VERTICAL LEAP

11 top tips for improving your website conversions
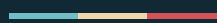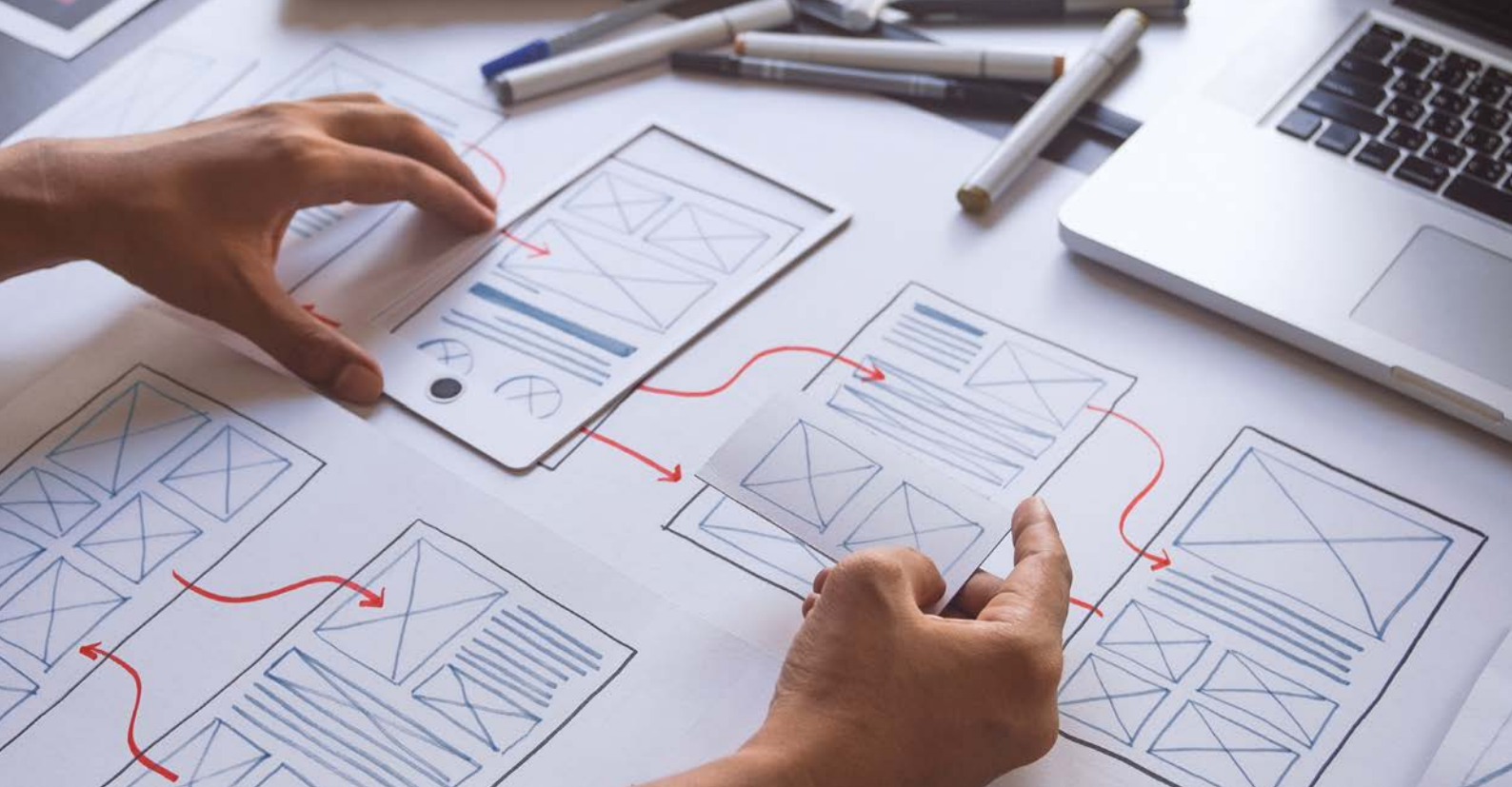
Striving for year-on-year website traffic growth is a KPI for most businesses. But with virtually all industries currently disrupted by the coronavirus (COVID-19), making sure you're maximising the traffic your website is receiving is especially important when making every opportunity and lead count.

We've put together 11 effective ways to test and improve your website performance and optimise your conversion rate. We'll take you through different approaches to drive more results from your existing traffic.

Firstly...

Firstly, what exactly is conversion rate optimisation (CRO)? Basically, CRO is the process of encouraging users to take an action when they visit a website. By designing and improving certain elements of a webpage, a business can increase the chance that site visitors will convert into a lead or customer before they leave the site.

> You can calculate conversion rate for a particular webpage by dividing the number of conversions achieved by that webpage by the number of people who visited it and multiplying by 100.

What is classed as a website conversion will differ depending on the nature of the business. A conversion could be a form submission, a webinar registration, an e-newsletter sign-up, adding products to a shopping basket or purchasing products.

To increase your conversion rate, you firstly need to understand what works and what doesn't work for your audience. Your prospective customers have specific expectations, wants and pain points and you have to make sure your website is meeting their requirements.

Here are our top tips on how to approach increasing your conversions rates:
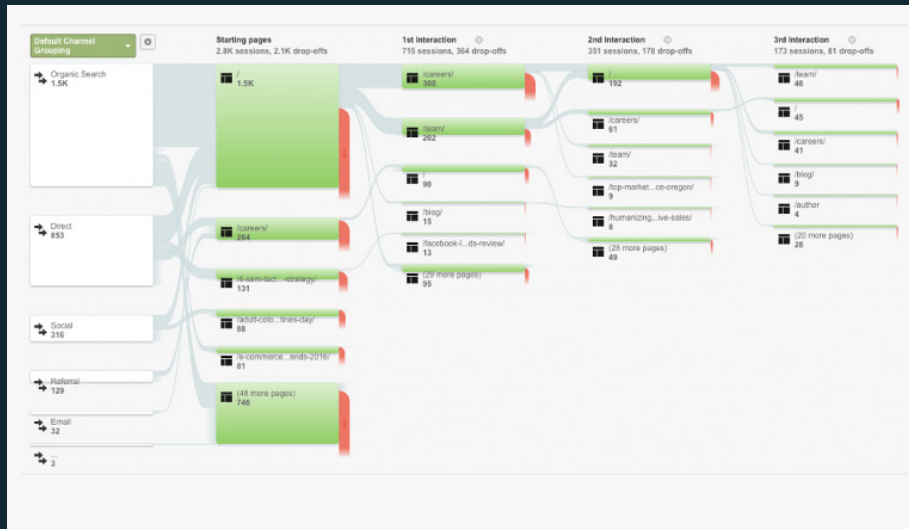
01. Identify which area(s) of the website will benefit from being optimised, based on data

First you need to establish which page or section of the website you want to focus on. This could be a page which isn't performing well, or one which would increase revenue or help achieve your business goals if it was performing better.

Using tools, such as Google Analytics, to review your behavior flow report can help you determine which pages to focus on. You will be able to see which pages are encouraging users to keep reading and move onto other pages within the website, as well as pages where users drop off the site.

Assessing data on how your current users are behaving on your site will help you identify pages and sections that aren't working as they need to be. We recommend focusing on a page or section which is going to align and positively impact your business objectives.
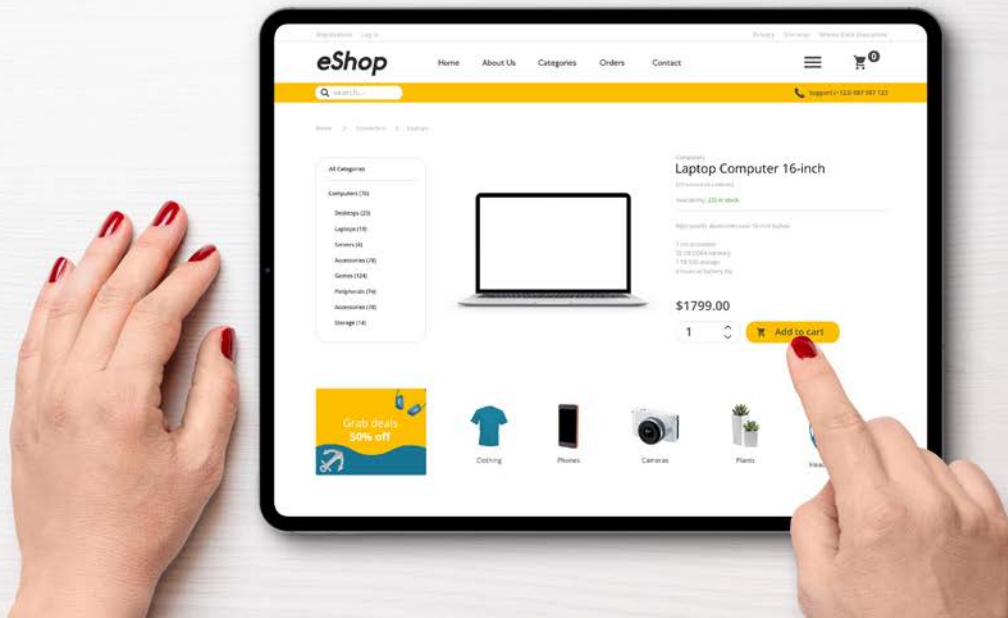
02. Carry out competitor analysis

Reviewing your top search competitors helps you understand how customers and potential customers think of your business versus your competitors, whilst also learning from your competitors' strengths and weaknesses.

Firstly, determine your top five competitors – we use our own prescriptive marketing platform Apollo Insights to determine this for our customers, but tools such as Google Search, Google Trends and Semrush can help you too.

When looking at competitors websites consider:

- Types of products and services they offer

- Value proposition

- Copy content

- Website design

- Imagery

- Case studies

Analyse their landing pages;

- Look at headlines – what language are they using

- Do they have a clearly stated value proposition?

- Do they use video or imagery?

- Where are their forms positioned?

What can you learn – things you could test on your website or things to avoid?

If you have an eCommerce site – analyse their checkout process;

- Is it multi-step or is it single step?

- What payment options do they offer?

- How easy is it to use?

- Are their clear indicators / form validation on each step of the process?

For each competitor list their top five strengths and top five weaknesses.

Also consider five options or features they are not offering customers. This could potentially identify opportunities to allow you to get ahead.

03. Optimise your conversion funnel

Once you have reviewed your competitors, you can consider your conversion funnel. A simple conversion funnel consists of brand awareness, interest, consideration and conversion.
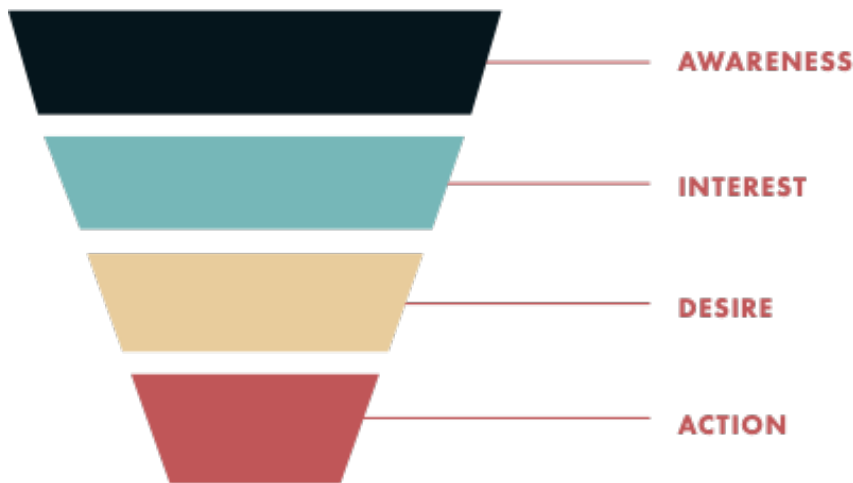
Determining what is engaging and converting your visitors on your website, will allow you to see where to test. Is the site working how you think it is? Are calls to action (CTAs) and header banners working as you think they are - are they receiving clicks? Is your copy engaging your users, are they reading it all? Do users see your forms on the page? By making tweaks and testing them you can start to see what improvements can be made – we'll come on to how to test shortly.

Testing and making iterative changes takes more time than just adding new content to a page, but it's much more effective. User testing helps you gain valuable insights and better understand what works for your audience. By understanding what's encouraging users to interact and convert, you can then add more of these positive impulses to the site, as well as removing barriers to conversion.

04. Conduct tests - what is working and what isn't?

Each element of a page should be considered and tested, everything from content length, CTA wording and colour, lead magnets, form lengths and style.

Tools such as Hotjar or Crazy Egg allow you to run tests on your website, to see how users are actually behaving.

For example, heatmaps, scroll maps and click maps show you where users interact most with a page, where they click, where they stop scrolling and where they spend the most time.

Image source: hotjar.com

A study conducted by Nielson Norman Group into how users read on the web, found 79% of their test users always scanned any new page they came across; only 16% read word for word.

Web pages need to adopt a scannable approach, with defined content sections, bulleted benefits, meaningful headings and clear signposting.

If a page isn't getting much engagement, consider optimising it. You could alter content, the layout of the page or consider following the format of better performing pages.

Once you make changes, test again to see if the improvements have worked.

05. Optimse your website design, to inform good user experience.

"Simplicity is virtue – let content shine through," says Google within its guidelines for website design.

Google conducted a survey in 2012 that continues to inform web design practice. The study looked at different types of design to gather first impressions. It determined that website visitors make their first impressions of a site's attractiveness in the first 1/20th of a second. Visually complex sites were consistently interpreted as less beautiful.

So, when reviewing your website design, consider if areas can be simplified. Simplifying design can help keep users focused on the page and ensure they see the content you want them to.

Clear signposting and navigation is also key to a well performing, user-friendly design. Users need to be able to find information quickly and the website needs to provide clear guidance on where to go next. Without clear signposting, the user may not know the next steps to take to purchase a product or to find out more about a service you offer and is likely to leave the site without accomplishing their task.

For example, if a user lands on a blog article and there is no clear next step at the bottom of the post, it's likely the user will leave. However, if there are links or CTAs, suggesting they read more articles, links to related products, services or case studies, it will help to engage users further.

06. Are your forms working hard enough for you?

Forms are an effective way of gathering lead data. But they can often become a barrier to users if it takes too much time to complete the fields.

Sometimes forms can be missed entirely if not in a clear and obvious position.

Forms can be made much easier and more convenient for users by removing unnecessary fields or using tick boxes or auto fill to make it much quicker for them to be completed. Only ask for the information you really need to prevent users being put off.

Inline validation is also highly recommended, to ensure users can see easily and quickly that the information they have supplied has met the required criteria. This is even more important if the form is in multiple steps, to make sure users know where they are in the process at each stage.

Image source: hotjar.com

The best way to check if your forms are performing effectively, is to test.

Run a recording test on a landing page with a form. Do your users have to scroll to see the form? Are your users reaching the form?

A scroll test will let you know where your visitors are reaching on a page. Do most visitors navigate away after seeing the form? If yes, this will indicate the form could be putting them off.
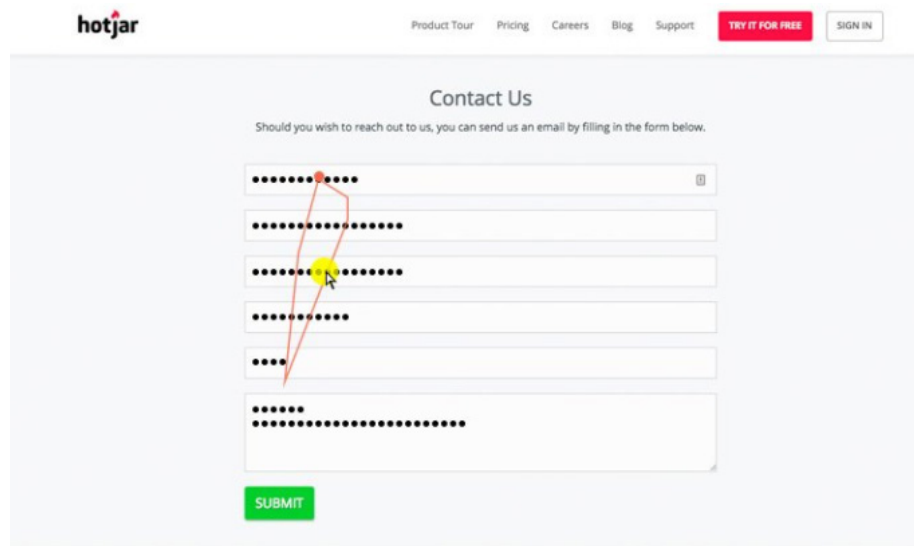

Image source: hotjar.com

Try reducing the number of fields and the style of your forms. Ensure your forms are positioned next to clear benefits of providing their information to reinforce your value proposition.

If the form isn't being reached, move the form higher on the page and test the landing page again.

Test multiple variations to see which option has the best results. You could change the colour, the wording on the CTA and the layout.

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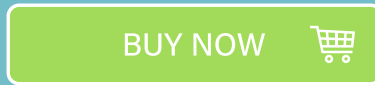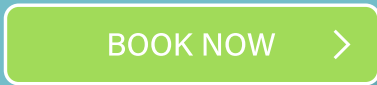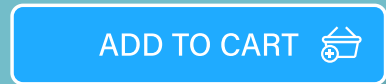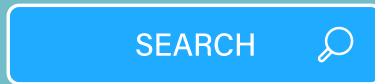
07. Improve your calls-to-action (CTAs)

Calls to action are a key element on a web page. CTAs act as a clear signpost on what a user should do next and moves the user through the conversion funnel.

An effective call to action clearly communicates what the user can expect when they click on a button or a link, which can improve click-through-rate.

Recordings and click map tests can show you which CTAs are getting the most engagement at different points on a page. Each CTA could lead to the same next page, but with different copy or button designs.

A number of strategies can be used to create effective CTAs:

- Design – CTAs need to grab the user's attention. A bright button or a colour that contrasts with the colour of the page will ensure the CTA stands out.

- Consistency – CTAs need to be consistent throughout your website in terms of design, so users know what they need to do when they see one.

- Highly visible – CTAs should be noticeable on each page.

- Position – keep your CTAs clear of visual noise so a user doesn't become distracted or miss the CTA. You can use multiple CTAs on one page, but make sure you're not confusing the user and it's simple to see where to go next, or what action to take.

- Clear benefits – state clear benefits to the user to encourage them to click on the CTA.

- Compelling wording - the wording used within CTAs needs to encourage action. It is also worth testing different wording on different calls to action to see if certain wording encourages users to click.

- Keep them short – a good call to action should be a short phrase, not a sentence. Most are no longer than five to seven words.
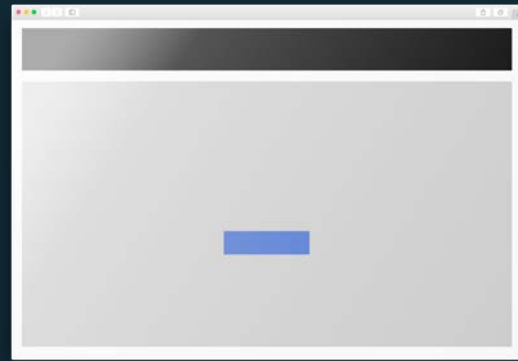
08. Run A/B tests

Once you have collected data from heat maps, scroll maps, click maps and recordings, you can use it to set up A/B tests.

A/B testing is a way to test two variations of the same web page against each other, to compare which variation drives the most conversions.

Google Optimise allows you to set up and run A/B tests, without the need to have programming experience. You can easily change CTA wording, button colours, heading language, imagery, form fields etc, to run quick tests to determine if a small change could make a big difference.

Testing one change at a time helps to pinpoint which ones have an effect on user behavior and which don't.

Running A/B tests takes the guesswork out of knowing what will improve engagement and conversions. By measuring the impact changes have on your website metrics, you can ensure that each change produces positive results once implemented.

Image source: Trustpilot.com

09. Build trust

Trust signals are features of your site that encourage trust in the mind of the user. Users seek validation before they buy and including positive trust signals within a website can help to boost conversion rates.

With 88% of online users incorporating reviews into their purchase decision, customer reviews are one of the major trust signals to incorporate into your site.

Third-party review platforms, such as Trustpilot, provide regulated reviews from buyers. Google rewards businesses that have positive ratings on trusted third-party review sites. Positive reviews indicate that a product or service is highly appropriate for its users, which plays a part in determining SERP ranking.

One study showed that 72% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. Reputation and third-party validation makes a big difference.

Reviews also give a big boost to user confidence; research indicates reviews produce an average of 18% uplift in sales.

It's not just about reviews though. Trust signals can also come in the form of:

• Case studies

• Proof statistics — number of customers, number of users, number of products sold

• Industry accreditation logos

• Client logos

• Certifications

• Financial trust badges

Customer success stories, showcasing accreditations and highlighting recognisable brands and customers are just some of the ways you can create trust signals to increase conversions and sales. Keeping these highly visible, especially on a homepage or key landing pages, is important, along with including trust signals within the footer, so they can always be seen.

10. Introduce video content

Including video content within your website has many positive benefits, including increasing conversion rates by up to 20%.

Video content is highly engaging to users. It enables businesses to quickly deliver core messaging in a dynamic way, whilst potentially reducing bounce rate by encouraging users to spend more time on a web page.

Video content overcomes the short attention span of users, providing as much information as a 500 word paragraph. Research has shown that viewers retain 95% of a message when they watch it in a video, compared to just 10% when reading it in text.

Explainer videos in particular are a great way to visualise complex solutions and show the benefits of a product or service. Studies have shown that visitors are 85% more likely to buy a product if they see an explainer video first.

Video is also a great way to showcase a company personality and connect with your audience. It is also highly shareable, which means as an asset it can work across many channels to promote your business, especially since YouTube is the second largest search engine on the web.

11. Improve your website speed to improve performance

How fast your website loads can have a massive effect on conversion rates. Just a one second delay in page load speed can reduce your conversions by 7%.

A fast site provides good user experience and satisfying user experience leads to high conversions. Google focuses heavily on website speed as a metric, so it's important for websites to be optimised as much as possible.

As page load time goes from:

1s to 3s the probability of bounce increases 32%

1s to 5s the probability of bounce increases 90%

1s to 6s the probability of bounce increases 106%

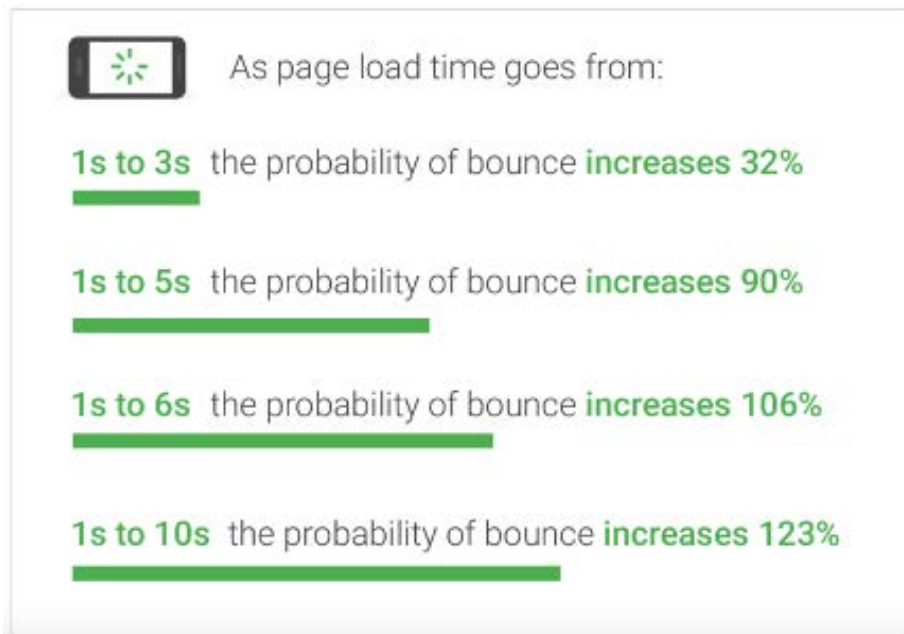1s to 10s the probability of bounce increases 123%

Image source: Google/SOASTA Research, 2017.

So, how fast should your website load in 2020? The below illustration provides the average loading speed for different industries and where best practice states they should be.
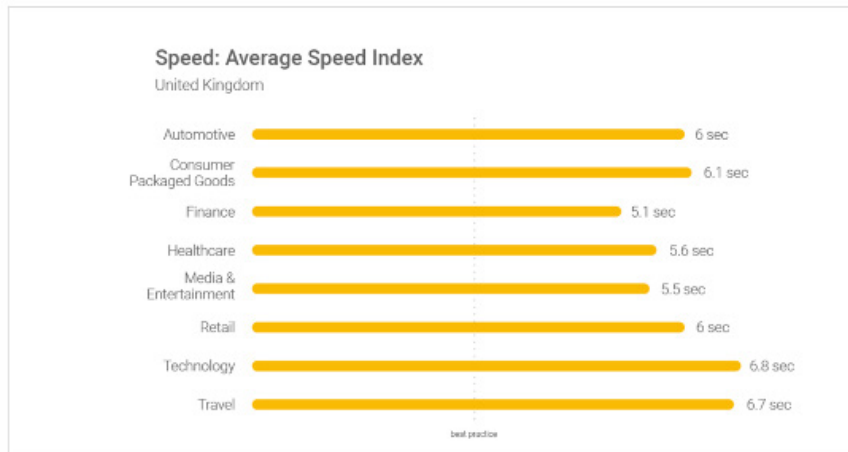

Image source: Google/SOASTA Research, 2017.

Many studies have concluded that two seconds is an acceptable threshold for e-commerce site speed, meaning that's the least users expect. Yet at Google, they aim for pages to load in under half a second.

Users want faster sites. If your site takes too long to load, your visitors are going to leave or abandon their transactions.

Investing time into speed optimisation can make a massive difference to your conversion rates. In 2016 The Trainline reduced latency by 0.3s across their conversion funnel and revenue increased by an extra £8 million a year.

Shopzilla ran an A/B test comparing the impact of download speed on conversion. They found that the faster pages delivered 7 - 12% more conversions than the slower pages.

Tools such as Google's PageSpeed Insights can show you how fast your website is loading and provide guidance on how to improve your website speed.

These tips will help you to improve your website performance and increase your conversion rates. Now it's time to test your website and see where improvements can be made.

Prefer to leave it to the experts?

Get a free website performance audit.

Our CRO experts can carry out a free performance audit on your website to uncover where improvements can be made, and to provide insights and actions to get your website working harder for you.

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