and break this into numbers so that it's easier to comprehend.

Imagine you spend \$1000 (say on Adwords) to get 1000 visitors to your website, resulting in a CPC (cost-per-click) of \$1. Assuming 10% of your visitors sign up, the total number of sign ups would be 100. But like any other business owner, you're probably always looking for methods to increase that number, preferably by a large margin at that. It's only natural.

Now, let's see how things could pan out, using the two means of increasing conversions mentioned above.

### Scenario: 1

You decide to increase your inbound traffic by spending.

Total visitors needed: 1300  
Sign up rate: 10% (As assumed)  
Total sign ups: 130  
Additional Adwords cost: \$300

This is pretty much brute forcing conversions.

### Scenario: 2

You decide to work on your website conversion rate.

This ends up increasing your conversion rate by an additional 2% to 3%.

Total website visitors : 1000  
Sign up rate: 12% - 13% (Assuming the mentioned  
increase in conversion rate occurs)  
Total sign ups: 120 - 130  
Additional Adwords cost: \$0

That's it. Need I say more?

There are other reasons why you should adopt a sound optimization strategy at the earliest.

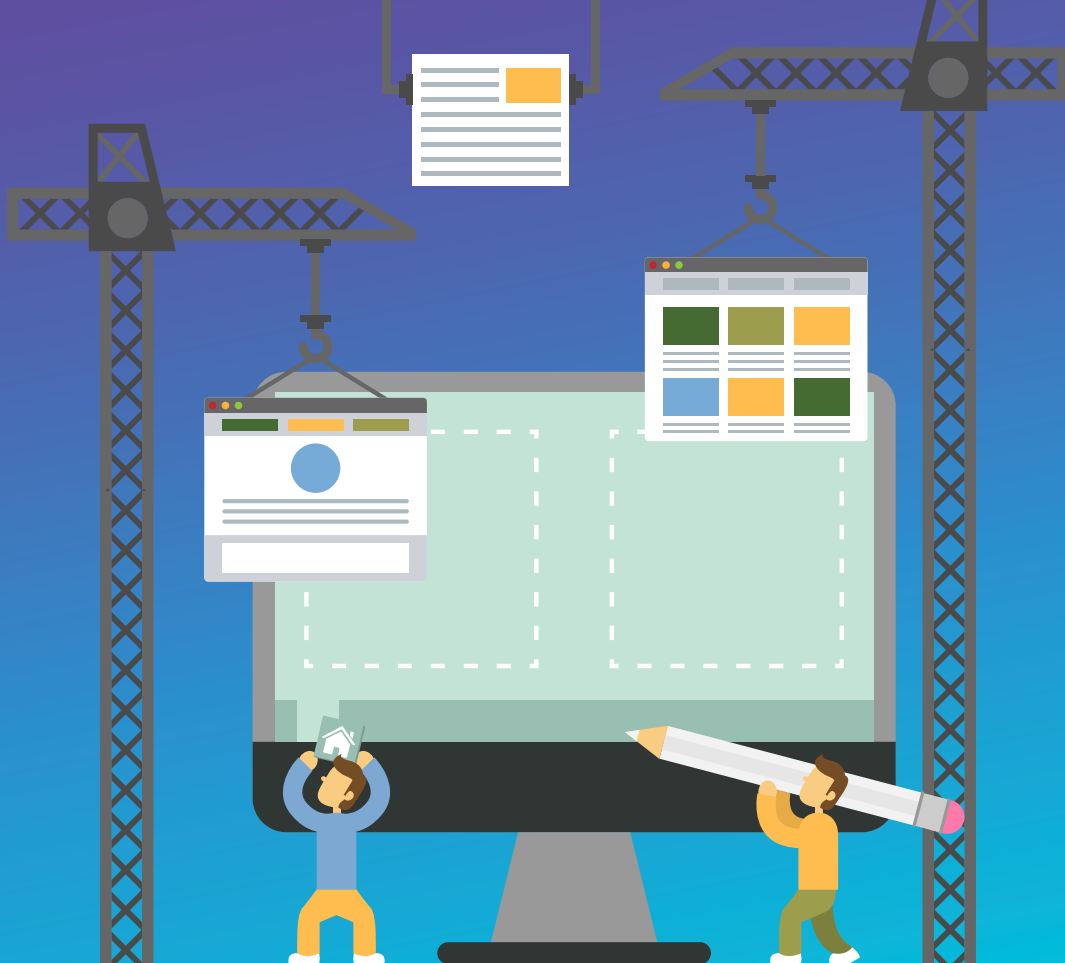
And while we're at it. Why forget the basics?

Now, imagine this. You have a brilliant content strategy, your page tops organic listings in your category, and you get a lot of free but high quality traffic from these channels. That sounds like your website is doing really well.

Right? I mean, of course it does.

Now, given these factors, your site should be as welcoming to them as you are to their traffic and patronage.

**These are bare basics, considering the fact that your potential customers are already on your website. All that needs to be done is to provide them with a seamless online experience, guiding them to your conversion gateway.**



## The Basic CRO Process

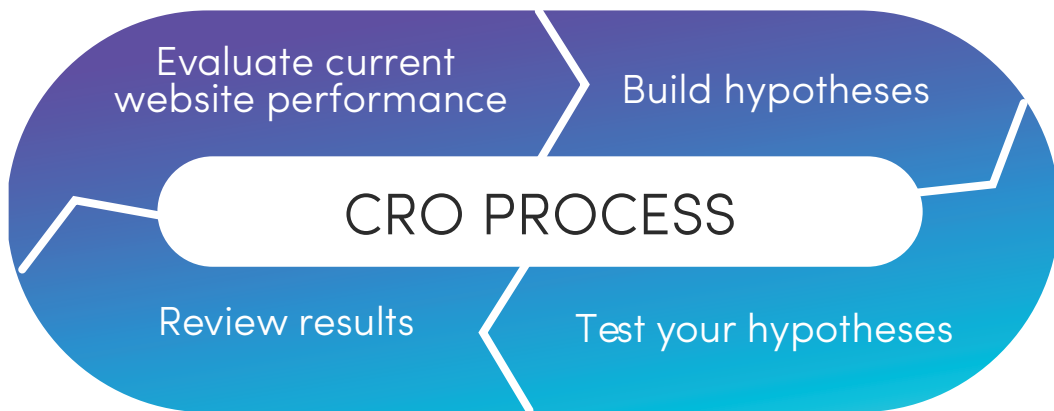
In this section, you can find out how to build your own optimization process and how to ensure that it's fool-proof. And simple to actually implement.

Let's start from the very beginning. Every website owner wants their website conversion rates to improve continuously. That's natural, right?. But CRO can never be a linear process.

CRO is a cyclical process. It has no fixed ending. It continues for as long as you choose to run the process - Which, ideally, should be for as long as you have a marketing division. Or in other words, forever.



This is how the CRO process looks -



A famous adage goes ‘the starting point of any journey is where you stand’. Logically, that makes sense. Adapting the adage to our situation, the first step would be to analyze the current performance of the website. This will give you a sense of where you stand and what needs improvement. This step is also very important in determining what direction the optimization process should take. Multiple tools can be used to get your website’s performance data.

We’ll also discuss the different types of tools and the data they provide in more detail, a little while later.

Here’s a brief overview of the steps you could take.

### Step 1: Evaluate current website performance

The first obvious step would be analyzing performance data. The results from various tools should be analyzed thoroughly to obtain insights. Insights are actual data points that give an understanding on what is happening on the website. These insights are also the prerequisites for any tests to be run on the pages. Without insights, future tests will not have a clear direction in which to proceed.

Insights come in different shapes and sizes. For example, visitor clicks, visitor scroll data, and page views.

Collecting insights can be done with different tools. More on that later.

## Step 2: Build hypotheses and see what could be better

Insights analyzed? Check. Now it's time to brainstorm! Yes, that involves thinking.

Here you process the insights you've gathered and analyzed, and formulate meaningful strategies to improve your website. These strategies can involve website elements, copy, design, and other things - and boost conversions.

Remember though, these strategies should be based on actual insights and data. Not on hunches. When insights go contrary to your opinions, swallow your pride and go with the data, or be willing to do so soon enough.

Do low visitor clicks on a sign up button validate your fear that it might be poorly designed? Planning to add an extra CTA? Not sure about your copy length? Considering adding a social login button?

Build a hypothesis. Hypothesis = Problem + Solution + anticipated result.

## Step 3: Test your hypotheses

With the help of CRO tools like A/B testing and Heatmaps, test the website changes that you've hypothesized. Make sure that the test or tests run smoothly, and that they run in such a way that you get the results you need, and very importantly, your visitors are not inconvenienced.

Let the test(s) run until you get conclusive results. You can take the help of A/B testing calculators to calculate the [sample size](#) and the [ideal duration a test should run](#) to give significant results.

## Step 4: Review your results

After your test or tests have run for long enough, it's time to take a look at the results.

Also, take care to ensure that the results are unbiased. Meaning, conclusive results indicating that the winning variation has definitely outperformed the others.

In such a case, the next step would be to implement the winning variation and to grab those missed conversions.

That's the final step in the cycle.

Hold on there. Remember we talked earlier about what the conversion process looks like?

That's right. It's cyclical. Which means..

### Step 5: Rinse and repeat

This one's self explanatory.

We hope that crash course in CRO gave you an idea of what to expect from the whole thing.

Hold your breath as we dive in.



## The CRO Process In Depth

In this section, let's zoom in a bit and look at each step in detail, along with some notes on the different types of tools used for each step. To help understand the steps better, a few scenarios have been discussed under each step.

## Step 1: Evaluating website conversion performance

The first step of any process is the most crucial since it'll end up determining the path of the entire process.

Evaluating website conversion performance doesn't mean merely comparing metrics and checking if they look positive. That would really not add much value, except maybe to give you a cause to celebrate, nor would it guarantee a clear path of action. While evaluating website conversion performance, it's essential that you fully understand and account for visitor behavior as well. Knowing the sort of people who visit your site and their preferences and priorities helps a great deal.

There are different types of tools that can be used to get the data you need here. For the sake of simplicity, let's categorize the tools into two buckets.

- Category 1 : Ones that help you identify weak pages.
- Category 2 : Ones that help you identify red flags on a particular page.

### **Category 1 : Ones that help you identify weak pages**

It's very important to evaluate and identify weak pages on your website. These weak pages are conversions roadblocks. Tweaking these pages will have the most effect on your conversion rate. Sounds like a no-brainer, doesn't it?

That's 'cause it is one.

## **Website Analytics Tools:**

Web analytics tools provide information on general website performance.

Data type: Web analytics tools usually provide comprehensive data on different pages of your website. Such tools provide metrics, from basic data, to detailed data on visitor demographics, acquisition channels, visitor behavior on pages, etc.

Important metrics to be noted: No. of sessions, bounce rate, average session duration, pages/session, average time on page, % exit, goals (if set up).

## **Funnel Analysis Tools:**

Funnel analysis is another important tool for identifying the weak pages. Every visitor follows a particular path – their conversion path – before they convert. This path is made up of the pages the visitors navigate before converting. Funnel analysis lets you understand how visitors navigate different pages and see conversion patterns and drop off rates across these pages, letting you zero in on the weak pages their conversion paths contain.

Data type: The data you get is mainly centered around the drop off rate of each page. This is the primary metric that determines the conversion performance of the page and whether it's weak or not.

Important metrics to be noted: No. of sessions, conversion rate, no. of conversions, drop off rate.

## **Category 2 : Ones that help you identify red flags on a particular page**

Identifying weak pages can be considered the first step in the evaluation process. The next step would be to identify the red flags on your weak pages. These weak points are the actual reasons why your visitors leave a particular page.

Without identifying these red flags, running further tests on the pages would be, well, useless. The chances of the such tests increasing the conversion rate would almost be nil.

### **Heatmaps :**

Heatmaps provide visual representations of visitor clicks on a particular page. By representing visitor clicks, you get to see for yourself how visitors interact with your website and where the drop off points on the page are.

Data type: The data typically consists of visual representations clicks represented by colored dots for every click on the particular page. The higher the click density, the brighter a particular region on the page gets.

Important metrics to be noted: The number of clicks on each element and the percentage of clicks each element receives in relation to the entire page's clicks.

### **Session replay :**

Session replay and heatmaps overlap, slightly. Session recordings are basically videos of the actions different visitors to your site take. Important customer behavior insights such as confusion points and hesitations can be captured with ease.

Data type: The data is usually in the form of recordings. The action of each visitor on the page is recorded, for viewing.

Important metrics to be noted: The average time spent in a session and the number of pages visited in that session constitute the most important metrics. Apart from that, it's also possible to get demographic information on each visitor such as country of origin, browser used, etc.

### **Polls :**

Polls provide another way to identify red flags, especially when it comes to the more subjective questions. Questions such as 'why are my visitors leaving my site?', and 'are my visitors able to find what they came looking for?', can be answered using polls. However, care should be taken to frame the questions so that they're easier to answer, and so that they're open-ended. Visitors usually ignore complex questions. Polls modules are rather self-explanatory.

Data type: Data is pretty much in the form of percentages of visitors choosing each of the answer options provided and the feedback they provide, which is in text.

Important metrics to be noted: Reactions to the questions you ask your site visitors.

Let's analyze some sample data provided by each of the tools mentioned above and how to get insights out of the data. These insights can then be used to set up different tests that will help increase conversion rates.

## Step 2 : Analyze data - Get insights

### Category 1 : To identify weak page

#### Web analytics tools:

As mentioned above, web analytics tools provide data on the overall performance of pages. Let's take this example -

Page ?	Pageviews ? ↓	Unique Pageviews ?	Avg. Time on Page ?	Entrances ?	Bounce Rate ?	% Exit ?
	6,425 % of Total: 100.00% (6,425)	5,457 % of Total: 100.00% (5,457)	00:01:57 Avg for View: 00:01:57 (0.00%)	3,594 % of Total: 100.00% (3,594)	66.97% Avg for View: 66.97% (0.00%)	55.94% Avg for View: 55.94% (0.00%)
1. /	982 (15.28%)	851 (15.59%)	00:02:08	839 (23.34%)	72.23%	68.43%
2. /abc.html	907 (14.12%)	734 (13.45%)	00:02:17	714 (19.87%)	61.76%	59.87%
3. /def.html	825 (12.84%)	696 (12.75%)	00:02:55	674 (18.75%)	66.17%	64.48%
4. /ghi.html	817 (12.72%)	752 (13.78%)	00:02:49	749 (20.84%)	62.48%	61.69%

Insights: In the above example, it's pretty obvious that the homepage has the highest bounce rate and naturally becomes the obvious weak page in your set of pages. There are other points to be understood while analyzing the bounce rate. The average bounce rate for the example website is around 67%, and any page with a bounce rate above the average should be made a note of.



Tip 1: The exit rate represents the percentage of visitors exiting the particular page. It includes both drop offs (actual exits from website) as well instances of moving on to other pages on the website. Given that, it's best to not consider exit rate the determining factor in selecting weak pages.

Tip 2: Some pages especially landing pages tend to have higher bounce rates compared to the website average. Always consider all available factors before actually marking pages as weak pages.

### Funnel analysis:

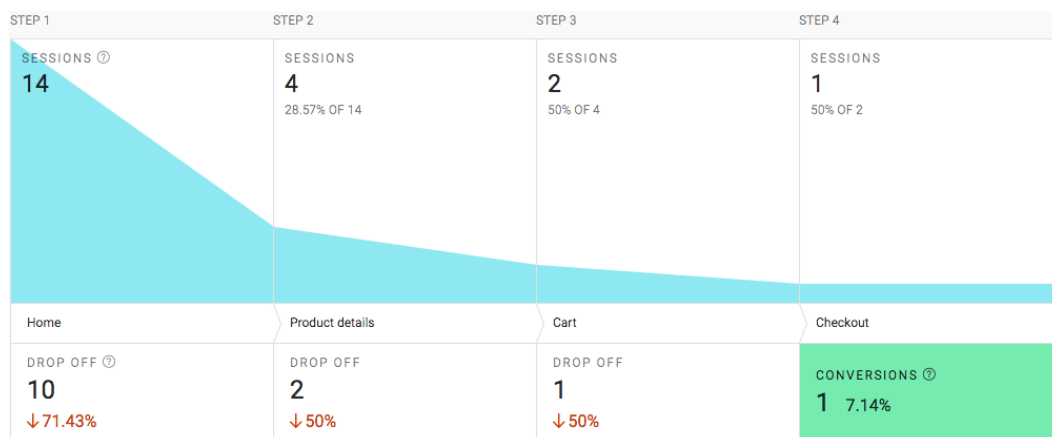
Funnel analysis provides the drop off rate, which is very similar to the bounce rate provided by web analytics tools. Drop off rate is much more action oriented than bounce rate.

Hold on, you say. What's this drop off rate, and how is it different from the bounce rate?

Well, the bounce rate can be defined as 'the percentage of visitors leaving the website after visiting only one page of the website'.

In contrast, the drop off rate can be defined as 'the percentage of visitors leaving a particular page of the website'.

By definition, drop-off rates help predict actual weak pages much more readily than bounce rates do. A typical funnel analysis report looks like this -



Insights: The drop off rate in the bottom indicates that more than 70% of the visitors drop off in the home page. This is a clear hurdle to conversion and needs immediate fixing.

Tip 1: Typically, you'll have multiple funnel analyses running simultaneously. As a result, it's necessary to check all the reports before choosing to mark a page weak. A page performing well in one funnel may not be doing well in another. Keeping that in mind, it's important to compare the overall performance before taking decisions.

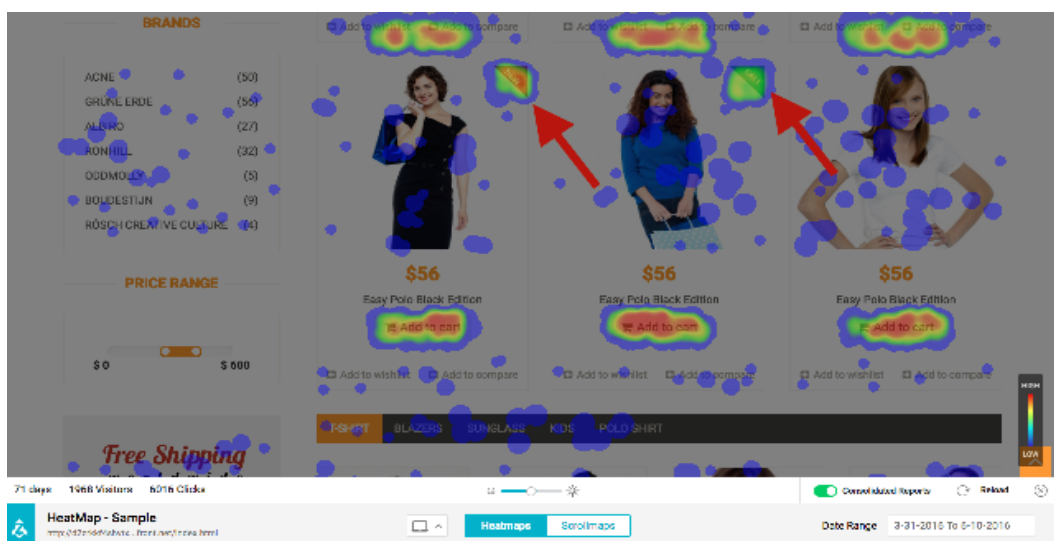
Overall, it's easier to analyze performance reports and identify weak pages. The real challenge arises when identifying weak points on weak pages.

We deal with that in the next section.

## Category 2: To identify red flags on the page

### Heatmaps:

Heatmaps help you identify these red flags on your page. Click density or the lack of click density on a page is one of the many indicators of where visitor focus lies.



Insights: This is an example of classic heatmap report, with visitor clicks represented as heat density globules. Notice the clicks on the 'New' and 'Sale' banners (marked by red arrow). These are not links. However, visitors click on this banner expecting it to lead to a page with 'New Arrivals' or 'Products'. This is a typical case of a banner with missing links.

Continuing in this vein, there are multiple such insights that can be obtained from heatmap reports. A few of them are -

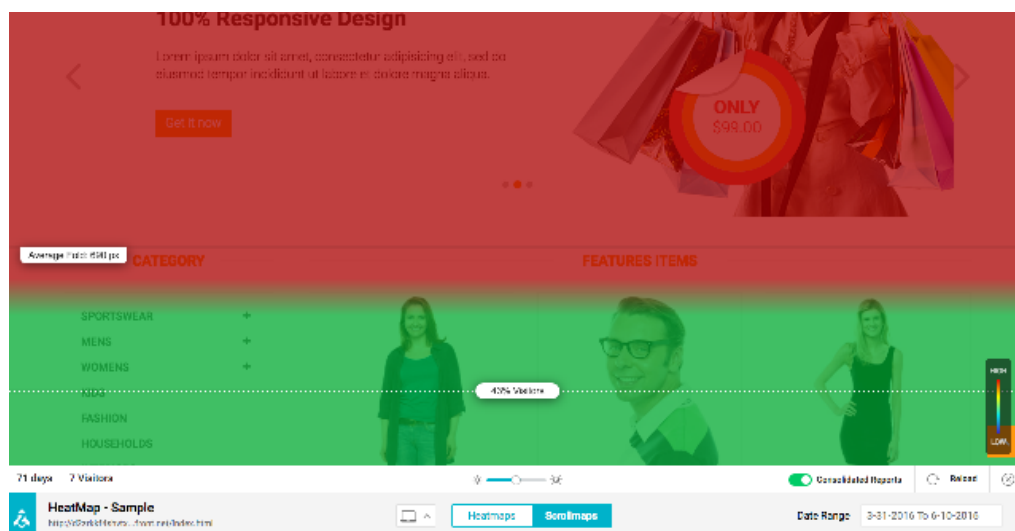
CTA engagement: From heatmap reports it's easy to identify whether the clicks on the important CTA buttons are increasing... Or not. Low visitor engagement with CTA buttons is a definite red flag and correcting it ASAP will have a large impact on conversions.

High and low valued content: We hate to break this to you, but, not all website content is created equal. On a page with multiple topics, certain content areas will have more clicks - indicating that those pieces of content have higher value. Your focus should be on expanding these content sections. Content with fewer clicks is of 'low value' and can be removed to include more high value content.

Device engagement: With more visitors visiting via mobile devices, it's important to have your site optimized for mobile. Heatmaps can be used to check if the engagement on mobile devices has dropped.

## Scrollmaps:

With scrollmaps, it's easy to understand where your visitors spend time and what they ignore. This is important to factor in, while considering where to place CTAs or content.



Insights: The average fold indicates the average boundary of the viewer's screen, across multiple devices. This is a very important metric. As per best practices, the most important CTAs or content should be placed above the average fold so that visitors from all devices are exposed to it. The steep drop from about 99% to 43% is proof that more than 50% visitors are not impressed with the content/images etc and promptly exited the page. This is quite critical and has to be looked into immediately to prevent more conversion leaks.

### **Session replay:**

Session replay is yet another important tool used by marketers to understand visitor behavior. Watching real users interact with your site or web application, and give you a first-hand view of their difficulties, expectations and usage patterns.

Insights: Recordings are a great source for valuable information on user experience across pages. Using mouse movements, it's easy to track visitor flow on the page. Also, there are certain issues that can be easily identified using session recordings and mouse movement maps - Namely hesitation points.

Confusion points: Repeated random clicks on links and CTAs to reach a final destination are the most common indicators of confusion. The user is looking for something but is not able to find it right away and starts clicking on random links in an effort to reach the desired page.

Hesitation points: This is most observed while watching recordings of forms. It's natural to see a user filling form fields rapidly. When they reach the phone number field, you can always notice a certain pause. These kinds of pauses/hesitations are common across a website when a user is unsure if they want to proceed. Such instances have to be resolved immediately to avoid leaks in conversion.

Session recording is one of the best tools for visitor behaviour analysis. It will expose you to areas of improvement in your website that you didn't even know existed.

## **Step 3 : A/B Testing**

A/B testing is the primary form of testing when it comes to weighing page variants against each other.

Step 1: As a first step, you can start by setting goals. A few examples of goals are

- Increasing leads/sign ups/subscribers - Increasing conversion rate
- Increasing engagement - Increasing click rate
- Increasing the average time spent on page
- Reducing drop off rate on the page

While setting goals, you should also consider the following points to help you set parameters that help you evaluate if your tests have succeeded :

- Consider short term goals: It would be wise to consider multiple short term goals initially and weave them together to achieve your long term goals. For eg., if your long term goal is to increase your conversion rate by 200%, start off with a short term goal of 25% and gradually progress towards 200%.
- Set objective/numerical goals: It would be easier to comprehend and achieve a '15% increase in conversion rate' rather than a 'good' increase in conversion rate. Rather than giving yourself abstract goals, having a concrete benchmark you're aiming for helps.
- Set realistic goals: Ensure the goals are realistic and in line with your current website performance stats. For eg, it's impossible to get a perfect, 100% conversion rate no matter how much you optimize.

Step 2: After setting the goal(s) for the A/B test, try coming up with hypotheses that could potentially impact the performance based on the goal. The best way would be to come up with at least 3-4 hypotheses for an experiment.

Tip: For each of these goals, the hypotheses would differ. Please note that the hypotheses should be based on the insights from reports while keeping other parameters constant. Testing parameters beyond the insights might even lead to a decrease in performance.

For eg. You A/B tests can involve hypotheses like -

- Including more impactful CTA positions and copies.
- Two entirely different images - may be one with a person in it and another with a work desk.
- Test a graphic against an image.
- Text against image - you can test to see if you can replace a chunk of text with an image or vice versa.
- Similar images, Man against woman - depending on the concepts you write or the audience you cater, even small changes can make a huge difference.

A few other things you could test are CTAs, ad copies, the value proposition of your opt-in forms and banner texts.

Instead of testing different versions of the CTA, if the heading of the page is changed, the performance could be impacted negatively.

Step 3: After setting goals and coming up with a few hypotheses, the next step would be to build an A/B test. Choose an A/B testing tool that would best fit your needs to create the experiment.

Before creating an A/B test, keep these points in mind -

- Test one variable at a time: As discussed above, if you have decided to test the efficiency of your CTA button, then keep the other variables constant.
- Give enough time: Running tests in a hurry tends to yield biased results. It would be best to run a test at least for an entire week to normalize the fluctuations in data during the week. Ensure the A/B test results in a winning variation.
- Significance level should be 90% or above: If you want a clear winner, then it's better not to lower the significance level. Many marketers tend to do this thanks to this hasty need to get results as soon as possible. It's important to note that the lower the significance level is, the more error-prone the results are.

Tip 1: The significance level of an experiment determines the reliability of the A/B test. For eg. a 95% significance level means that you can be 95% sure that the winning variation was not obtained by fluke. As an industry best practice, we recommend maintaining a 95% significance level for all A/B tests.

Tip 2: We recommend equally allocating traffic to the original page as well as the variations. For eg. if you have two variations of your original page, a 33% traffic allocation to all the 3 pages is advised. This would provide unbiased results because each of the variations has an equal opportunity to perform.

However, there might be cases, especially with landing pages, where you might not want to impact the conversions you're currently getting. In such cases, make sure that 70% of your traffic is allocated to the original page so that most of your conversions are not impacted. This however, will lead to a longer testing duration to decide if the variations are actually performing better than the original page

#### Step 4: Check results and implement decisions

As the A/B test progresses, you'll be able to see the performance of each of the variations. Upon getting a winning variation, your report could look something like this.

CURRENTLY LEADING VARIATION		TOTAL VISITORS ⓘ	DAYS RUNNING	REQ. SIGNIFICANCE ⓘ
🏆 Variation1		11,914	62	95%
IMPROVEMENT ⓘ	CONVERSION RATE ⓘ		NO.OF VARIATIONS	NO.OF GOALS
↑ +30.87%	19.29%		Original + 1	1

Once you see a conclusive result, the A/B test is complete. At this point, it'd be best to check your results and pause the experiment.

Your experiment will provide you with a clear winner, and all you'll need to do would be to adopt that winner as the page variant you go with.



## Conclusion

Phew, that wasn't so hard, was it? We've finally reached the end of this journey.

Now that you've understood what CRO is and how it works, you just need to remember a few points before you delve into the world of conversion rate optimization.

- Opinions don't matter. Data, on the other hand, does.
- Adopt CRO as a part of your inbound marketing strategy.
- CRO should never stop if you're looking at continuous improvement.
- You can get more conversions without having to increase your traffic.
- Always test one variable at a time for best results.

**Conversion rate optimization is a continuous process, and hopefully, you'll be able to make your first steps with confidence!**



## About Zarget

Zarget is a SaaS based conversion optimization software company. We provide intelligent conversion optimization solutions with our all-in-one conversion suite. This suite includes heatmaps, A/B testing, session replay, funnel analysis, split URL testing, polls & feedback, and form analytics - in one streamlined tool.



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