eBook

9 Conversion Rate Optimization Secrets from Digital Leaders

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Uncovering the secrets of conversion

Enterprises are on a relentless quest to convert website visitors and mobile app users—taking them from that initial click or tap to a paying customer. Yet, only 22% of businesses are satisfied with their conversion rates.[1] Beyond "standard methods," there are creative and innovative ways to move your customers to the next step and achieve your conversion rate optimization (CRO) goals.

What is CRO?

First, let's level-set on what we mean by CRO:

CRO is a method of increasing the number of website visitors or mobile app users who perform a desired action—in other words—a conversion.

It doesn't have to be a purchase; it can be downloading an app, clicking 'add to cart,' signing up for a newsletter, submitting a form, heeding an app push notification or even clicking a link. You may also have multiple conversion points per page and each will have its own conversion rate goal.

$$\text{Conversion rate} = \left(\text{number of conversions} / \text{total visitors} \right) \times 100$$

We consulted with some of the foremost CRO experts to help you put their tips, tricks and best practices into action.

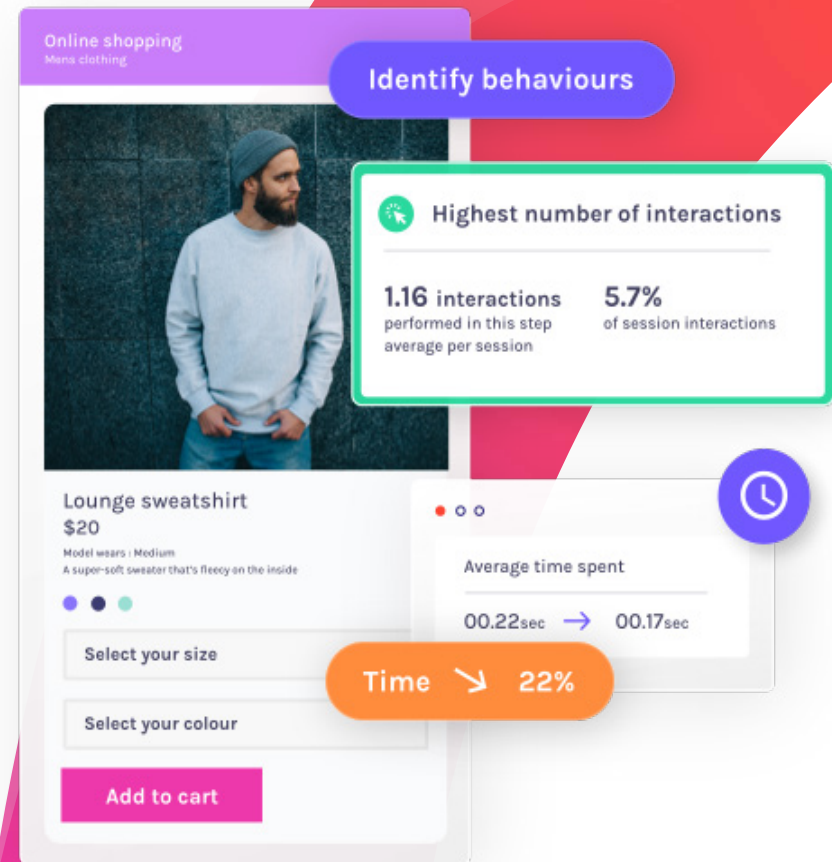[1] 45 Conversion Rate Optimization Statistics

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Flip the switch: Get into the mind of your customer

It's natural and intuitive for CRO efforts to go directly to website or app optimization. The visible factors associated with it—the site/app, the pages/screens, the user journey—are tangible, so this makes sense. "Moving the chairs around" or rearranging elements on the page as an optimization technique, is only one lens to consider during this process. This 'mental model' of how websites work doesn't consider many other factors that affect CRO, namely the visitor who is looking at your screen of your website or app. That is vital.

Getting inside your customer's mind is a different optimization style: optimizing the sales conversation instead of focusing on improving the page, the site and external elements.

You direct your efforts to the user's perspective to solve their problems.

Online shopping
Mens clothing

Identify behaviours

Highest number of interactions

1.16 interactions
performed in this step
average per session

5.7%
of session interactions

Lounge sweatshirt
$20
Model wears : Medium
A super-soft sweater that's fleecy on the inside

Average time spent

00.22sec → 00.17sec

Time ↘ 22%

Select your size

Select your colour

Add to cart

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This means leveraging real digital behavioral data to understand why visitors are coming to your site and what they're hoping to achieve. What do their actions reveal about concerns might they have around purchasing from your company? What can your glean about their objectives by exploring their journey through your site or app?

The decision to buy is made in that person's mind, and that is what you also have to focus on, but you'll be rewarded with an upside: conversion.

"If optimizing the sales conversation sounds like it's hard work and a lot more difficult than the other form of optimization, it is. It requires a lot more effort because it's the invisible things that we're dealing with. It's things in the mind of the customer. You can move stuff around the page all you want, but the decision is not made on the page."

*- Johann Von Tonder, COO AWA Digital*

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Go beyond personas: Understand customer types and personalize their experience

Though there are multiple ways to slice and dice marketing personas, one distinction often gets overlooked: new customers and returning customers. While this may seem like an obvious difference, it is often not addressed, and it should be.

How you optimize for a new customer and a current customer is very different.

Acquiring new customers consists of carefully navigating them through the buying process, hopefully leading to lowering your cost per acquisition and increasing your conversion rate. Whereas with a returning customer, the effort is focused on personalization, increasing that customer's lifetime value, and encouraging them to purchase additional products and more often.

For example, when a new customer comes to a website or app for the first time, you want to eliminate concerns that are causing anxiety. Questions to be answered include: Can they trust you as a reputable business? Will they get the product that they ordered? Do they need to be reminded about your core value propositions around your delivery offers or your terms? There are many different elements that help drive towards that first purchase.

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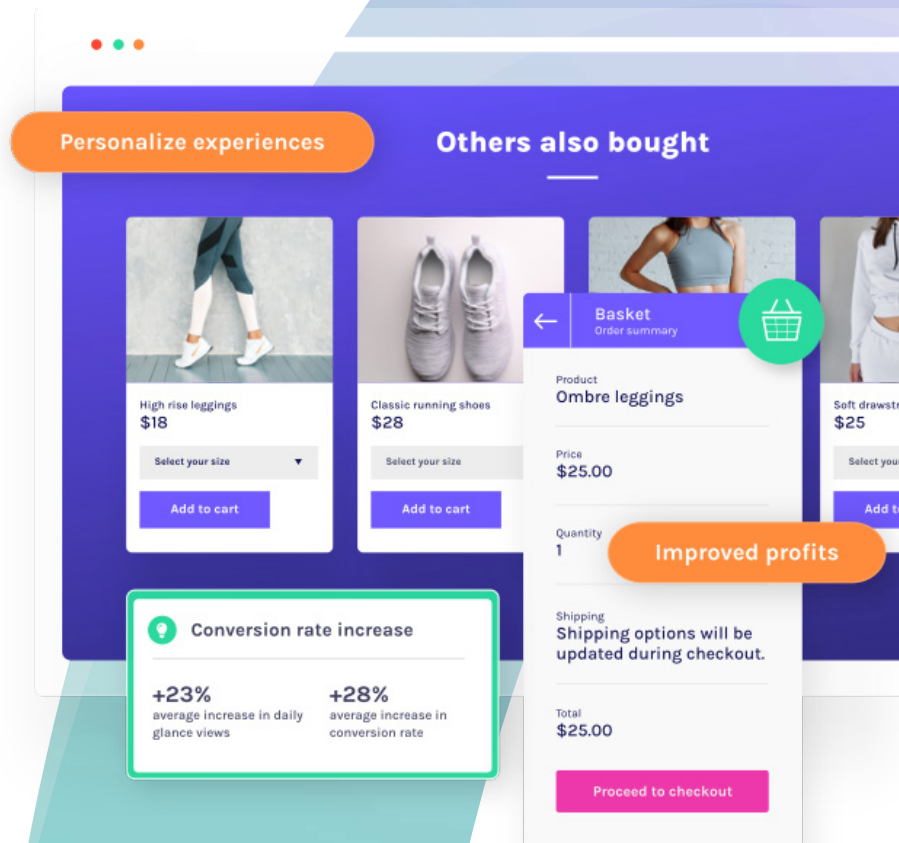
A returning customer naturally has a lot more data associated with them. You likely have their demographic information, prior purchase records, search history and other helpful data which will give you an indication of what you can potentially promote to them in the future. Overall, return customers can and should have a much more personalized experience, which will result in higher trust, brand loyalty and future purchases.

"The most important thing we look at when starting out an optimization program is making sure that we're doing the right optimization for the right customer, whether they are a first-time customer or they are a returning customer."

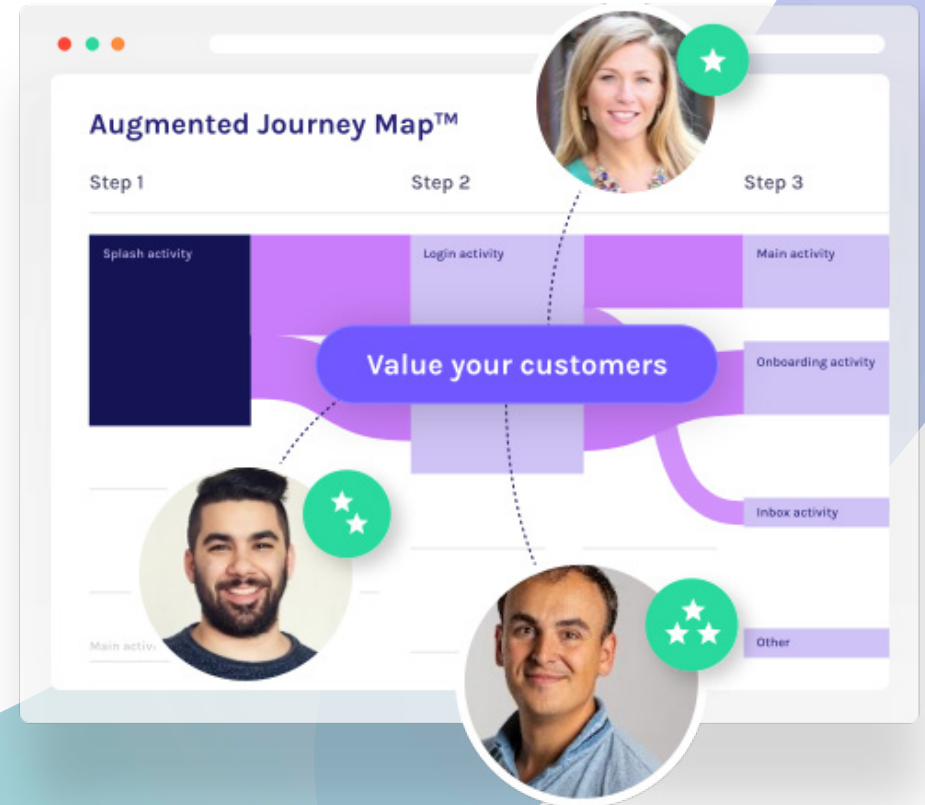- Matthew Pezzimenti, Director & Founder, Conversion Kings

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The CRO hack in plain sight: Incorporate Voice of the Customer (VOC) data

Customer experience matters. A lot. A recent survey revealed that 80% of customers think their company experience is as important as the product or service. Reinforcing this point, 80% of consumers would stop doing business with a company because of a poor customer service experience.[2]

What your customers think about your brand has a major influence not only on their own behavior but also on your company's revenue. VOC feedback helps identify important. The key is to scale VOC data by integrating it with your digital experience analytics platform.

This helps you audit your digital journeys and see how many other users were impacted by the same issue so you can calculate to impact to your conversion rate. Meaningful, actionable insights can be shared with business and IT stakeholders and ultimately rolled into conversion programs, providing a more seamless customer experience.

Augmented Journey Map™

Step 1   Step 2   Step 3

Splash activity   Login activity   Main activity

Value your customers

Onboarding activity

Inbox activity

Main activ...   Other

[2]How Does Data-Driven Voice of Customer Reinvent CX and UX?

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Also, smart and swift conversion efforts can be made on the fly with VOC data. For example, when a consumer has a bad experience on your website and opens up a chat conversation, it's crucial that the chat representative has the right tools to capture the issue and help resolve it right away with that first touch, instead of the problem getting escalated. This can save the customer in that moment and also potentially convert them to the desired action.

"VOC consists of complaints from the customer. It will always pertain to a bigger set of customers when you extrapolate what the other customer is actually talking about. We can identify those struggles and pain points from a customer lens and help holistically instead of having to look at these issues in silos where you just put a Band-Aid on the wound."

- Vijay Honnalagere, Senior Experience Specialist, Verizon

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The unassuming game-changer: Form-field optimization

Forms are a standard part of any website, but they can often take a back seat to more prominent areas. Doing a thorough review of all of your forms and their fields can make the difference between a conversion and losing a customer forever.

There are four main areas to examine:

1. **Eliminate unnecessary fields.**
   Analyze each field to decide if it's truly needed. Remove unneeded, required fields as they could be causing user validation errors. Also, cut any optional fields that can eliminate one or more decision points. (Pro tip: Review your data to see what percentage of users are filling out optional fields. Typically that percentage is very low.)

2. **Label all fields as required or optional.**
   Not all fields are created equal, so don't treat them all as the same. By marking fields as required and optional, visitors can go through the form and know for sure which fields to either complete or skip, instead of guessing what an unmarked field means and potentially filling it out incorrectly.
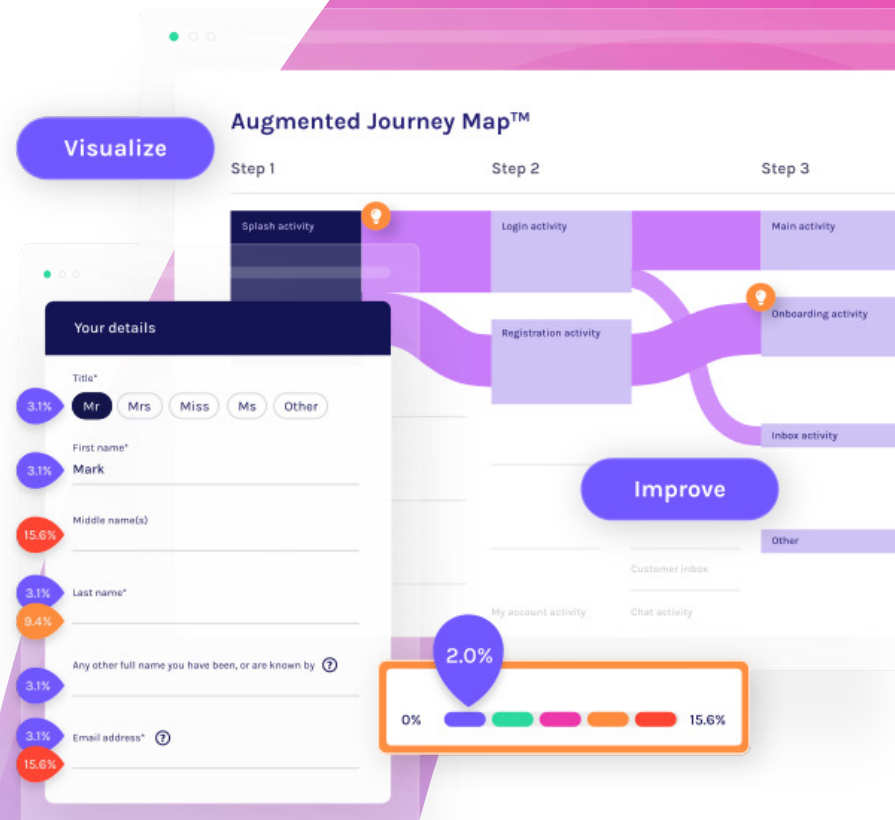
3. **On mobile, display the proper keyboard for each field.**
   With so many users on mobile, it's crucial that the keyboard for each field matches the expected input from the user to make their journey as easy and efficient as possible. For example, if a user activates the email address field on mobile, present the email keyboard with the "@" symbol and autocorrect and auto-capitalization turned off

4. **Show field-level error messages inline.**
   Most people fill out a form and press "submit" only to get errors at the end. It's not a good experience. Displaying errors all at once can be overwhelming to users and requires back-tracking on each field. Instead, display field-level error messages inline. This way, if a user leaves a required field blank or inputs an invalid entry into a required field, they'll immediately know and can correct it.

"Whether your form is a checkout funnel or an application or really anything in between, you have to become obsessed with that form and the individual fields within it, because they can be one of the largest sources of struggle for your users. And you have to make their experience as easy and frictionless as possible in order to maximize conversions."

- Laura Hunter, Manager of E-Commerce User Experience,
  Mason Companies

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Get a 360 view of conversion: Analyze how other elements are impacting conversion

While general website usability typically gets a lot of attention and can deliver results, it's not foolproof, nor should it be your only focus.

There are two other areas that demand the same level of attention.

Content effectiveness makes a big impact. Pay close attention to content, product photography styling, how reviews are structured and presented, and other elements. These elements can get overlooked but make a real difference.

Equally, site speed is critical to CRO. Pages that load within two seconds have an average bounce rate of 9%, while pages that take five seconds to load have a bounce rate of 38%.[3] Some experts think speed is the most important area you should be looking at to improve your conversion. Ironically, the other CRO work you've invested time and money in will be lost if your site is slow and visitors leave.

"Initiatives that are aimed at doing things that are genuinely helpful for customers like helping them find products they're looking for, helping them compare and chose, and helping them make sure they get everything they need for the project that they're about to embark upon, can lead to conversions."

- Steve Borges, Co-founder, Biglight

[3]11 Low-Hanging Fruits for Increasing Website Speed (and Conversions)

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Money isn't everything: Not all conversions are about revenue

Typically, most CRO efforts are geared towards making as much revenue as possible from customers. This naturally leads to prioritizing tests that are laser-focused on one question: which test idea has the potential to generate the most revenue?

But what if your tests are about increasing completions or reducing costs? How do you prioritize tests with different goals? When embarking on this type of testing program, here are the following steps to work optimally:

1. List out and understand the importance of each of the goals relative to one another.

2. Order each of the pain points for the tests according to their importance and develop a prioritized list.

3. Combine this ranking with other factors such as build costs, trophic levels, and the expected impact of the test to calculate an overall prioritization score.

4. The result is a prioritization framework, not ordered by revenue potential but by the potential to relieve pain points and improve user experience.

"When we worked with the clients to prioritize their testing road maps, we can choose between our original in a revenue-focused framework and our user experience-focused framework based on the client's needs."

- Steve Borges, Co-founder, Biglight

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The needle in the haystack: Consider your audience when reporting

One area that can fall below the CRO radar is reporting protocols and communication. Different teams and leaders have specific interests when it comes to analytics and have a different way of thinking—whether it's marketing operations or IT. Each offer their own perspectives and valuable insights to your program. Communicate with each of these groups and individuals clearly and based on their requirements.

There are several examples where communication can go awry:

In the first case, perhaps you did an experiment, and you're happy with the outcome, but it was never launched as a program. It's crucial how you report out the data, which template you use, and what information you provide, so it doesn't appear as though data is missing or misleading.

Secondly, be aware of your weekly reports on a program.
It's imperative to be consistent on the template you're using and any changes that are implemented. Or, if each team needs to look at the information differently, you should customize it to their interests. You'll have better communication internally, and ultimately it can help your program grow. With better information comes better internal conversations and possibly conversions.
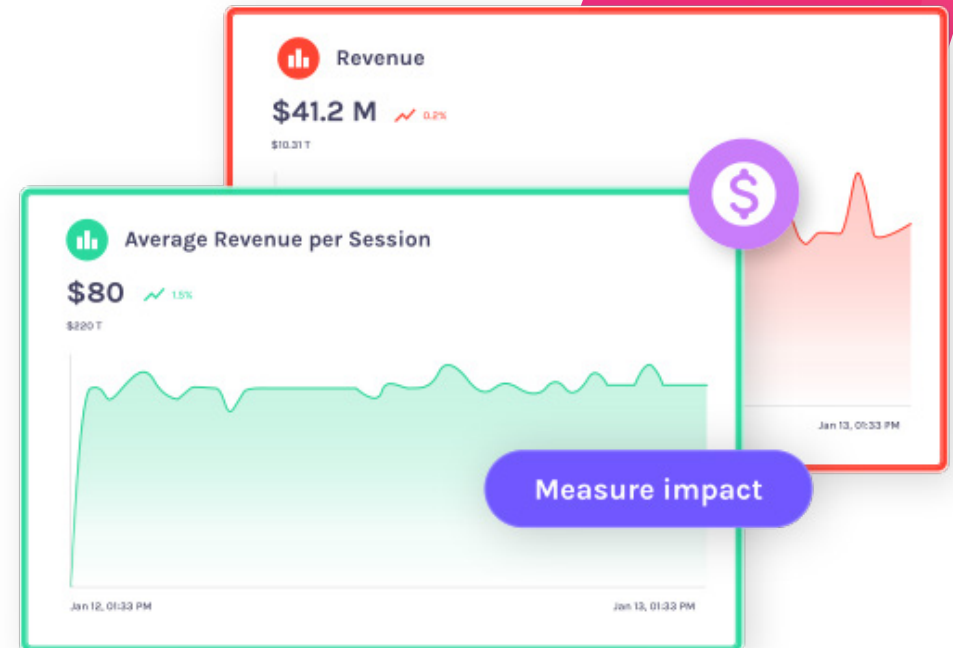
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Be crystal clear: Ensure you're reporting on the right thing

Sometimes there is a disconnect between how we report on optimization activities and how the conversion rate is recorded. CRO and marketing professionals can struggle to interpret the conversion results and effectively communicate those analytics to management. Why? It can be complex, so let's break it down.

A conversion rate is fundamentally a result of other metrics that happen in your conversion funnel, such as site traffic and bounce rate, how many people are adding to their cart and if they are successfully getting through that checkout process. These are all critical in creating the conversion rate that we're all so focused on improving.

But here's the rub: when we look at a site conversion rate, it is influenced by many other factors, some of which are in our control and some outside of it. One of the biggest variables outside our influence is both the type and the quality of traffic coming to the website.

Revenue

$41.2 M 0.2%

$10.31 T

Average Revenue per Session

$80 1.5%

$220 T

Measure impact

Jan 12, 01:33 PM   Jan 13, 01:33 PM

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For example, big display campaigns are great for branding and awareness, but they are not optimized for conversion. Likely you'll get heavy traffic and high session numbers with a lower conversion rate coming through that channel. Ultimately this will bring down your overall conversion rate and wills skew your data. Instead of reporting on the conversion rate of total sessions divided by your transactions, you'll get a more accurate sense of CRO if you look at the non-bounce sessions divided by transactions.

Once the data is removed that's contributing excessively to your bounce rate, you'll have a better understanding of your true conversion rate and also a cleaner set of data to identify where visitors are truly having problems.

"One of the big things to remember is when you're reporting on your conversion rate, remove any data that's contributing to bounce, so that you can effectively report back and identify where your optimization efforts need to be focused."

- Matthew Pezzimenti, Director & Founder, Conversion Kings

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Go counterintuitive: Negative results can lead to positive outcomes

Believe it or not, poor results on CRO efforts are not always in vain. In fact, they can be immensely helpful to your future programs. Here's why.

Not all campaigns pay off with the number of leads you wanted, but you can learn a lot from negative results—sometimes even more than with those that are considered "winners." The important steps are to analyze the data, gather key insights, learn from it and apply it to future programs.

The same idea applies when you have bad news to report on your program. For instance, when providing reports to management, rather than just showing a decrease in your conversion rates, mine the data for insights, explain it, and act on it: Why did these results happen? What are the learnings? What can you do to improve it for next time? That makes it all worthwhile.

"As long as you're willing to learn something, there's always something to learn."

- Edina Hurtic, CRO Analyst, Philip Morris International

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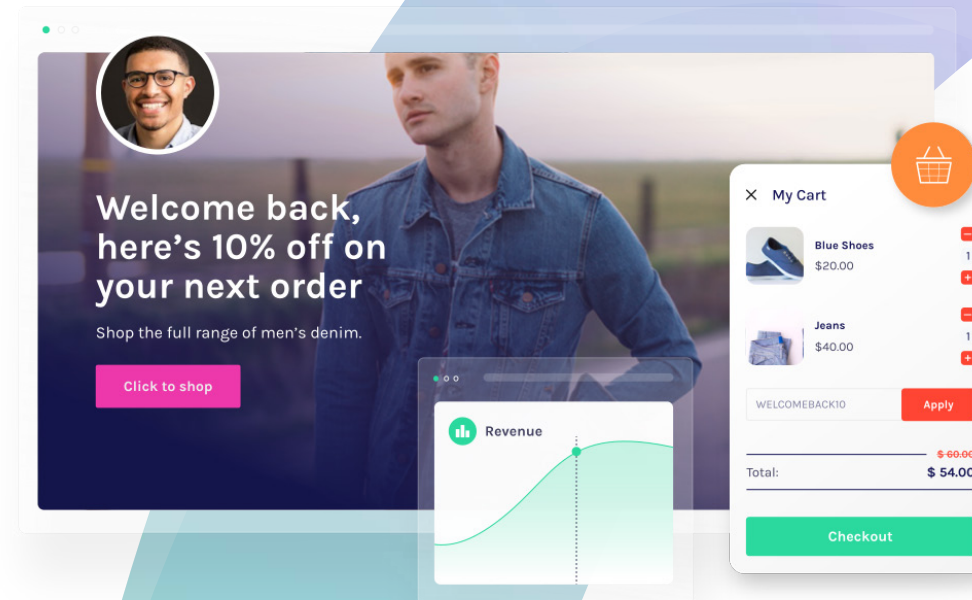
Turn CRO ideas into action

There is no magic formula for exceptional CRO results.
It takes dedication and creative thinking, along with expertise and inspiration from what works for digital innovators. Whether it's getting in your customer's head more, turning poor-performing campaigns into new insights or looking at usability through a different lens, you can make an actionable difference with these best practices and ideas.

Audience behavior

Engagement
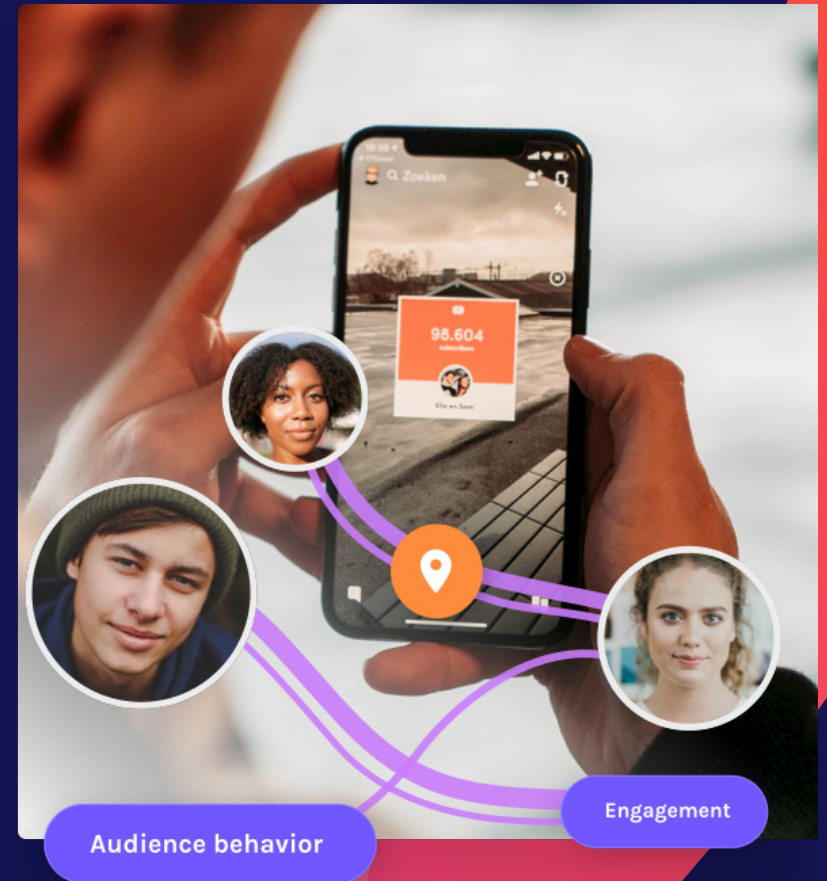
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About Glassbox

Glassbox empowers organizations to create frictionless digital journeys for their customers. Our digital experience analytics platform works in real time across mobile apps and websites to accelerate loyalty and growth. Through AI-driven visualization and analytics tools, Glassbox helps teams to prioritize customer experience and digital product enhancements from a single collaborative system. Teams across the organization, from IT and product management to marketing and compliance, can understand user struggles, visualize the customer journey and optimize every step. Hundreds of enterprises across multiple industries choose Glassbox for easy, secure and private cloud-based deployments.

To learn more about how Glassbox can help you improve digital journeys, increase customer engagement and accelerate growth, view a product demo.

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