10 Tips to Increase Sales at Home & Abroad

Introduction

You want to be a global online retailer? Great. Your challenge is much bigger than simply moving visitors to your site. You must also make them feel comfortable, stay, browse, and, most importantly, buy. But how?

Business owners who want to sell abroad online face a unique set of challenges.

Not only are you likely to be short on time and resources, but profitability and financial restraints remain a constant concern. You may not have a robust marketing budget, or the technical ability to implement some of the sophisticated tools that you've read about in business publications, but you can still be a persuasive and successful seller.

With the demands and realities of business owners who want to sell online all over the world, we've created this collection of user-friendly tips that will help you build your business and increase sales. These tips are based on expertise from our own insiders here at 2Checkout, industry thought leaders, and insights from best-practices research. We don't just want you to read this e-book. We want you to learn actionable ways to start expanding your business and accept payments globally TODAY —regardless of your size, experience, or budget.

Read our 10 simple tips every business owner can implement that will lead more buyers to purchase your product and become satisfied customers, regardless of device or location.

#1 - Localize your customers' buying experiences

#2 - Own your online reputation

#3 - Understand the value of a quick response

#4 - Master effective lead nurturing

#5 - Re-engage customers for cost-effective campaigns

#6 - Provide personalized pages

#7 - Eliminate "choice paralysis"

#8 - Overcome consumers' objections and issues

#9 - Eliminate barriers during checkout

#10 - Build the best call-to-actions buttons

tip #1 # Localize your customers' buying experiences

Wendie Wulff
Communications Specialist
at 2Checkout

The best way to persuade people from other countries to buy from you, no matter where you are, is to offer localized payment options. Think about all of the different countries, cultures, languages, currencies, and payment methods out there. You don't want your buyers to be confused by what they don't know…or change their familiar, trusted payment method just to buy from you. You want to make it easy for them to use their familiar, trusted payment method every time they buy from you. Proprietary 2Checkout research shows that automatically localizing payment options definitely increases sales. In most countries, 60% to 90% of customers prefer to pay with their local currency when shopping online.

Learning the language of the country you want to sell in goes a long way. A recent JP Morgan report says only 27% of online shoppers worldwide speak English. If you can't learn the language of the country you want to sell in, find local, in-country resources to partner with. In the end, you only really need to be certain your website and payment process both make sense in the language of the country you want to sell in. This can be done from your country with translators or translation services.

It is also important to learn something about the culture you are selling into. This is called cultural competency. Alternative countries may find the business practices of other cultures offensive. Aside from adhering to the business basics of fair business practices, disclosing information about your business, being upfront about costs, providing a secure payment process, and respecting customer

privacy, there are cultural norms that you need to be aware of. Potential oversights can hurt your sales, or boost them. Research the countries and cultures you will be selling into and use the information you gather.

As part of this research, investigate local and regional laws. For example, advertising is not universally accepted; many European countries do not allow the use of words like 'better' and 'best' to describe products. And marketing tactics like contests and "buy one, get one free" are often prohibited by some countries.

Whether you tailor your product through promoting, sales, and checkout experiences for the local preferences of customers in every country where you want to sell — or choose to use a partner to help you achieve the same result — the facts show that providing localized payment options will help your customers to buy (and you to sell) more.

Sources

Copyblogger, "12 Tips for Selling to a Global Audience"
http://www.copyblogger.com/global-marketing/

tip #2 # Own your online reputation

Anne Eshelman
Marketing Specialist
at 2Checkout

Whether you market actively on social media or not, your customers from around the world are there — and they are looking for information about your brand and products. According to SalesForce, 74% of consumers rely on the advice of connections in their social networks to guide their purchase decisions, and your prospects stand anywhere from 54% to 80% through the buying cycle before they even consider contacting you (MarketingProfs)!

Social media can be used effectively to sell globally despite cultural differences. For Facebook, consider the strategy of maintaining one main brand page that houses links to multiple localized branded landing pages in several local languages. For Twitter, create twitter accounts for each local language you want to focus your marketing efforts towards. Take a look at what countries most your sales are coming from and focus on those perspective countries local languages. Use subtitles for YouTube videos in the languages you believe will benefit you to focus on (you will need to use local language resources for the countries/regions you are targeting). More importantly, make sure that the social media platforms your company uses are the same platforms that your target country uses; Facebook and Twitter may be the most popular platforms in America, but QZone is the a dominant platform in China and VKontakte currently occupies millions of monitors in Russia

As a global online retailer, you can't afford to put the image (or fate) of your business into someone else's hands without working to shape the conversation. Whether you listen to the conversation about your brand online or not, it is happening, and it's influencing people's decisions. In fact, 49% of Americans believe online word of mouth is highly credible.

How do you go about persuading global prospects you don't even know to express interest in your business? Manage what global customers say about your business: spread the positive feedback you receive, taking a stance about who you are and what you believe in, and proactively engage prospects before they form an opinion for, or against, you (and your competitors).

Here are some easy methods to find your voice in global, online conversations.

✓ Automatically monitor keywords online.

Set up a Google Alert using your business name as the search term and you'll know any time someone posts information about your business on a site where Google crawls. It's also a good idea to research the social media platforms of your target countries and to know what, if any, social media listening tools are available for those platforms. If you use Facebook or Twitter, you can also use TweetDeck or HootSuite as analytic tools. Add your business name to the feed so you can easily spot information about your business posted on Facebook or Twitter. You can also invest in social media "listening" tools like Radian6, or online reputation management sites like ReviewPush and Trackur that monitor all activity related to your business on Google, Yelp, Foursquare, Yahoo, Yellow Pages, and more, for about $30 a month.

The Google Keyword Planner can also help you identify popular terms and phrases that customers (no matter where they are located) use when looking for a site like yours. Depending on the social media listening tool you choose, you may be able to measure an ROI for your leads. (The best tools will typically integrate with your current CRM, to seamlessly track leads coming from social media).

Online word of mouth is another way to own your online reputation. Online word of mouth is especially effective when dealing with prospects from other countries who only interact with you online. It can be a powerful tool in either attracting, or losing, customers. In fact, research by advertising firm MDG

indicates that 92% of those surveyed trust the online opinions and reviews they read. Generally, you'll find three types of word of mouth conversations.

Customers sharing a negative experience. When people share an experience they've had with your company, they take the time to do so because there was some type of emotional, "life-changing" event. Unfortunately, people who have had a bad experience are far more inclined to vent online than those who have had a satisfactory experience are inclined to praise. Bad experiences happen. So do bad reviews. The challenge is finding a way to "right the wrong" swiftly and publicly – with worldwide visibility – even if you don't think you're in the wrong. As soon as you notice the information, respond publicly to the person and apologize for the negative experience. While being empathetic, however, don't sacrifice your brand if the issue is not all your fault (the customer is in clear violation, trolling, etc.). Apologize for their frustration then politely respond with how they can change the outcome or why the outcome has to be what it is. Be sure to do this in public so other buyers can refer to your stance and gain perspective. If you have the aggrieved customer's contact information, contact him or her privately as well, and offer a solution that might offset the bad experience. If you don't have the outraged party's information on file, follow up on the negative review with a request that he or she contact you privately for further resolution. Though many unhappy customers may not wish to deal with you or your business further, responding quickly and diligently shows the public that you truly make an effort to resolve issues. Harris Interactive's Retail Consumer Report indicates that 18% of unhappy customers can be transformed into loyal customers, simply by being acknowledged by the company that made them unhappy. Nearly 34% of offended commenters will even delete or amend their negative review.

Customers sharing positive experiences. Satisfied customers who leave a positive review about your company lend credibility to your brand when others search for your company name. The review's message is boosted when they or you republish it to share the positive review. If you receive a note of thanks via   giving your business the thumbs up, ask the customer for permission to use their positive comments on your website and other social media outlets. If you get rave reviews from customers on Twitter, publish them directly to your website by hovering over the "Tweet" with your mouse, select "Embed Tweet," and then copy the HTML code provided to your website. Form a template that you can send to established customers with a marketing promotion or coupon thanking them for their business, and ask them to share their experience on

your Facebook, FourSquare, and Yelp profiles. You may even choose to allocate a portion of your marketing budget for "gifts" you extend as a thank you to the customers who support you with positive reviews. The more positive news associated with your brand online, the less vulnerable you are to negative news.

People asking what their friends know or think about your company. Social media and relevant search have made a very small and connected world out of a large, global one when it comes to finding a trusted resource who can speak to a brand or company. Global prospects use these resources to manage the massive

Leverage brand ambassadors.

By partnering with influencers who are already connected to the target market you seek, and are truly passionate about your business and mission, you can get in front of the customers you want. The value of the ambassador is trust by association. Ambassadors' followers trust what they say; in turn, their recommendation endorses you as a similarly trusted brand. Though you want to reach as many customers as possible through a brand ambassador, the key isn't finding the person who already has a huge following and fan base, but rather, a person who has a shared "fire" for your brand, and has a reputation he or she can leverage. (Reaching out to an already established key influencer does not guarantee a successful relationship. There's a good chance that person will sell out to the highest bidder as soon as a better opportunity comes along.) If you have loyal, long-term customers or well-known peers in the industry, you might consider working with these people to create a mutually beneficial case study or blog post that can be translated into multiple languages. This is especially helpful if you have loyal, long-term customers or well-know industry peers in the countries where you want to sell.

When selling in countries other than your own, you are selling outside the cultural zone you are familiar with. Find ambassadors or resources in the country you want to sell in that you can trust. These might be freelancers, resellers, other local websites, online communities, etc.

Be where your customers are.

Your website may clearly "spell out" the process for handling customer issues with live chat, email or a phone number, but it's critical that you adjust to your global customers' communication preferences, even if it means adding additional monitoring tools or staff to your workflow. It's even better if you can add resources fluent in the languages of the countries you are targeting. For example, customers who post a question to your Facebook wall or Twitter account typically anticipate a quick response in social media. Customers who post to forums have a similar expectation. (Keep in mind that forums might also require you to stay engaged in the conversation beyond one response). 89% of customers leave brands because of bad customer service. While adjusting your process to accommodate them might be a time-consuming practice, it's critical to keeping online-savvy, international customers happy.

Sources

Salesforce: Exact Target, "20 Stats About How Social Media Influences Purchasing Decisions"
http://www.exacttarget.com/blog/20-stats-about-how-social-media-influences-purchasing-decisions/

MDG, "Have You Seen Your Online Reputation?"
http://www.mdgadvertising.com/blog/have-you-seen-your-online-reputation-infographic/

Harris Interactive, "March 2011 Retail Consumer Report"

tip #3

Understand the value of a quick response

Melissa Blackburn
*Director of Customer*
Experience
at 2Checkout

With so much information available online, global customers can research all of their options (including how competitive your pricing and value-added offerings are) before they even look at your website. As we discussed in Tip #2, people form opinions through discussions in social media, online forums, and customer reviews before you ever get a chance to share your message. When you do get the opportunity to connect, your task is to do so as quickly, efficiently, and convincingly as you can.

Here's how your timely responses can increase your sales across the global community.

✓ Measure success in minutes

The faster you can present personalized attention to prospects and customers, the better your chances of converting them into buyers. In today's fast-paced, always-connected, global world, a fast response no longer means a matter of days: it's a matter of minutes. One MIT study (results shown below) indicates that allowing as little as five minutes to lapse between a prospect's expressed interest and a vendor's personalized response severely reduces the likelihood that that prospect will remain engaged with the transaction. Again, response in local language is best.

Response Time from Creation
Initial Dials to Leads that become Contacted
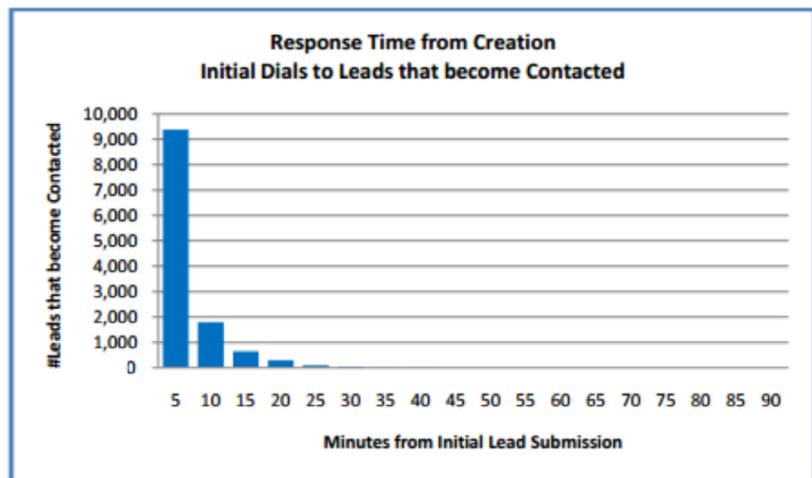
Automate your messaging

When speed is of the essence, marketing automation technology can be your best competitive advantage, both in decreasing response time and reducing personnel costs. Once reserved only for large companies with deep pockets,   at the right time, in the right language, and at the right point in the sales cycle, you can quickly react to the common questions that arise at various points in your customer acquisition process. You can also dedicate your true "human resources" to the most qualified leads.

Use live chat on your website

There's one simple way to take global customers from hesitancy to checkout: be available to chat. In the study Making Proactive Chat Work by Forrester Research, 44% of online consumers surveyed said that the option to have questions answered by a live person in the middle of an online purchase is one of the most important features a website can offer. When you're a retailer customers may not be familiar with, the opportunity to speak directly with customers leaves you less vulnerable to outside sources who may do the talking for you. When doing this globally, invest in local language chat providers.

Sources

MIT, "How Much Time Do You Have Before Web-Generated Leads Go Cold?"

Eloqua, "Does Automation Impact Lead Conversion Rates?"
http://blog.eloqua.com/lead-conversion-rates/

Forrester, "Making Proactive Chat Work"
http://www.forrester.com/Making+Proactive+Chat+Work/fulltext/-/E-RES57054

tip #4

Jenny Comisford
Demand Generation
Marketing Manager
at 2Checkout

&

Anne Eshelman
Marketing Specialist
at 2Checkout

Master effective lead nurturing

Lead nurturing is technically defined as "the process of cultivating leads who are not yet ready to buy." Generally, companies have lead generation specialists or other marketing and sales personnel engaged in these activities. Learning to do it effectively has a direct and measurable impact on your success as a global, online retailer. According to Forrester Research, companies who implement lead nurturing can expect a 19% increase in their pipeline value.

Effective lead nurturing is about meeting your customers where they are, no matter where they are physically. As a global, online retailer, you're privy to loads of personal information about your site visitors, based simply on a prospect's search habits. This includes how long he or she stays on a page, what products he or she navigates to, and what search terms he or she uses to get to your site. When you use what you know about your customers, you can anticipate their needs, offer relevant, localized content, and move them through the sales funnel. That's the essence of lead nurturing.

If you're a B2B company, lead nurturing can help move suspects and prospects through your marketing and sales funnels, reducing your customer acquisition cost and minimizing the amount of time it takes to close a customer. DocuSign, a leading provider of eSignature software, doubled its sales pipeline within two quarters and reduced web churn by 66% with a cohesive lead nurturing program. In the world of B2C, where impulse buys and annual sales events reign supreme, lead nurturing can deliver repeat customers and make the most of customer lifetime value.

Here are a few ideas to keep in mind when designing your global lead nurturing campaign.

Automate data capture and USE IT.

Whether it's a customer ordering a pair of shoes or the CFO of a company downloading a white paper, you're collecting information about that customer or prospect through your website or marketing automation tool. Collect this data in a usable format. Avoid free text data fields whenever possible; they're difficult to normalize and challenging for software to recognize and compute.

Once your data is captured, use this information to make decisions about the prospect's situation. Is he or she new to your website? What is his or her occupation? Where does he or she spend the most time on your website? With some strategic observation, you can begin to determine and craft effective messages through concrete insights.

Understand the purchase cycle.

The key to lead nurturing is to understand where your customer is at any given point in your sales funnel. Mapping your customer/prospect's buying journey can be tricky. Though there are differences in the global B2C and B2B buying cycles, there are generally five stages in the process.

Phase 1: Suspect -- Anyone in the digital space.

How to reach them: Create relevant content that anyone (especially those in your local, target market) can find in social media, on your blog, etc. This will create brand awareness and educate potential prospects no matter where they are. As part of this, create content optimized for the search engines in the countries where you want to do business. Local markets are often best served by local search engines, so localize your messages and search terms for each market you serve.

Phase 2: Prospect – A prospect is any individual who has provided you with some contact or firmographic information through content download, account registration, or previous purchase. People in this group have "opted in" to hearing from you, and have devoted some time to consuming your content.

How to reach them: Present them with more in-depth, complex information, including appropriate product-specific information. Use the 3 to 1 rule. Send

three educational pieces of content and one "hard sale." They're interested enough to give you information, but not "sold." Respect the prospect's boundaries in the process.

Phase 3: Lead -- An individual who has self-identified as being interested in learning more about your offerings and services. Offer the most relevant product information based on his or her demographic and/or firmographic information.

How to reach them: Case studies and proof stories are an effective way to reiterate how you've helped others find success with your product. Make sure the study or story you share is relevant to the individual's need. Ideally, these will adhere to in-country cultural and language norms.

Phase 4: Customer -- The individual has been engaged by your marketing and offering(s) enough to strategically pursue the purchase.

How to reach them: In this phase, individuals will begin to question your (and your product's) value against your competitors' (and product's) value; offer more information to validate being on the customer's "short list" of considerations. Perhaps a comparison chart showing your competitors' products' features and benefits.

Phase 5: Customer -- They bought what you sell, but your job is far from over.

How to reach them: Educate these customers on some of your other offerings based on their previous behavior and start to cultivate a relationship. Integrate a personal touch into the communications you send. This is one good way to increase customer retention.

Map your sales cycle to the customer.

Aligning your sales cycle to the customer through mapping may sound complex, but it's not as intimidating if you approach the task with logic. Consider these questions:

- What does the customer need at this point?
- What questions might he or she have?
- What information can I use to persuade him or her to take the next step?

Here at 2Checkout, for example, we map our cycles based on what happened each time we made contact with a prospect/customer and identified what goal we had for each one of those occurrences.

Start simple.

Once you've captured usable data and mapped out relevant content to facilitate the buying process, it's time to launch your campaign. Although lead nurturing campaigns can be quite elaborate, start simple so that you can determine what's working, what's not, and adjust accordingly.

An safe place to start is a "Welcome" program. The first time someone visits your site, gather his or her email address, and send a welcome email introducing your brand and its key features and benefits. If you're in B2B, this email might be an opportunity to offer your customer a high-level piece of content to give him or her a taste of the types of information you'll provide in the future. If you're in B2C, this email might be an opportunity for a "new customer" discount or free shipping.

Whether B2B or B2C, if the visitor clicks on any part of your content, it's a cue that he or she is interested, though still a prospect. A few days later, you might send heartier content to see if he or she "bites." As each person takes the next step, he or she moves down the sales funnel and you serve content relevant to that location in the funnel. The more adept you become at understanding what customers respond to, and ignore, the more sophisticated your campaigns can become.

tip #5 # Re-engage customers for cost-effective campaigns

Jenny Comisford
Demand Generation
Marketing Manager
at 2Checkout

Trying to determine which marketing automation campaign will give you the most "bang for your buck" when you've got limited resources? Think re-engagement. Because you're targeting "low-hanging fruit" in the form of customers who had a relationship with you at some point in the past, re-engagement can be one of the most vital — and cost-effective — nurturing campaigns you execute. In fact, MarketingSherpa estimates that re-engaging customers through email can result in up to a 42% increase in revenue. When marketing to these customers you are trying to re-engage, don't forget that they are individuals living in a unique culture, region, and country. Use cultural competence to make re-engagement more relevant. Perhaps tie messages into holidays, news stories, or other cultural events.
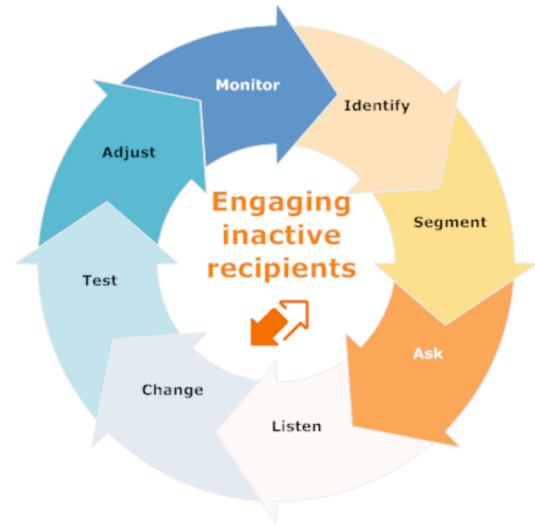
Image from www.socialemailmarketing.eu

Here are a few ideas for building an effective, global re-engagement program:

Be personal.

Re-engagement is about reminding customers that they once gave you their business, and persuading them that you're still a valuable resource. The more personalization you can use, the better. Address customers by name, and tell them about relevant products and services you provide based on previous interactions with you. Give each customer the sense that the message he or she receives is tailored to him or her, and that you put time and effort into winning his or her business once again.

Get noticed.

Re-engagement can be a low-cost reacquisition strategy, but you may have to work even harder to win a customer's attention and business the second or third time around. One approach may be to lead with a strong and appealing offer geared only to this customer segment. If appropriate, you may customize the offer for something the customer has purchased before. State your business (and urgency around the offer) clearly in the email subject line.

Measure responses.

Establish parameters around your re-engagement program to determine what's working… and what's not. Monitor open, unsubscribe, and click-thru rates for emails, and test which subject lines, subject matter, and promotions generate the most traffic, and to which customers. Consider other factors that impact success and response, including the time and day you send messages.

Clean your list.

According to HubSpot, as much as 25% of your customer contact list can become invalidated within a year due to members opting out and unsubscribing as well as the accumulation of invalid and inactive email accounts. Not only is it a waste of time to message invalid addresses (and against FTC regulations in the US to email those who have unsubscribed), but it can give you a false perspective of your success. The fact of the matter is that some of your dormant customers will never re-engage. By staying aware of who does, you improve your marketing ability to break through to the folks who DO want to continue business with you.

Determine customer segments.

When you begin to see patterns in your metrics, you may begin to segment customers by product and message interest, as well as likelihood to buy again. This is based on their behavior in regard to your messages. While re-targeting is one of the lower cost campaigns to execute, it's not without the cost of your time and resources. Determine which customers are worth trying to persuade — and which you should let go.

Establish an end game.

The length of your customer buying cycle will vary according to your unique business, but you should establish an end point when you will consider those who don't respond as an "unengaged" portion of your list, and therefore, no longer part of your re-engagement campaign.

tip #6 # Provide personalized pages

Tyler Ransburgh
Director of Digital Marketing
at 2Checkout

Providing global customers with a relevant, localized experience as they travel through your advertising channels can increase click-through-rate (CTR) and conversions. This process includes customizing for localization as we shared in tip #1. This process also includes optimizing site design for local requirements. Think of the differences between Swiss austere design norms and those of the Chinese, which are far more information rich and – to Western eyes – cluttered. Reactions to colors and symbols also vary from country to country. In many cultures, white is the color of mourning. This is not good for shopping.

With paid search (or any other targeted advertising) you have the opportunity to provide custom landing pages based on the path your customers have chosen to reach your site. According to Hubspot's "Marketing Benchmarks Report," companies see a 55% increase in leads when they increase the number of personalized landing pages they offer from ten to 15. That said, don't sacrifice landing page quality simply to create more of them. (That same research concludes that a clean layout is one of the primary elements customers consider when choosing to engage with, or click away from, a customized page).

Before you set out to customize, create a landing page template that clearly tells customers who you are, what you do, and why they should care, in a visually appealing way. Add localized elements to that landing page. For a simplistic example -- a Greek landing page -- consider the colors Agean blue and white and images of local architecture.

Once you've found that design, here are three adgroup themes you can experiment with to customize landing pages.

Keywords.

This is the simplest way to customize a landing page. In their simplest form, landing pages will focus on your product or service using various keyword phrases associated with your business product, or service. (If you're not sure what these are, take a cue from your site analytics to see how customers get to your site). You can also extend the industry phrases with descriptors like internet, online, web (or online processing, internet processing) to create a very specific, and ideally, relevant customer experience. Remember to customize in local language for SEO.

Country, language, and currency.

When selling your products or services to an international audience, localized content goes a long way to build customer confidence, relationships, and trust. It's easy to target your paid search both to specific countries and to more granular details, like regions within a country. As with your ads, landing pages should present the content in the local language, currency, and other local standards like form layout (not all countries use postal code or state). International customers will feel more comfortable doing business with an online retailer who can deliver a landing page tailored to what is familiar and consistent with local customs. In turn, they are more likely to convert.

Industry.

Particularly in the B2B world, it is important to understand which industries your product resonates with. Creating landing pages that speak to the customers from their points of view can make or break the sale. Providing real-world examples and testimonials on a landing page that specifically relates to the buyer's position, concerns, questions, and desired solutions can increase sign-ups and conversions.

By customizing these options and testing, 2Checkout has seen conversion rates increase 137% and cost per conversion decrease by 48%. Much of your success with customized landing pages is a "test and learn" process. Experiment with your approach to paid and customized landing pages to find the best, localized combinations that help you attract new customers, and drive more sales.

Sources

Hubspot, "Marketing Benchmarks from 7,000+ Businesses"

tip #7 # Eliminate "choice paralysis"

Simon Paul
Web & Graphic Designer
at 2Checkout

One outcome of globalization is that the internet and the new "flat world" have dramatically increased the number of choices available to consumers. The variety and quality of products and services you offer in relation to a customer's perceived value of them is one key determinant of website conversion. Though you want to meet the needs of your prospects and customers, giving them too much choice presents the risk of "choice paralysis." This leads to the exact outcome all online marketers work to avoid: presented with too many choices, consumers get "stuck" in the analyzing and decision-making process. Ultimately the buyer makes the one choice you don't want: to abandon his or her shopping cart. As Barry Shwartz, author of "The Paradox of Choice" explains, choice paralysis occurs when "choice no longer liberates, but debilitates."

"As the number of choices keeps growing, negative aspects of having a multitude of options begin to appear. As the number of choices grows further, the negatives escalate until we become overloaded. At this point, choice no longer liberates, but debilitates."

- Barry Shwartz, "The Paradox of Choice"

Unlike a brick and mortar establishment, which can proactively guide the customer through the sales experience and offer solutions when a customer's nonverbal cues show that he or she is "over analyzing" the purchase decision, global, online retailers must defend against choice paralysis digitally. Though it takes paying careful attention to your product mix, pricing, and website functionality, it can be done.

Here are three ways to combat choice paralysis.

Know your customer.

Website conversion is about leading the user to his or her end goal (your product) through various sections of content. Users have different reasons for being interested in your product, but you can lead them through the buying process and eliminate choice paralysis with how you manage the information on your site. Start with a clear brand proposition that you communicate through your localized site design, layout, copy, and checkout experience. If a customer can't understand what you do within the first few seconds he or she arrives on your site, you risk overwhelming him or her.

Be clear.

Create clear category distinctions that allow customers to find what they need based on the reasons they've searched and come to your site. (If you're not sure, turn to your site analytics and a basic tool like Google Keywords Tool for some insight.) Use overt terminology that quickly allows customers to determine the differences among categories. Eliminate generic terms and "fluff" in your copy and content. Tell the customer exactly what makes one product different from the other — even if it's simply the price. Images should provide the same clear distinction. For example, if one product includes seven "accessory" parts, and a similar one includes four, show the difference visually, and point the distinction out in copy. If you sell software, show a screen capture of your product. Give clear definitions or suggestions for each option so it's easy for people to understand the benefits. Provide visuals that organize and help clarify each option. Highlight a default or locally-popular option that can guide the user to a selection if he or she struggles to make a decision.

Leverage suggestive selling.

If you present several products alongside one another (for example, a pricing or subscription-based menu), highlight a default option to guide the user to the most locally-popular solution which gives him or her a sense of grounding when comparing multiple options. As he or she shops and adds items to his or her cart, you might also feature a "suggested products" box, showing a few images that go with what he or she has selected, to help him or her navigate with ease.

Sources

Social Triggers, "How to Increase Online Sales By 600%"
http://socialtriggers.com/get-online-sales/

Web Marketing Today, "Increase Conversions by Limiting Choices"

invesp, "Two Ways to Combat Consumer Paralysis"
http://www.invesp.com/blog/sales-marketing/two-ways-to-combat-choice-paralysis.html

Smashing Magazine, "Design To Sell: 8 Useful Tips To Help Your Website Convert"
http://uxdesign.smashingmagazine.com/2009/04/06/design-to-sell-12-tips-to-help-your-website-convert/

Overcome the consumer's objections and issues

Alex Mullin
Head of Sales & Marketing
*at X-Cart*

XCART

Shopping cart abandonment is a reality of doing business as a global, online retailer. Conversion research conducted by SeeWhy indicates that as few as 1% of customers will actually buy on the first visit to a site. While there is now enough science and research behind shopping cart conversion to help online retailers take steps to change this, there is one consistent reason that consumers abandon: unexpected costs. Whether due to shipping, taxes, or missing the threshold required to qualify for a promotion, a total amount due that was higher than what the consumer anticipated is the number one reason consumers gave for abandoning online shopping carts when Forrester researched the issue back in 2010. It remains a challenge for global, online retailers to overcome today. Especially with international shipping and tax costs.

Though you can't control some of the costs that cause consumers to flee (like taxes), you can set their expectations appropriately by keeping them informed, and addressing their concerns. This is particularly important when it comes to potentially unanticipated costs like shipping and taxes associated with doing business in other countries. Here are three ways to counteract the negative impact.

Preview shipping costs.

With a shipping preview button, customers can see their shipping costs long before they get to the final phase of checkout. Not only does this transparency set their expectations appropriately, it gives you an opportunity to potentially upsell and increase their order size if you offer free or discounted shipping based on a minimum purchase. One example of such an approach by X-Cart, an e-commerce shopping cart provider, is shown in the image below.
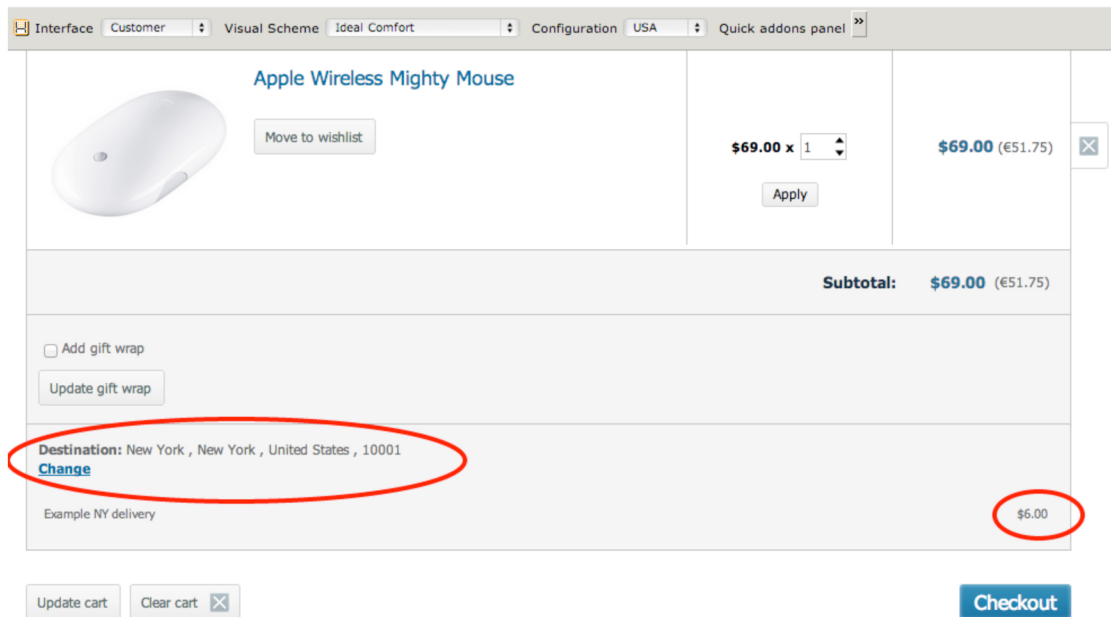
Along with updating fees in "real-time" as customers add to, and edit, their shopping cart contents, tailor your checkout flow to the benefit of the customer, specifically if you offer a premium, or free shipping. In this case, the checkout cart should not only tell the customer about shipping fees and taxes, it should clearly state how much more he or she needs to spend in order receive premium or free shipping. Serve a pop up that allows him or her to keep shopping in the event that he or she needs to add to their order in to meet your offer criteria.

Remind customers of their cart.

Customers abandon shopping carts for all kinds of reasons, many of which may have nothing to do with their lack of desire to buy the product, or buy from you. Send a personalized email reminder featuring an image of a product that the customer abandoned in the shopping cart. Ensure that your email is mobile optimized to accommodate tablets, smart phones as well as desktop users. Include a clear and simple call to action: take a few moments to finish your purchase; you'll have the product in your hands on "X" (specific date.)

Solve their concern.

Customers are empowered in our digital age to price shop and comparison buy. In fact, the thought that they will find a better deal elsewhere may drive shopping cart abandonment. You can counteract this abandonment by understanding who is more likely to be price sensitive to fees, and proactively addressing their concerns. In a conversion study conducted by SeeWhy, cart value was a key driver behind abandonment rates. In the case of lower value shopping carts worth less than $100, abandonment rates were 78%. When the cart value increased to $100 -$1250, however, abandonment dropped to 52%. Analyzing your own value-oriented metrics can help you to re-engage those who abandoned. For example, offering a discount coupon to lower cart value shoppers may be enough to offset the costs of shipping that cause them not to buy. Likewise, you might remind them if they add just $X worth of product to their abandoned cart, they could qualify for free shipping worth a value of $X.

Sources

See Why, "Understanding Online Buying Behavior: Part III Cart Value Abandonment Trends"
http://seewhy.com/understanding-online-buying-behavior-part-iii-cart-abandonment-trends/

Forrester, "Understanding Shopping Cart Abandonment"
http://www.forrester.com/Understanding+Shopping+Cart+Abandonment/fulltext/-/E-RES56827

tip #9 # Eliminate barriers during checkout

Bob Zabloudil
Product Manager
at 2Checkout

Attracting global customers with a visually appealing website, quality products, and persuasive pricing strategy isn't the end of the game when it comes to increasing online sales. Once you've successfully conquered all of those hurdles, you must convince them to finish their purchase, and complete the transaction. One way to do that? Present a localized and secure checkout process that is as efficient for the customer as you can make it.

With an average shopping cart abandonment rate of 73.6%, it's imperative to do everything you can to increase conversions. We'll discuss a few ways to decrease friction throughout the checkout process to make your site a converting machine!

Here are three ways – beyond offering checkout in local currency – to ensure a customer-friendly, global, online checkout to increase sales and conversions.

✓ Give them a choice

Though it's in your best interest as an online marketer to collect data about your prospects through site registration and log in, it's an additional step that many don't want to complete. One Econsultancy survey indicated that more than 25% of customers said they would abandon a purchase if forced to register for an account to complete it. The fact of the online retail environment is that today's customers have endless choices; you'll lose sales if you don't give them what they want. Keep in mind that competitors aren't just online. Your customers can always walk into physical store, select an item, pay for it — and never be bothered to self-identify.

Though you should be mindful of the need to respect customer privacy and ensure an efficient checkout, that doesn't mean you shouldn't ask them to register. Give them the "what's in it for me" pitch. Use bullet points under your registration option that succinctly promote the discounts, special offers, and conveniences they'll appreciate on future orders if they register.

Additionally, clearly offer the option for customers to checkout as a "guest," which should be a quick and simple process. (In that same Econsultancy study, 14% of customers cited "no guest checkout option" as the reason they abandoned a shopping cart.) Remember that customers who purchase, but don't officially register on your site, have still given you quite a bit of personal information (not to mention, their business). If you force registration and prospects abandon their transaction completely, you'll never know who they were — or how to remarket to them.

Do the hard work for them.

Pre-populate the email field on your registration form with the email the customer entered during checkout. (If your checkout utilizes a third party shopping cart, confirm whether the registration process is built into the cart. If so, make sure it's an optional feature). Regardless of the form type your checkout uses, pre-populate information when you can using "shortcuts" like postal codes that prefill city, state and country, and shipping information that can be populated from billing information with one click. According to Bigcommerce, you can increase conversion by 50% by simply eliminating unnecessary form fields for the customer to complete. That said, "stress test" your prefill functionality. If the customer has an address that isn't recognized because it is unusual (for example, an apartment address might have a ½), allow the option to override.

Guide, don't distract.

Your checkout page should clearly tell the customer what is in his or her cart (including size and color information), and what he or she will pay for those contents. Make it simple for customers to add to or edit the cart. If you offered a promotion on a customized landing page that they were served, prefill the contents of the promotion box for them, and clearly demonstrate that the discount was applied. If you offer multiple boxes for promotion codes, but only honor one discount per transaction, state your policy clearly so they don't spend time inserting a code that isn't accepted. Include detail around the shipping type (carrier and estimated days to delivery), along with cost. Adding a live chat feature in local language to help customers receive real-time answers to their questions at checkout can present an opportunity to cross-sell and reduce returns in cases where the customer may not realize they need additional parts or tools to use a product. According to Practical Ecommerce, live chat has the power to potentially increase conversion rates for some small businesses by as much as 50%. Be sure to state the hours that live chat is available if you can't accommodate 24/7 chat service. As we said earlier, you might need to investigate local language chat options for specific countries.

Sources

Practical Ecommerce, "Implementing Live Chat: Dos and Don'ts"
http://www.practicalecommerce.com/articles/4076-Implementing-Live-Chat-Dos-and-Don-ts

Conversion Rate Experts, "Split testing 101: A quick-start guide to conversion rate optimization"
http://www.conversion-rate-experts.com/cro-tips/

KISSmetrics, "What The Highest Converting Websites Do Differently"
http://blog.kissmetrics.com/what-converting-websites-do/

Econsultancy, "Eight out of the top 10 US retailers offer guest checkout"
http://econsultancy.com/us/blog/10355-eight-out-of-top-10-us-retailers-offer-guest-checkout

MOZ, "Holy Grail of eCommerce Conversion Optimization - 91 Point Checklist and Infographic"
http://moz.com/blog/holygrail-of-ecommerce-conversion-optimization-91-points-checklist

tip #10

Build the best call-to-actions buttons

Siddharth Deswal
Market Expert
at Wingify

Wingify

Emarketing consultancy firm SilverPop estimates that 50% of your customers will click away from your site within the first eight seconds of reaching your landing page. In some cases, it's not within your control. Perhaps the customer isn't part of your target market, or didn't mean to land on your site. A more likely explanation? They are a person you could have made a customer—but he or she didn't find the opportunity to buy the item that would solve his or her problem on your landing page and gave up. Improving call to action buttons throughout your site can help solve your global customers' problems.

Here are three easy ways to evaluate and potentially improve the call to action buttons on your site.

✓ Use the Contrast Effect

The basic premise of the Contrast Effect is that you can enhance or diminish the value of something based on how contrasted it is from its environment. On the web, that "environment" refers to a page; what you should contrast is the Call-to-Action button (CTA.) Sometimes, creating contrast is a simple matter of using different wording, font, or placement. You can test the impact of such changes with an A/B test that you normalize for all other factors, except for the different call to action button contrasts you use to experiment. Consider the different impacts of a few call to action button treatments used in a test by RIPT Apparels as shown in the images below.

*Original
CTA button*

*Text
version*

*Final
version*

Image credit Proimpact7

By testing various aspects of the button, and its relationship to the image, this particular retailer was able to generate a 6.3% INCREASE IN SALES. (You'll also notice that they incorporated a sense of urgency in the language, for a stronger and more immediate call to action.)

Use an active/personalized voice

Professional marketing writers know that active voice (the subject performs the action stated in the verb) is more impactful than a passive one. It also leads to the other secret of copywriting: you say more by saying less. The same axioms apply to the words on your call to action buttons. Consider the difference "voice" and word choice had on a test that WriteWork used as shown in the images below.

By clicking Create My Account you agree to our terms
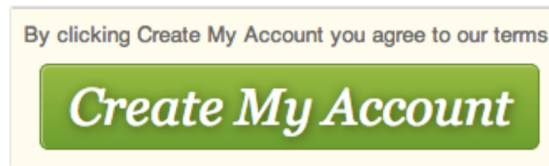
Create My Account

Image credit: Thinkeyetracking.com

Original voice (above.) This could be rephrased as "Will you please create my account?"

Test version of more active/personalized voice (below.) This could be rephrased as "I am going to create my account and get started." Here, the user is directly involved.
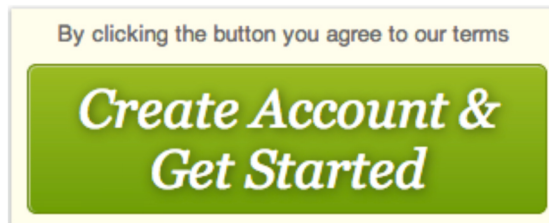
By clicking the button you agree to our terms

Create Account & Get Started

Image credit: Thinkeyetracking.com

The result?

For WriteWork, whose CTA button was intended to increase subscriptions to its essay collections, the 2nd CTA button lifted response by 31%.

Personalizing the tone can increase you CTA button's impact. In another test, a button with "Start my free 30 day trial" beat the original, "Start your free 30 day trial" by a full 90% when measured for click-thu rates.

Use visual cues

Effective design draws the user's eye where the marketer wants it to go. One simple way to do it? Incorporate arrows. Research by Galfano et al actually proves that we cannot help but look where an arrow is pointing. Totango uses visual clues by incorporating a character, who in essence, acts as a type of arrow (see below) pointing to "Sign in" and "Start Free Trial" CTA buttons. This is an effective technique.
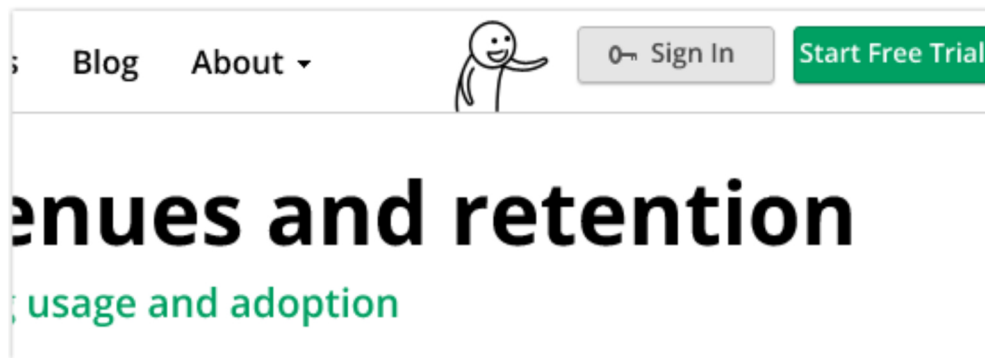
Silver Pop: http://www.marketingscoop.com/article_tools/silverpop_landingpage.pdf

All of these techniques will benefit from adopting localized visual and verbal references. Again, think about the benefits of an austere, minimized call to action in for a Swiss buyer and a complex, information-rich call to action for a Chinese buyer. Also be careful in the global use of characters like the little arrow man. These should be tested locally.

Sources

Visual Website Optimizer, "Call to Action Buttons: The Ultimate Guide on Which Ones Convert and Why"
http://visualwebsiteoptimizer.com/split-testing-blog/call-to-action-buttons-ultimate-guide/

Giovanni Galfano, Mario Dalmaso, Giulia Pavan, Carol Coricelli, and Luigi Castelli, "Eye gaze cannot be ignored (but neither can arrows)"

Smashing Magazine, "Call to Action Buttons: Examples and Best Practices"
http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/10/13/call-to-action-buttons-examples-and-best-practices/

Quick Sprout, "11 Ways to Improve Your Calls to Action"
http://www.quicksprout.com/2013/03/14/click-here-11-ways-to-improve-your-call-to-actions/

Conclusion

As we hope you'll find out from our 10 tips on increasing global sales, you do have the power and control as an online retailer to boost your conversions, by simply optimizing the tools that you already have. Not all businesses will experience the same success rate from all of these tips, and not all promise an instant or dramatic solution.

But all present a framework you can use as a launching pad of sorts, to experiment and learn more about what's effective in increasing online, global sales, not only for your customers and prospects, but also for your own unique business model and goals. Succeeding in worldwide ecommerce is a process that requires you to keep pace with changing technologies, and consumer demands. Try new ideas and approaches, test the impact of those methods—and keep experimenting. The more you know, the more you grow as an online retailer.

Have questions about these principles and tips or want to share your experience with applying them?
Connect with us on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn.

share

Global payments made easy.

2Checkout is an online payment processing provider who helps thousands of online businesses sell around the world every day with dozens of international currencies, multiple languages, and a customizable checkout page.

Connect with 2Checkout and learn more about how our services can enable you to implement these principles.

Connect >>