



The Complete DIY Guide To Improving Conversions

IN 60 DAYS

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Introduction

Let's get straight to why we're here: to help you improve your website conversion rates in a matter of 60 days (or 8 weeks).

For the uninitiated, this can be achieved through **Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)**, the process of optimizing a website experience to get more visitors to take a specific action.

At VWO and HubSpot, we believe that Conversion Rate Optimization is an art and a science. And just as with any form of art or science, all it requires is the willingness to learn, be patient, and work hard. If you're ready to commit, these are the only prerequisites you need to get started.

Over past decade, savvy online businesses have been growing by not only investing in traffic acquisition strategies, but also by ensuring that visitors to their site are converting into customers.

In our experience of working with 5000+ clients, we've seen that the journey from start to first few home runs in optimizing conversions usually takes 8 weeks. Hence, this guide will take you on a 8 week journey on how you can lift your conversion rates in a methodical manner.

After you've followed this guide, you won't just know how to boost your conversion rates one time. Instead, you'll be equipped with the know-hows to increase conversion rates time and time again.

Even if your company is young or on a shoestring budget, your team would be able to effectively practice conversion optimization in-house.

Let's get started!





Getting Ready For Conversion Rate Optimization

In week 1, we're just getting warmed up.

For this week and the next one, we're focused on helping you understand the fundamentals of CRO so you're well equipped for your future as an expert for your team.

Let's Start by Learning Some of the Basic Principles of CRO

CRO isn't a magic fix.

CRO focuses on improving the website experience of your visitors. It's not a magic formula to getting more customers. Even if your website experience is stellar, you still have to work on showing the value of your product/service in order to get customers.

Best practices and hacks don't always work

You may find a lot of advice or quick tips to boost conversions online. Keep in mind: what might work for one website in a certain scenario might not work for your business and vice versa. The best conversion rate optimizers take best practices with a grain of salt and use their own data and insights to make decisions.

Assumptions don't matter.

CRO is all about data, and that is the only information you should rely on. No matter how many years of experience your web developer or UI designer might have, they can't always know what's going to work with your audience. CRO is all about using data-backed insights to make improvements.

CRO is a continuous process

At a strategic level, CRO is an ongoing practice of learning and optimizing. To achieve sustainable growth, make sure you continue to practice CRO regardless of initial results. One positive change this month might not ensure optimal conversion practices overtime.

Now, let's get to the steps you need to take for the first week of your conversion optimization program.

STEP ONE

Identifying and Gathering the Resources Required



Setting Up Your CRO Team

Since Conversion Rate Optimization is cross-functional, it involves a team of professionals from different departments and functions to coordinate effectively and make the most out of available resources.

At any given time, a CRO team needs to collectively possess talent with all of the following skills:

Conversion Rate Optimization Manager

In charge of developing an end-to-end plan for your CRO program—enumerating and prioritizing essential activities.

Data Analyst

Monitors your website data and user behavior using relevant tools to uncover actionable insights.

Web Graphic Designer

Will help you design web pages with a focus on increasing conversions.

Copywriter

creates copy that will reduce customers' anxieties, ease friction, and persuade visitors to take the desired action.

Web Developer

In charge of actually developing variations of webpages for A/B tests using optimized code.

This week, focus on determining who will take care of which responsibilities for your CRO needs. Based on the bandwidth and budget at your disposal, you can either onboard key hires for these roles or identify talent from within your organisation and rope them in.

An ideal case would be a dedicated professional possessing one of each skill. However, not every organization has the resources to dedicate five employees for CRO. For many small businesses, a single team member can also take care of multiple functions.

Setting Up Your CRO Infrastructure

Setting Up Your CRO Team

While you build your CRO team, you need to set up the technology stack requisite to run your CRO program. Here's what you need to do:

Choose a Testing Platform

A testing platform will help you run qualitative analysis, set up A/B tests, and track results in one dashboard. It's hard to distinguish between the different platforms and their technologies, but you should take the time to understand how it affects your general website performance.

- **Here are some of the questions you should be asking:**
- **How does the platform affect the performance of my website?**
- **Does the platform offer more value beyond just A/B testing?**
- **Will the platform help me plan my optimization program?**
- **What is the level of customer support provided?**
- **Can I alter the pricing plans to match my ever-changing business needs?**

We recommend you try demos of different solutions to zero in on the one most suitable for your business. If you'd like to give VWO a try, sign up for a [30-day free trial](#).

Have Your Website Analytics in Place

Before you start your optimization program, you need to have an analytics engine in place. Website analytics can help you in two ways specifically:

- **Track the current conversion rate across your website.**
- **Highlight the problem areas on your website, like where visitors drop-off the most.**

The pitfalls of not having analytics in place are that your optimization efforts will be akin to throwing darts in the dark, randomly hoping for some darts to stick. Having analytics integrated with your testing engine is important for post-test analysis and learning as well.

Need a website analytics solution? Here are a few we recommend:

Google Analytics

Kissmetrics

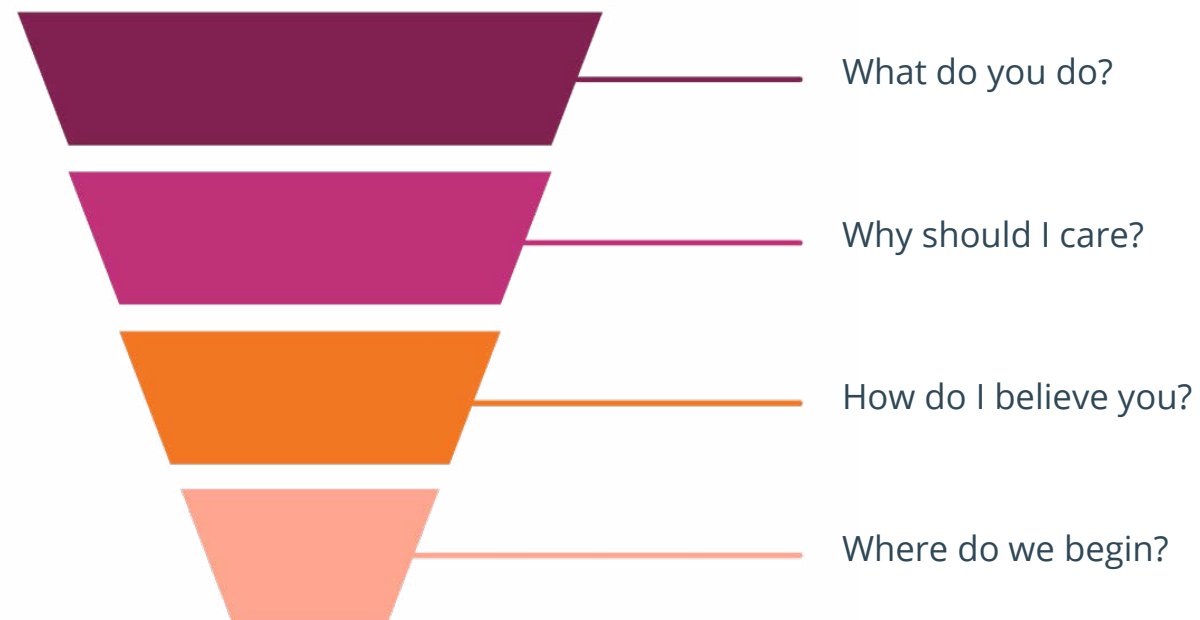
Mixpanel

Adobe Analytics

STEP TWO

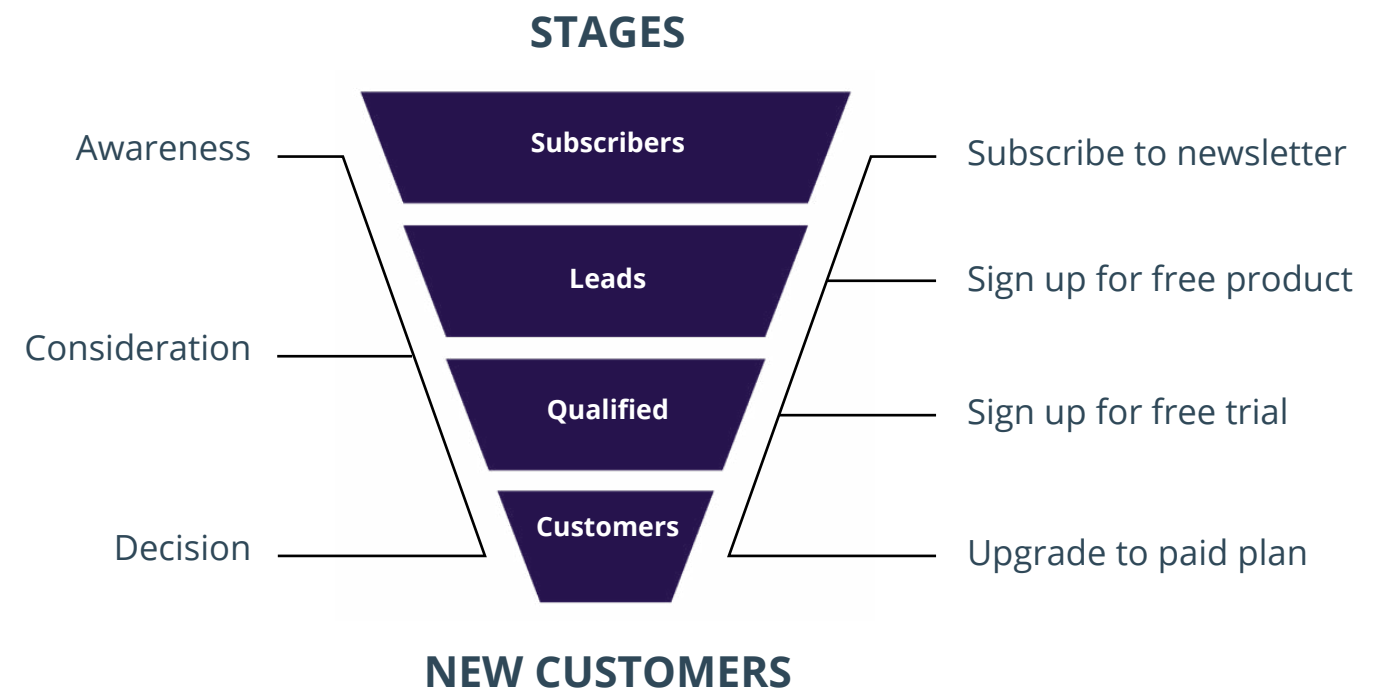
Get an Understanding of Your Website's Conversion Funnel

The **Conversion Funnel** is a term marketers use to describe the path visitors take between initially visiting your website and ultimately becoming a customer. Understanding the way visitors browse your website tells you what improvements can be made by optimizing each different stage in the funnel.



The Conversion Funnel

Here's an example of a conversion funnel with specific actions tied to each stage:



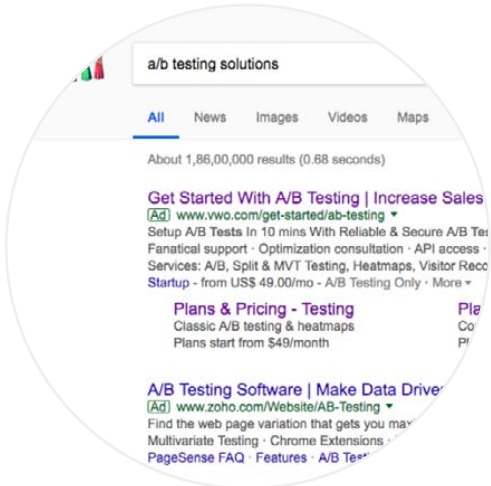
If you don't have a map of your conversion funnel prepared, you may need to sit down with your team to sketch one out. Try to visualize the ideal steps a prospect might take on your website to convert into a customer.

EXAMPLE

Conversion steps a prospect takes in becoming a VWO customer

1
**Discovery Through
PPC Campaign**

Prospect first learns about VWO when researching about A/B testing solutions via a PPC ad campaign.



2
**Engagement Via
VWO Resources**

Prospect then comes to VWO.com, downloads a couple of resources or reads a few articles.



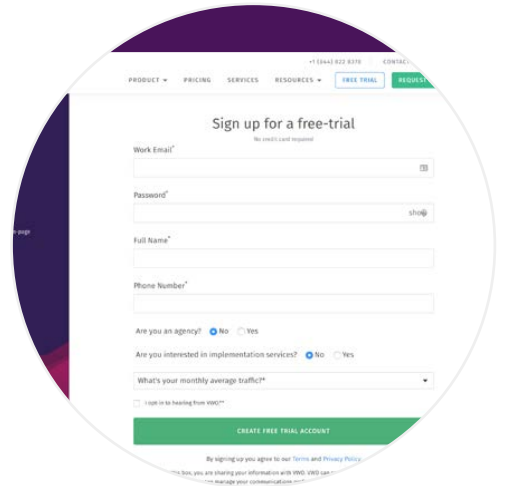
3
**Brand Connect
Via Social Media**

Then, the prospect follows VWO on social media channels.



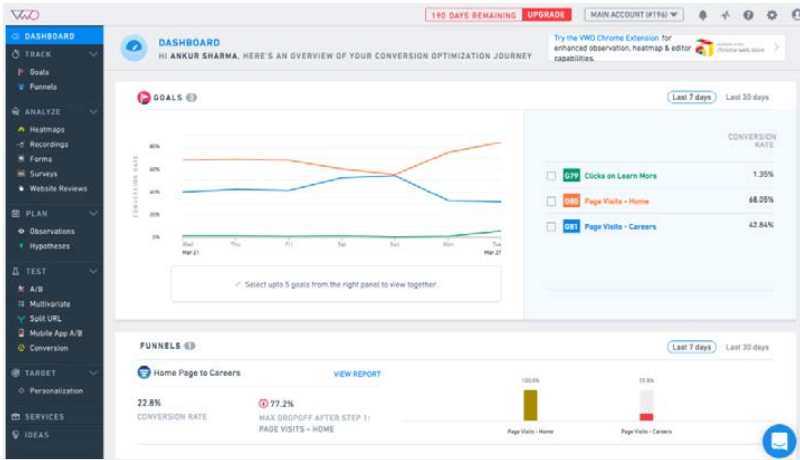
4
Free Trial Sign-Up

Prospect keeps exploring VWO until they finally sign-up for a free trial and convert to a lead.



5
Sale

After finding value in the free trial, they become a paying customer.



Keep in Mind

The conversion funnel maps ideal steps. Not every customer will start in the exact same stage or convert in the same way. However, mapping out what routes a visitor might take to become a customer is key to figuring out which stages need to be optimized.

STEP THREE

Know What Metrics to Improve

After you’ve mapped out the conversion funnel, you need to align your business’s success metrics with the steps of the conversion funnel. The charts shared below will help you align your conversion goals with different funnel stages for the visitor:

Funnel Stage	Customer Mindset	Customer Actions	Success Metrics
Top of Funnel	What does your business do?	- Discovering the Brand - Building awareness - Conducting initial research - Collecting information	- Unique visits - Pages per visit - Bounce rate - Time spent - Social media shares
Top-to-Mid of Funnel	Why should I care?	- Conducting in-depth research - Doing cost analysis - Competitor research	- Total returning visitors - Returning visits - Pages per visit - Time on site - Bounce rate
Mid-Lower of Funnel	How do I believe you?	- Requesting for more details - Phone call to sales reps - Booking a product demo	- Lead form completions - Time on site - Bounce rate
Bottom of Funnel	Where do we begin?	- Purchase - Sign-up	- Average order value - Average order size - No. of transactions - No. of purchases

Examples Of Conversion Goals By Industry

Funnel Stage	E-commerce	SaaS	Agency	Your Business
Top of Funnel	- Newsletter click-throughs - Social media shares on your content - Clicks from ads, content and other channels	- Click-throughs via PPC - Subscription to blog/newsletter	- Click-throughs via PPC - Clicks from ads, content and other channels	
Top-to-Mid of Funnel	- Return visits to website - Category and product exploration - Reading product reviews	- Visits to pricing page - Downloads eBooks, case studies etc. - Product tour on your website	- Case studies downloads - Request to checkout portfolio	
Mid-Lower of Funnel	- Offers/promotions claim - Wishlist/Bookmark additions - Customer service queries - Request for more details	- Free Trial Sign-Up - Request A Demo - Calls with sales rep	- Contacts sales rep - On-site Meetings scheduled	
Bottom of Funnel	- First time purchase - Repeat purchase	Subscription to paid plan	Delivery order signed	

Micro Conversions and Macro Conversions

Not all visitors to your site are at the same buying decision stage. Some are just looking to learn things, some are actively prospecting, and some others are ready to buy today. The fact that visitors will be at all different stages is why you need to track and optimize for conversions at all stages for every user.

Are you looking for more free trial sign-ups, more average revenue per visitor, or top-of-the-funnel ebook downloads?

Enter micro conversions and macro conversions.

- **Micro conversions** are low-involvement commitments from a visitor, like an ebook download or a newsletter subscription.
- **Macro conversions**, on the other hand, are actual sales conversions, like a checkout for an eCommerce business or making a call to your Sales team.

It may seem like macro conversions are all that matter. However, micro conversions are the baby steps that visitors start with to get to know your brand, eventually leading them to become customers.

Good CRO requires tracking both.

Micro



Macro





Conducting a Conversion Rate Audit

Week 1 was all about understanding your website's conversion funnel, which is just one of the prerequisites you need in order to streamline your conversion optimization efforts.

In week 2, we'll be conducting a basic conversion rate audit for your website, setting baseline conversion rates for your business, and going after some low-hanging fruit to get things in place.

STEP ONE

Research Industry Benchmarks

When you’re just starting out with CRO, it’s important to know what your current conversion rates mean. Are they bad? Good? Average? How do your conversion points compare to your competitors’ or other businesses in your industry? Start off the week by doing a little digging into how your industry behaves.

Gather all the relevant data that is available to get answers to these questions. Then, derive insights to conduct benchmarking for your business.

If you need a reference on what all KPIs or success metrics you should focus on, refer to the tables you would have made in Week 1.

For example, if you run an eCommerce store and are conducting research to benchmark how conversion rates differ across various devices and platforms, then you need to be looking at the data shared to the right:

Conversion Rates By Device		Q4 2015	Q1 2016	Q2 2016	Q3 2016	Q4 2016
Global	Desktop	4.21%	3.84%	3.69%	3.42%	4.14%
	Smartphone	1.35%	1.41%	1.38%	1.21%	1.55%
	Tablet	3.74%	3.24%	3.18%	2.94%	3.56%
US	Desktop	4.28%	3.87%	3.75%	3.51%	4.31%
	Smartphone	1.20%	1.29%	1.27%	1.11%	1.50%
	Tablet	3.68%	3.08%	3.03%	2.79%	3.55%
UK	Desktop	6.89%	6.71%	6.25%	5.77%	5.96%
	Smartphone	3.46%	3.32%	3.17%	3.15%	3.31%
	Tablet	5.12%	4.83%	4.64%	4.46%	4.52%

Conversion Rates By Platform	Q4 2015	Q1 2016	Q2 2016	Q3 2016	Q4 2016
Android	1.58%	1.62%	1.45%	1.18%	1.53%
Chrome OS	3.33%	2.67%	2.63%	2.64%	3.08%
Linux	1.07%	0.77%	0.69%	0.56%	0.82%
Macintosh	4.76%	3.87%	3.81%	3.62%	4.29%
Windows	4.17%	3.95%	3.81%	3.50%	4.25%
Windows Phone	1.19%	1.26%	1.19%	1.01%	1.16%
iOS	2.35%	2.10%	2.01%	1.80%	2.22%

(Source)

Conversion Rates by Device or Platform are just one of the many KPIs. Similarly, you need to identify the industry benchmarks for all of your KPIs you’d want to monitor.

STEP TWO

Set Your Baseline Conversion Rates

The baseline is your the current conversion rate and other website metrics. For example, you may have a baseline of 30% checkouts on your checkout page.

Having this number is important, because your benchmark analysis and current baseline tells you what kind of improvement you can expect and should drive toward.

The table below is just an example of some of the major KPIs. You can follow this example to create one relevant to your business.

What to Consider	How to Find out	Industry Benchmark	Your Baseline
Page load time	Pingdom or Google Page Speed		
Bounce rate	Google Analytics		
Cross-device and cross-browser functionality	CrossBrowserTesting by Smartbear		
Conversion rate	VWO or Google Analytics		

STEP THREE

Go for Low-Hanging Fruits and Quick Fixes

While conversion rate optimization is a long-term process, for this week, it is advisable to look for low-hanging fruits and some quick fixes that might just give you an initial boost.

What all can you try?

Make your web copy more concise—

take what you have, edit it in half, and edit it in half again.

Adjust your calls to action (CTAs)—

make it easier to understand and more prominent for your visitors

Make your web forms shorter—

a lengthy sign-up process can annoy customers.

Clarify your company's value proposition

so that the benefit you provide is clearly comprehensible.

Boost the incentives—

offer up a promotion or giveaway to encourage prospects to engage with your brand.

Create step-by-step instructions—

find opportunities to guide your customers through the sales process.

Improve trust—

implement trust signals through social media details, membership stats, testimonials, or client logo.

Optimize your blog—

match the most relevant, current offers you have with your highest performing blog posts.

There are many ways to boost your conversion rates, but starting with the easiest wins will help you build momentum to start off.



Identifying Areas Of Improvement In Your Website's Conversion Funnel

One in every seven A/B tests fail. But, this ratio decreases considerably when optimization testing is done by experienced CRO practitioners.

Why? Research.

CRO practitioners fare better at optimization, because optimization is their main focus. They put in the effort to understand the specifics of a business and take actions based on research.

For the next two weeks, we'll be focusing on **Conversion Research**. Conversion research is the activity which helps you get actionable insights into how you can improve your website. Consequently, you'll be able to test out different versions of your website based on hypotheses you generate from your learnings.

Conversion research for a website begins with closely monitoring website performance and identifying areas of improvement to generate **quantitative data**. This task is best done using a web analytics tool.

In this week, as part 1 of your conversion research, you'll be getting familiar with your analytics tool to track and monitor key visitor journeys on your website.

Next week, we'll conduct research using capabilities such as Behavior Analytics tools, Surveys, and more to generate **qualitative data** on your website visitors.

Let's begin.

STEP ONE

Get Familiar With Your Analytics Tool

Although there are innumerable web analytics tools available, Google Analytics (GA) is the most widely used tool across all websites. We'll be referring to it for all relevant purposes in this guide.

Google Analytics offers a ton of metrics and dimensions you can use to evaluate your website (and its individual pages). This section will help you know the key Google Analytics metrics and dimensions better and offers you actionable tips to effectively use them in your CRO strategy.

Website Audience

You can find the following metrics in Google Analytics here: Audience > Overview.

Sessions: Sessions are the number of times users have stayed on a website (for a specific amount of time). Usually, the more the number of sessions your site has, the better.

Users: The number of unique visitors to your website.

Returning Visitors: Returning visitors are the number of users who have visited a website more than once, in a selected date range. A growing number of returning visitors normally indicates that more users are liking the content of a website and are returning to browse again.

Traffic Channels

You can find traffic for your website in Google Analytics here: **Acquisition > All Traffic > Channels**.

Organic Traffic: Organic traffic refers to users that land on a website through a search engine results page (SERP). Growing organic traffic reflects improved visibility of a website across search engines.

Paid Search Traffic: This channel includes users that visit a website by clicking on its ad on a search engine. The landing page of your search ads should be optimized so that it's able push users deeper into the conversion funnel.

Referral Traffic: When users arrive on a website by clicking on hyperlinks from other websites, they are counted as referral traffic. With referral traffic, you can know if backlinks are contributing to your audience or not. Further, you can find the top sources that direct traffic to your website.

Website Performance

Pageviews: Pageviews tell you which web pages are visited most by your audience. And with this information at hand, you can know where to put up content on your website to grab the maximum eyes.

Average Time on Page: You can find the average time users spend on the popular web pages (based on high pageviews) of your website. By doing so, you can find pages that have a large audience but where users don't spend much time. Such web pages can be optimized to make the users stay a little longer.

Bounce Rate: When a user arrives on a website and leaves without going through other pages of the website, it is counted as a bounce. All single-page visits for a website are considered bounces.

Audience Segments

Mobile: The dimension gives you the number of users that visit your website through desktops, mobile devices and tablets. When the data shows that a significant portion of your audience is mobile, you can consider investing more on the mobile version of your website.

Screen Resolution: By selecting the secondary metric Screen Resolution, you can find the different screen sizes that your visitors use.

Location: Location tells you the number of website visitors from different geographic locations across the world. You can identify locations having the highest level of engagement — based on sessions, time spent on page, bounce rate, etc., and target your next ad campaigns or email marketing campaign accordingly.

Here are a few resources which will help you get familiar with Google Analytics:

[Interpreting Google Analytics For Conversion Optimization](#)

[The Google Analytics Conversion Funnel Survival Guide](#)

[Google Analytics 101: How To Configure Google Analytics To Get Actionable Data](#)

STEP TWO

Monitor Key Visitor Journeys On Your Website

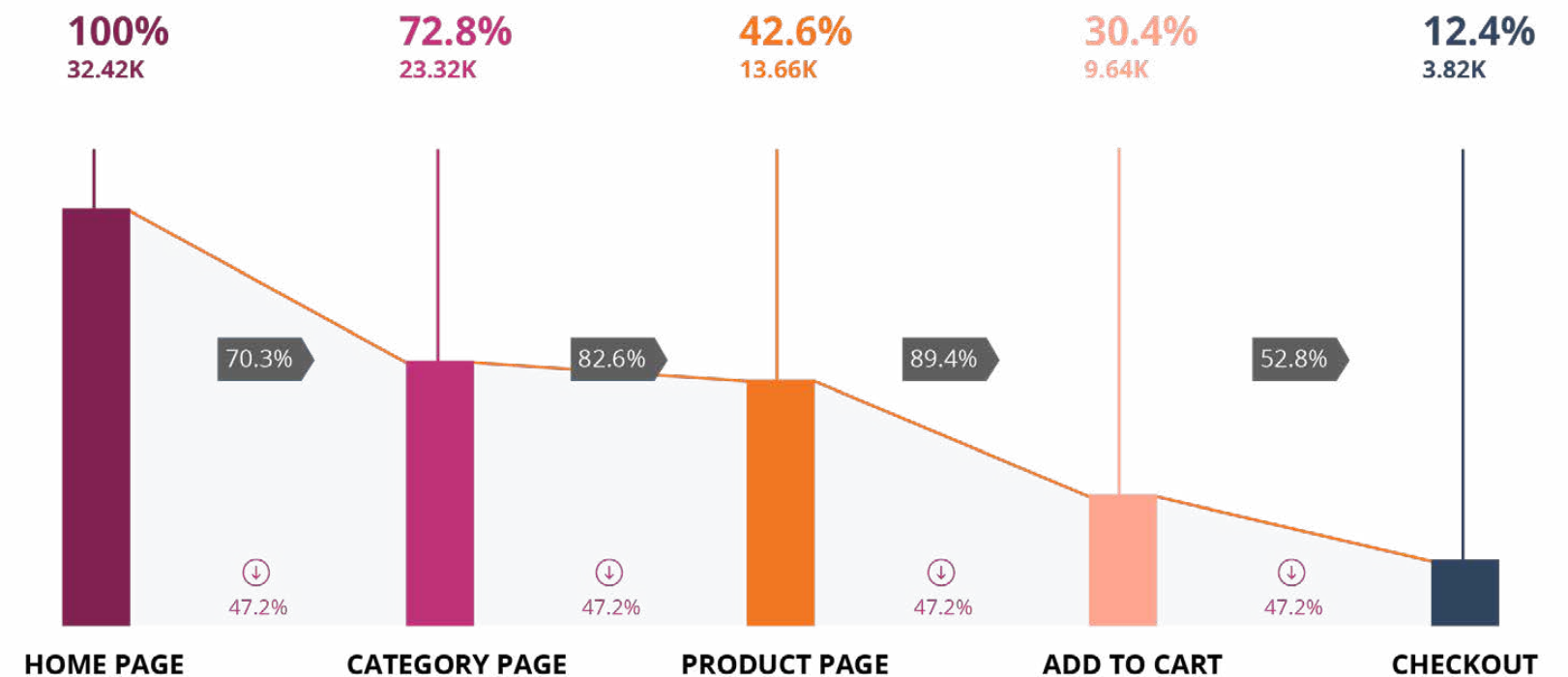
Once you've gained a thorough understanding of how your website analytics works, you can start tracking key business metrics and visitor journeys on your website.

The question you want to be able to answer is this:
What are visitors doing?

With your analytics data, you can zero in on pages that are leaking visitors.

How's the exit rate on each of the pages in the funnel? Is the bounce rate on your home page too high? Finding such symptoms on your pages can help you zero in on where to focus your optimization efforts.

Watch this [video](#) to learn how you can set up a conversion funnel in Google Analytics. Next, you have to figure out **How page features and pages of the funnel shape your user's behavior?**



Source: VWO

By setting up [event tracking using Google Tag Manager](#), you can segment your audience and see how different features on a page influence user behavior.

For instance, you might find out that users who use a sorting tool on your eCommerce website's category page are more likely to become paying customers than users who don't. Getting such insights help you weed out unwanted features and concentrate on the features that convert users better.



Understanding Why Users Do What They Do On Your Website

While website analytics tools tell you “where the problem is” on your website, user behavior analysis tools tell you “what the problem is”.

For cases where you want to know “what users do”, you need to dig deeper into how users behave. Qualitative research means employing tools like heatmaps, visitor recordings, scroll maps, and form analyses to give you insights.

Here’s an example:

Data analytics can tell you that visitors are exiting your product page at an alarmingly high rate. Visitor recordings go a step further to actually show recorded sessions of your visitors on the product page, helping you visualize where the users spend most of the time on the page, areas they get stuck on, information they don’t seem to locate, and so on.

In this week, we’ll dive deeper generating qualitative data by learning how visitors behave on your website.

What Tools to Use for Qualitative Research:



Heatmaps

Heatmaps are a graphical representation of the most-clicked elements on a web page which help you quickly identify the page properties (buttons, elements, and so on) that attract the most attention.

You can find answers to questions such as, “Is the primary CTA button getting enough attention?” or “Are there too many distracting elements on the page?”

For example, here is a heatmap of the VWO home page, highlighting elements that are clicked the most:

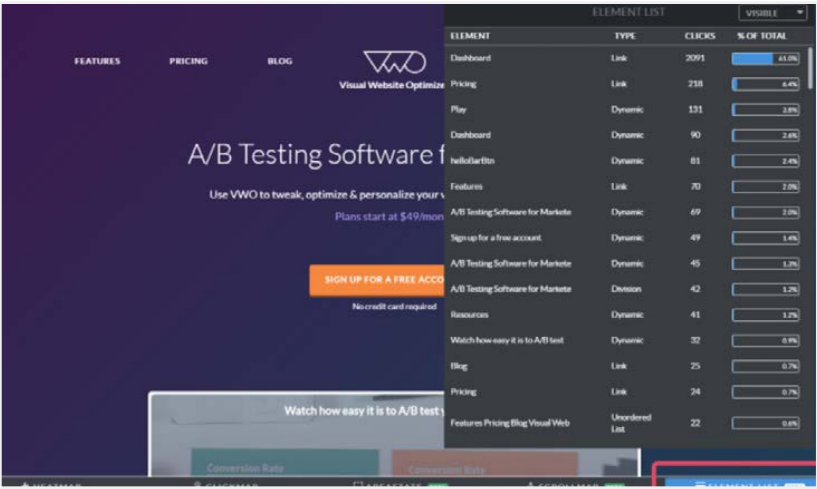


Element List Heatmaps

Element List Heatmaps is a kind of heatmap that lets you view all the clicked elements on a page as a list.

These are especially helpful when your web pages contain hidden elements such as drop-down menus, hidden submenus, and elements that load only after a log-on.

Here is an example (notice that you can find clicks on both visible and hidden elements):

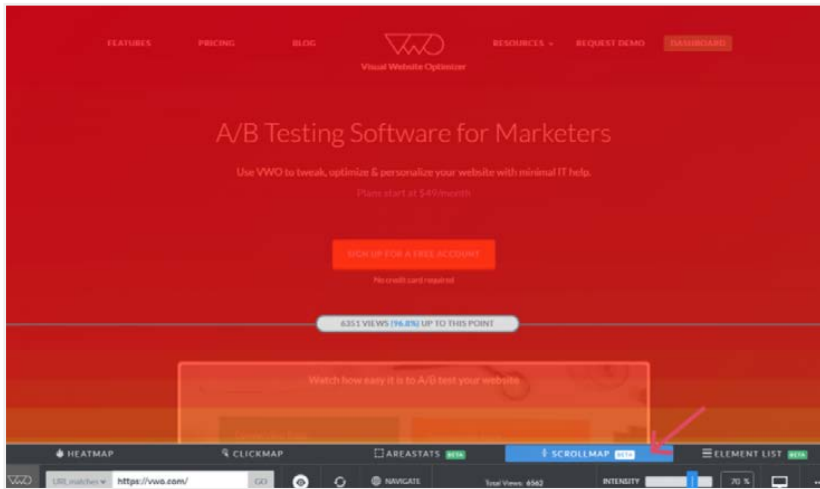


Scroll Maps

Scroll maps show you what percentage of a full-length web page your visitors scroll to. For example, how many of your visitors made it all the way to the bottom of our page vs. the first 25% of the page?

Scroll maps can help you find out if critical elements on your page are ignored because they are located too deep below the fold.

For example, below is a scroll map of the VWO home page.

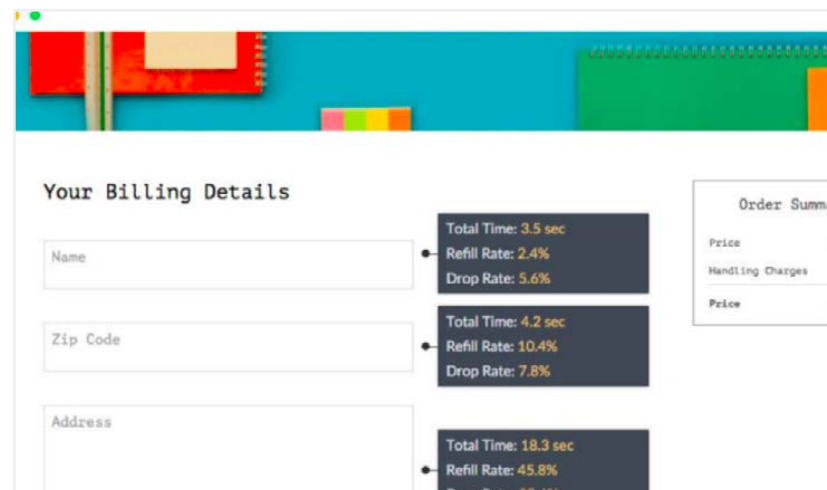




Visitor Recordings

Visitor Recordings let you create a playback of visitor sessions on your website. Looking at the actual interactions that visitors have with your website, you can find out more about their behavior.

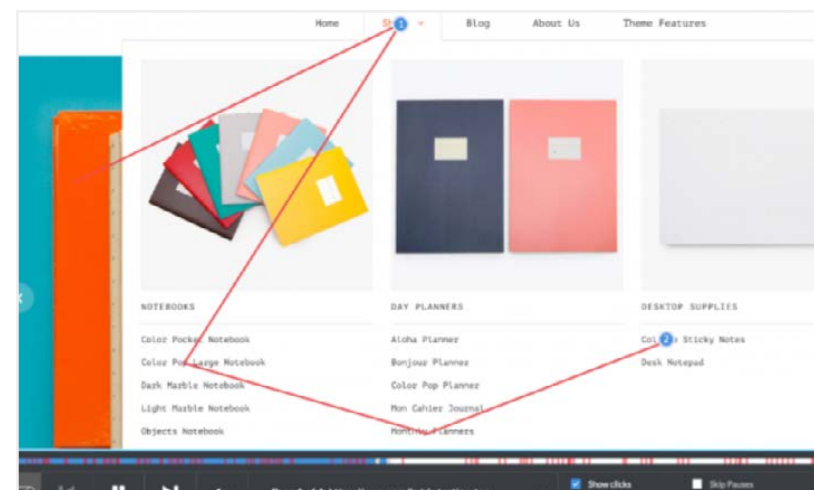
Below is a screenshot from a visitor recording (notice how the mouse movement and clicks are tracked for a visitor):



Form Analysis

Form Analysis let you analyze your web forms and identify points of friction for your visitors.

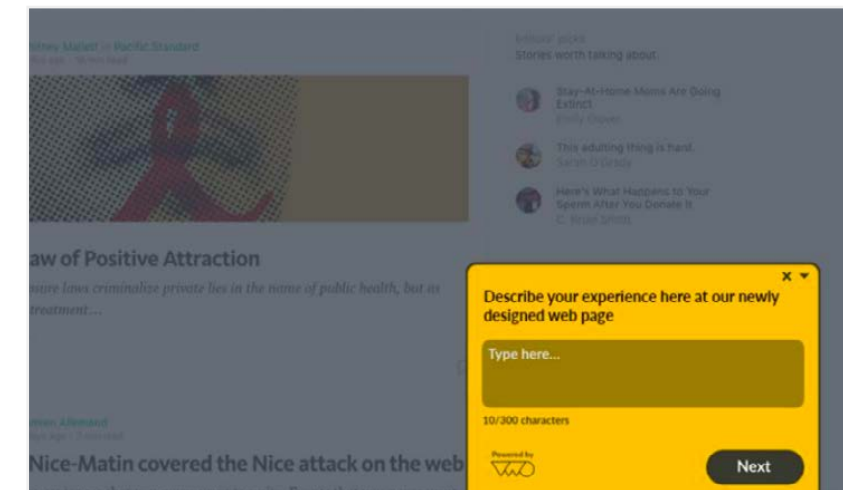
After you have identified a form that is converting poorly, you can run form analysis to know exactly which form-field is proving to be the biggest pain point for visitors. Here is an example:



Website Surveys

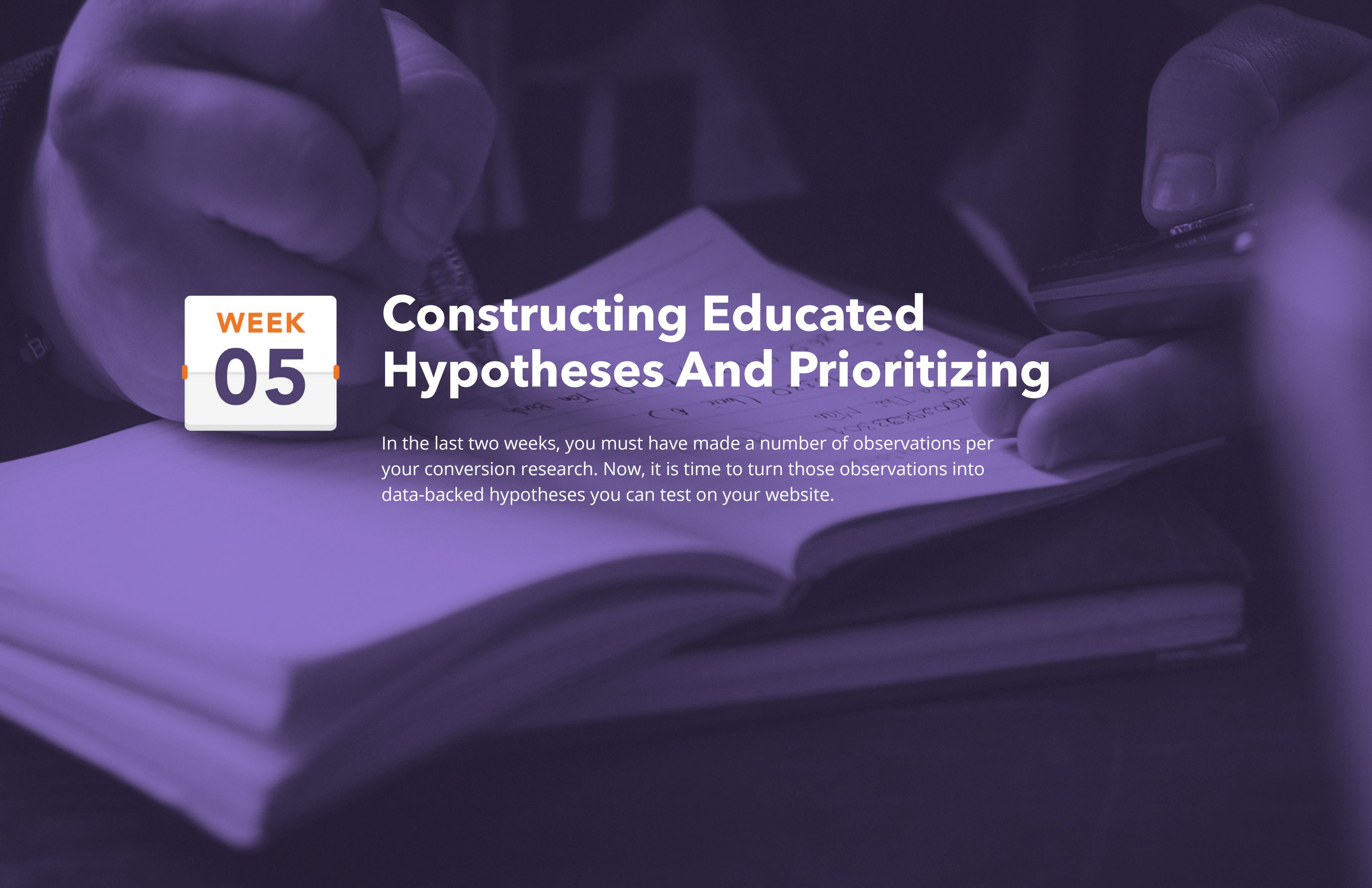
The above-mentioned tools do a great job of analyzing user behavior on a website, but what these tools cannot replace is user feedback.

Website surveys help you do exactly that—collect user feedback. For example, here is a website survey from VWO in action:



Now that you know what kinds of qualitative tools are available for you, do some research to find out what it'll take to implement. From there, start running qualitative tests across your highest-traffic pages and start writing down insights.

You'll be surprised how much you'll learn and how many ideas you'll generate to generate hypotheses for improving conversions.



WEEK
05

Constructing Educated Hypotheses And Prioritizing

In the last two weeks, you must have made a number of observations per your conversion research. Now, it is time to turn those observations into data-backed hypotheses you can test on your website.

STEP ONE

Build A Strong Hypothesis

In Science, a hypothesis is an educated prediction that can be tested. Scientists use the word when they propose a new theory. So while doing CRO, we call our theories of how a website can be improved as hypothesis. Just like scientific theories, these hypotheses could turn out to be true or false, and that's exactly what we will do later when we A/B test them.

At its core, a hypothesis is a statement that consists of 3 parts.

You believe:

- ✓ .. a particular change..
based on insights gleaned from
quantitative and qualitative data
- ✓ ..will have a particular effect..the goal;
the conversion metric that you want to improve
- ✓ ..due to a particular reason.
the rationale behind why you believe the
change will have the desired effect

Here's an example of a good hypothesis.

I believe *moving customer logos closer to the billing form* will result in *5% more checkouts* because it *instills confidence in the payment gateway*.

Based on the hypothesis, you make some changes to the original page. This new page(s) is/are the variation(s). The objective of the test will be to find out which of these two (or more) pages converts visitors better.

A structured hypothesis sets the base for better results through optimization.

Even if your result fails, you can retrace your steps and correct the path. Without this structured process, optimization efforts may go astray and lose their purpose.

Here's what an unstructured, unscientific hypothesis looks like.

"Let's just try changing that button color because it worked out for companies A, B, and C."

That's the kind of hypothesis you don't want to end up with. Instead, use this formula to build successful hypotheses:

"I believe _____ will result in _____ because _____."

STEP TWO

Prioritize Your Hypotheses

Building a strong hypothesis is crucial for testing—no doubt.

But what should you do when you have a backlog of potential hypotheses to test? How should you go about deciding which one to test first?

Often, organizations do not have a structured approach to CRO and arbitrarily pick out a hypothesis from the pool of options they have.

However, some others who follow a structured approach to CRO realize the need for a robust prioritization framework.

Why?

Because a prioritization framework provides a clear direction to your optimization program and prevents you from running aimless tests. Instead, choose a framework that will enable you to maintain a dedicated CRO testing schedule.



Michal Parizek, Senior eCommerce & Optimization Specialist at Avast, in his interview with VWO, points out the importance of keeping a testing calendar: “A test calendar helps to keep focus on important tests being launched on time. It is also vital for resource planning and for bringing all stakeholders in a loop. We usually do a quarterly overview of what tests we’d like to run and then we specify and add details on a monthly basis.”

Several frameworks exist to help us out here. One of the most popular is the P.I.E. framework formulated by Chris Goward at [WiderFunnel](#):

Potential: Find out the pages that are performing worst and can improve greatly.

Importance: Then narrow down by selecting the ones that have the most valuable traffic. Traffic is valuable when it’s either costly (paid) or super relevant to your product offering.

Ease: Even when you have a final list of pages, it’s important to realize that not all pages are easily optimized. A page, such as an eCommerce product listings page, may be technically complicated to start optimizing while another, such as your homepage, may have too many stakeholders to please. It’s important to go for the one that is easily optimized first and then move up the list.

You need to rate your hypotheses on each of these parameters from a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is the lowest and 5 being the highest), and then calculate a final score by dividing their sum by 3. Follow this for all the hypotheses you’ve created to get clarity on which one to test first.

Test	Potential	Importance	Ease	Total
Hypothesis 1	5	4	3	$(5+5+3)/3=4/5$
Hypothesis 2	4.5	5	4	$(4.5+5+4)/3 = 4.5$



Choosing The Right Test And Setting It Up

During Week 5, you created a number of hypotheses and came up with a testing calendar. It is now time to get started with your first test. Sound scary? Don't worry. We'll walk you through it.

All you have to do is break it down to simple aspects and ease into the testing process. Before you run a test, there are a couple of things to understand.

- What is bayesian statistics, and why it matters?
- How long do you need to run a test?
- What should I use—A/B, Split, or Multivariate test?
- How not to run an optimization test

What Are Bayesian Statistics, and Why It Matters?

Note: When it comes to the math behind A/B Testing, there are different schools of thought including **Bayesian**, and **Frequentist**. In case you're interested in learning more about the difference between these two, check out this [link](#).

The reason we run tests is to understand if a particular change(s) can yield higher conversions. Let's say you've started a test, and it runs on the first 10 visitors. You see that 2 of those visitors converted on the variation, compared to 1 on the original page.

That's a commendable 20% conversion rate against a paltry 10% on the original. That means you've found a winner, right?

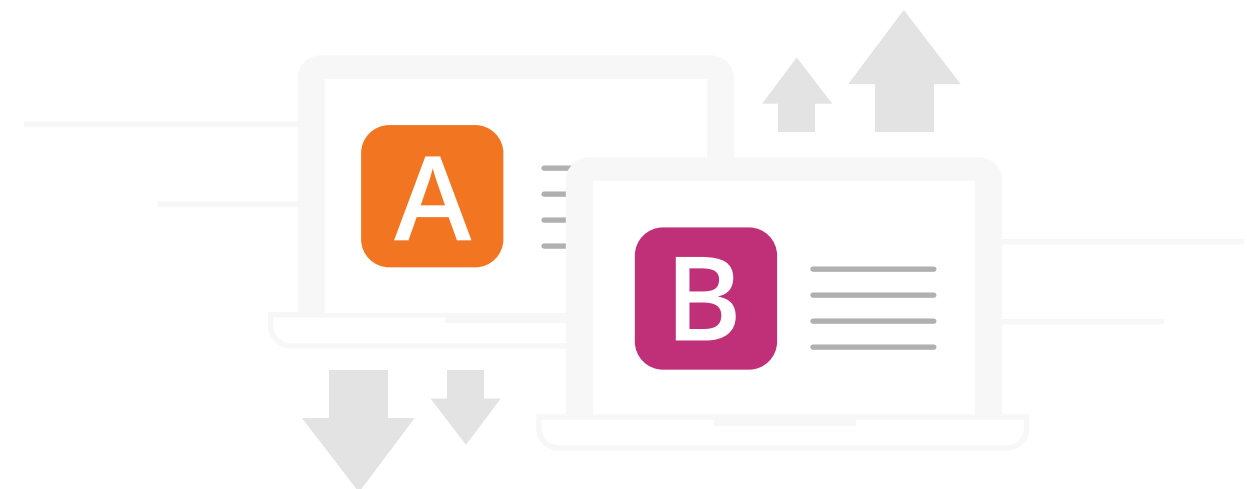
Actually, probably not. While you might be seeing double the conversion rate at first, those 10 visitors might not be a good representation of your total website visitors. Your goal is to get an accurate representation.

The question you want answered is **'what is the probability that variation beat control?'**

This question can be answered more precisely with Bayesian Statistics. Most other methods, including Frequentist Statistics answer this question: **'what is the probability of seeing a result at least this extreme if the Control and Variation were identical?'**

The Bayesian approach is better suited to today's reality as it answers the hard questions easily. The results speak your language and you don't have to wrangle with esoteric terms like significance and p value. With Bayesian, your results are valid whenever you look at them, so it completely solves the [peeking problem](#).

In our opinion, you should use a testing platform which runs on a Bayesian powered statistics engine as it precisely answers the question of 'what is the probability of variation beating the control' and reduces your testing time considerably, helping you make smarter business decision.



How Long Do You Need To Run a Test?

You need to decide a test duration before you start running a test. When you run a test, visitors are constantly included in the test and the numbers keep changing. Conversion rates may rise, dip, and stagnate at different times through the test.

For the sake of simplicity, we're advocating two methods for you to calculate the required test duration, one using VWO and one without. Calculating test duration is dependent on the following factors:

- Average number of daily visitors
- Your current conversion rate for control
- The lift in conversion rate you expect

With VWO, all you need to do is enter these values in VWO's SmartStats (Statistics engine based on Bayesian method) as shown below and out comes the estimated duration for which you should run the test.

However, if you decide to do it using some other tool, you can use this [free test duration calculator](#) to find the period for which you should run your tests.

Estimated Duration of the Campaign

1 Week Approximately

This is an approximate estimate and actual timeline of the campaign may be different.

This estimate is based on the following parameters. Rough ball-park estimates for following would be OK, however campaign results may be impacted if the values are totally off:

Average number of daily visitors ⓘ
Please use the daily average over last few months to account for any outliers.

200

Conversion rate for **c Control** ⓘ
Enter an approximate value for current conversion rate for the primary goal.

25 %

New conversion rate you care about ⓘ
Minimum new conversion rate that you would care about.

30 %

Certainty vs Speed ⓘ
High Certainty mode requires most amount of time and visitors while Quick Learnings mode provides quickest results but sacrifices accuracy. Balanced mode tries to find the right balance between the two.

Balanced Mode ▼

Types Of Tests – A/B, Split and Multivariate

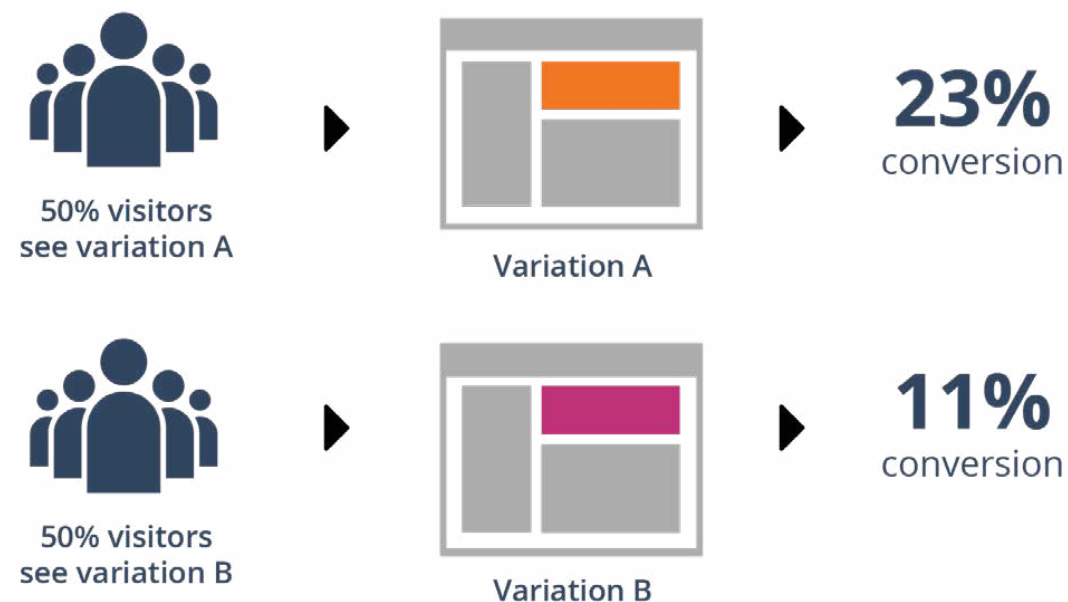
There are two major test types marketers use for CRO: A/B test (or split test) and Multivariate test.

Let us look at the difference before you decide which to use.

A/B Test or Split Test

A/B testing (sometimes called split testing) is compares two versions of a web page to see which one performs better.

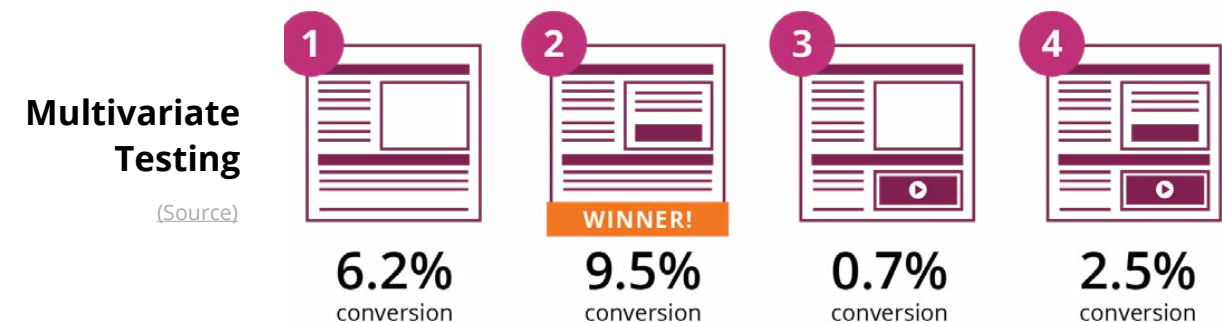
You compare two web pages by showing the two variants (let's call them A and B) to similar visitors at the same time. The one that gives a better conversion rate, wins.



Multivariate Test

With multivariate testing, you identify a few key areas/sections of a page and then create variations for those sections specifically (as opposed to creating variations of whole page in an A/B split test). So for example, in multivariate test you can choose to create different variations for 2 different sections: headline and image.

A multivariate testing software will combine all these section specific variations to generate unique versions of page to be tested and then simply split traffic amongst those versions.



Multivariate testing is used when there are multiple changes proposed to a single page, and you want to test each combination of these changes. If you'd like to learn more, read [this](#) blog post.

Based on your hypothesis, you need to finalize the type of test you're going to use. You must understand that A/B/Split, and Multivariate are not alternatives. Each is a method to perform different tasks, and the decision to use one should depend entirely on the task at hand.

Mistakes to Avoid While Running An A/B Test

While website testing sounds pretty simple in theory, there are a few key mistakes every marketer should avoid, whether they're first starting out or are a seasoned conversion rate optimizer:

1. Testing once, and never testing again. Running multiple tests at the same time with overlapping traffic leading to skewed results.
2. Not running a test for a full business cycle, leading to unreliable results.

As a general rule of thumb, keep the following best practices in mind:

1. A negative result to your hypothesis is not a failure, it's just another learning.
2. Always be testing. Your results from one test should lead you to another hypothesis, and then another. Never stop testing, or you'll risk getting stagnant conversion rates.
3. Test one variable at a time. Let's say you wanted to test new CTA designs, change the tone of your blog titles, and launch a whole blog redesign all at once. All the sudden, your conversion rates dropped by 10%. What happened? Unfortunately, when you're testing too many variables at once, it's impossible to know what causes increases or decreases to your conversion rates. Instead, regulate your tests and make sure you're not running multiple efforts that impact the other tests by accident.



WEEK

07

What To Do While Your Test Is Running

Build On Your Conversion Optimization Knowledge

Once you've setup your first test, there is at least a week's wait before you can get statistically significant results. Depending on your traffic levels on the pages where you're running the test, you may need to wait longer than that. Although this wait might entice you to sit back and relax, we recommend making the most of it by growing your knowledge of CRO and the industry.

One of the easiest ways to keep up-to-date in an industry is to closely follow those who are its thought leaders-- people and organizations who produce excellent content and also curate content created by others.

Here's a list of the top experts and companies associated with CRO you should definitely follow:

Individuals

Oli Gardner (@[oligardner](#))

Co-founder of Unbounce—opinionated writer on conversion optimization, landing pages & social media.
www.unbounce.com

Joanna Wiebe (@[copyhackers](#))

Co-founder of CopyHackers.com & Page99Test.com
www.copyhackers.com

Brian Massey (@[bmassey](#))

Founder of Conversion Sciences and author of Your Customer Creation Equation.
www.conversionsciences.com

Michael Aagaard (@[ContentVerve](#))

Freelance CRO consultant, international keynote speaker and former Senior Conversion Optimizer at Unbounce.
www.michaelaagaard.com

Peep Laja (@[peeplaja](#))

Founder of ConversionXL and CXL Institute. Conversion optimization champion, speaker, author and optimizer.
www.conversionxl.com

Organizations

VWO (@[vwo](#))

The world's leading A/B Testing & Conversion Optimization Platform
www.vwo.com

KISSmetrics (@[kissmetrics](#))

Customer Engagement Automation Platform
www.kissmetrics.com

Monetate (@[monetate](#))

Optimization and Personalization Tool
www.monetate.com

Hotjar (@[hotjar](#))

All-in-one Analytics & Feedback Tool
www.hotjar.com

Qualaroo (@[qualaroo](#))

Customer Decision Analysis Tool
www.qualaroo.com

Hubspot (@[hubspot twitter](#))

All-In-One Marketing Software
www.hubspot.com

Work Towards Planning Your Next Set Of Test(s)

By now you must have realized that the success of your CRO efforts is contingent upon how consistently you work toward it. While you wait for the results of your previous test(s) to arrive, you should kick start the work on your next set of tests.

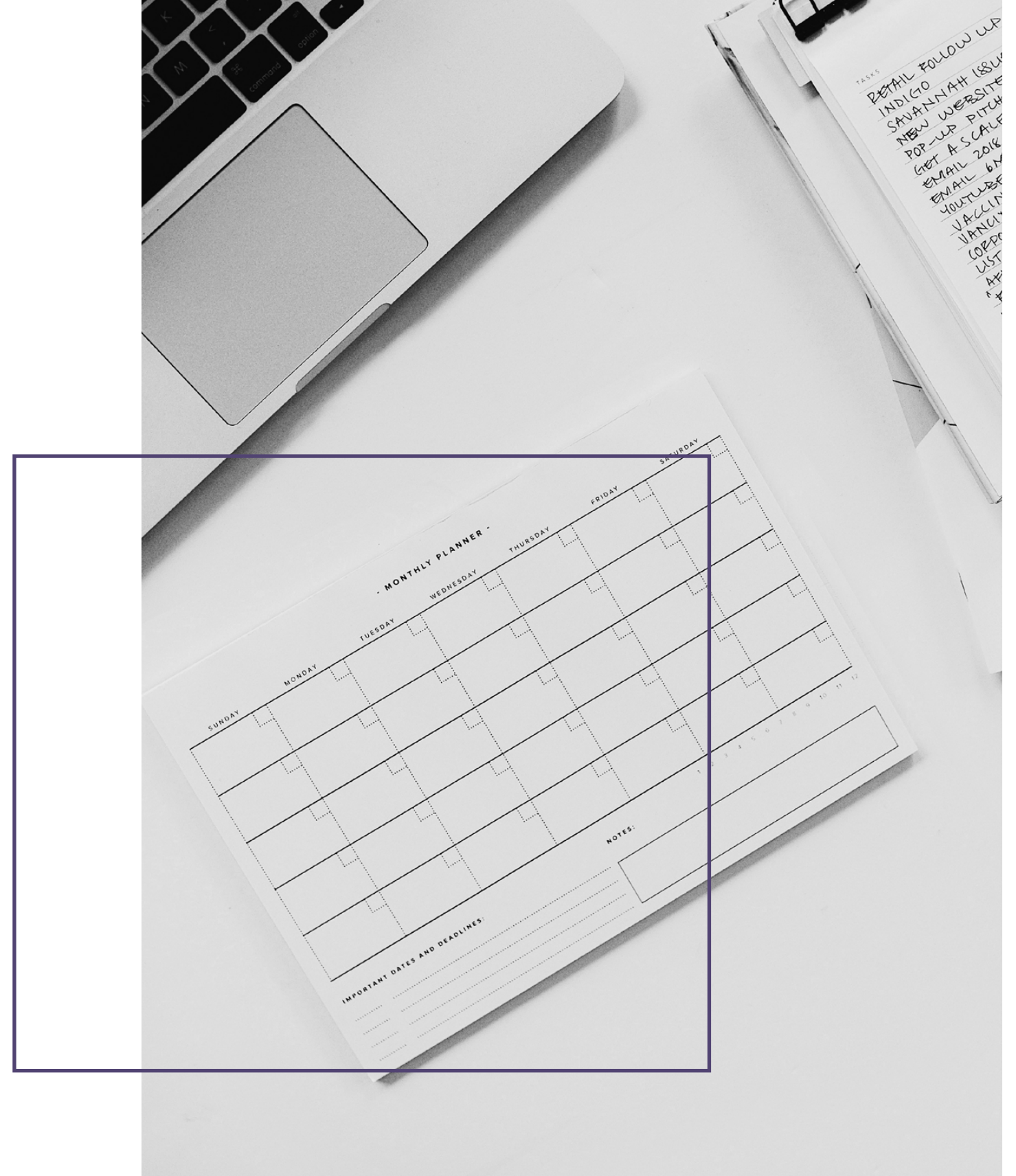
There are primarily two ways you can plan your next set of tests:

1. Pick up tests from your testing calendar

If you already have a few testing ideas finalized and scheduled, you can work toward getting the requirements to conduct it in place. Doing so will also give you a headstart and make the whole process more efficient.

2. Go back and brainstorm new testing ideas

In case you're out of ideas for the next iteration, or have already set up the ones you had, you should go back and repeat the entire process from scratch. Remember, by this point you have a lot more context about what's not working with your website. Just couple this with the learnings you've had so far, and you're good to go.





Analyzing And Learning From Your Test Results

It is the analysis phase of an optimization plan that helps you close the loop for conversion optimization and fuel further optimization efforts.

Unfortunately, optimizers often look at a test result only to see if there was a winning variation. However, optimizers need to look deeper than that.

A/B testing tools make testing easy, and that's about it. They're tools to run tests, and not exactly designed for post-test analysis.

When you run a test until you've reached significance you have to do post-test analysis to decide on the way forward.

Your test can really only end in 3 ways:

- Winning Variation is Found
- No difference Between Control And Variation
- Losing Variation is Found

What to Do With Your A/B Test Results

When a Winning Variation is Found

Great! What you should do now is answer these questions, and proceed as follows:

- What is the cost of deploying the change (engineering hours, design hours)?
- Does the expected increase in the revenue justify the cost involved?



Yes

- Talk to your engineering and design teams to get the change implemented.
- Analyze the test data to see if there are further opportunities to optimize.
- Use these learning outcomes to fuel further optimization efforts.



No

- Hold on to deployment.
- Use post-test segmentation: can the hypothesis be refined for more impact?
- Reconstruct the hypothesis
- Use these learnings to fuel further optimization efforts

When a Losing Variation is Found

When the variation loses, make sure you:

- Look at the research; ensure that the hypothesis isn't faulty.
- Analyze the test data; do segmentation to reveal further insights.
- Validate research data with surveys and visual analytics.
- Go through relevant case studies! It could reveal new perspectives.
- Reconstruct the hypothesis to accommodate new insights that were missed in the initial research.
- Go back to following the CRO process.

No Difference Between Test Variations. Now What?

Let's say the overall outcome is 'no significant difference' between variations. Move on to something else? Not so fast. Keep these 2 things in mind:

1. Your test hypothesis might have been right, but the implementation was poor.

Let's say your qualitative research says that concern about security is an issue. How many ways do we have to beef up the perception of security? Unlimited.

You might be onto something – but the implementation didn't work. If you have data that supports your hypothesis, try a few more iterations to confirm your hypotheses.

2. Just because there was no difference overall, the treatment might have beat control in a segment or two.

If you got a lift in returning visitors and mobile visitors, but a drop for new visitors and desktop users – those segments might cancel each other out, and it seems like it's a case of "no difference." Analyze your test across key segments to see this.

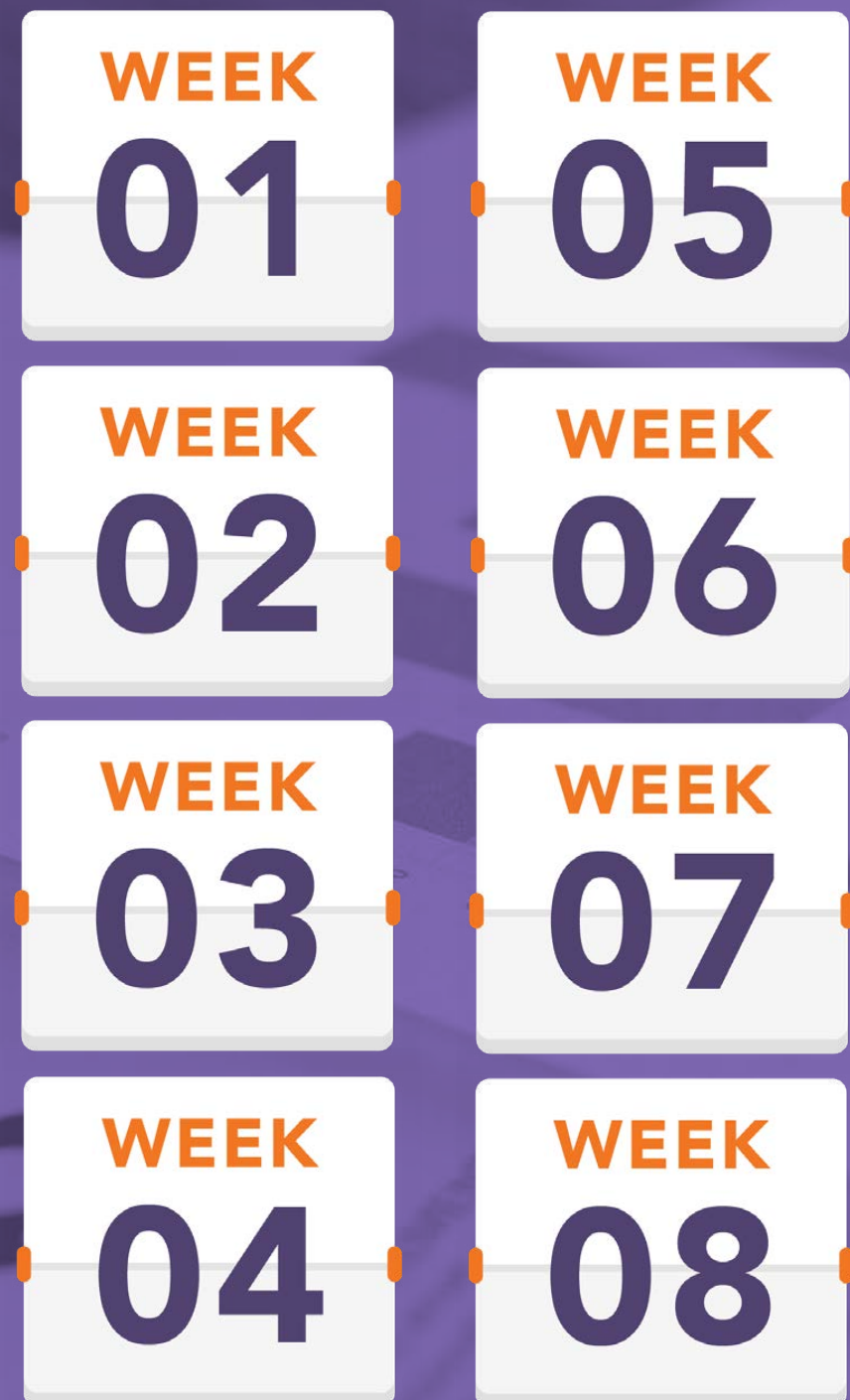
Look at the test results at least across these segments (make sure each segment has adequate sample size):

1. Desktop vs Tablet/Mobile
2. New vs Returning
3. Traffic that lands directly on the page you're testing vs came via internal link
4. If your treatment performed well for a specific segment, it's time to consider a personalized approach for that particular segment.

There's no difference, but you like B better than A

We're human beings, and we have personal preferences. So if your test says that there's no significant difference between variations, but you like B better – there's really no reason not to go with B.

If B is a usability improvement or represents your brand image better, go for it. But those are not good reasons to go with B if B performs worse in a test.



Wrapping Up

We've come to the end of our 8-weeks, and by this point, you might know infinitely more about CRO than when you started at the beginning. Remember, CRO is a process of improving your conversion rates based on data, not assumptions.

If we haven't repeated it enough, we'll say it one more time: CRO is a process, not a one-time fix. Over time, you'll get faster at CRO and your tests will get more advanced.

Now that you've become well-versed with the know-hows of CRO, make sure you continue to explore it even further and impact your bottom line repeatedly. Just don't forget the main tenants we talked about in this ebook.

Before you leave, be sure to pay this guide forward. Share it with your friends, colleagues, or anyone who you might think could gain value from it. What's more, bookmark it for your own reference, and be sure to download a copy.

Good luck, and happy optimizing!

About VWO

The VWO Experience Optimization & Growth Platform is the only connected platform that enables organizations to optimize their entire audience journey - from click to conversion. You can build stellar digital experiences that convert better by discovering visitor behavior insights, easily turning these insights to experiments, expanding experiments to multichannel digital properties, and bringing back lost audience through effective engagement- all via a single connected platform. Embrace the power of the VWO Connected Platform to see your core conversion & growth metrics go up everyday.

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 PayScale

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Group 

 Target

 HOLIDAYS

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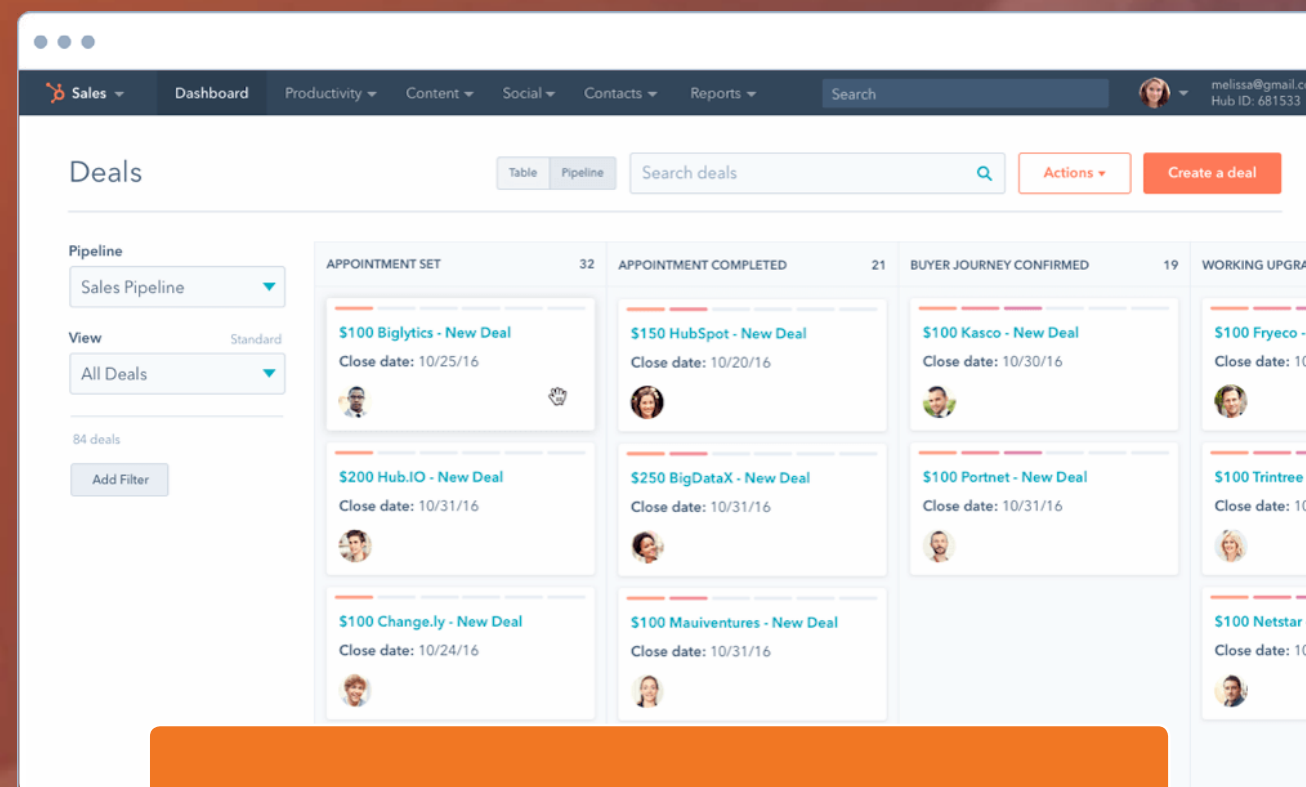
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