

Science behind web sales

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This week's fool's gold comes to you from 30,000 feet above the mid-west States where I am flying in an attempt to single-handedly reverse the negative impacts of Brexit by winning more business across the Pond.

I thought I'd share the lessons from a great new book I was reading earlier on the flight.

There can't be many businesses without a website nowadays, but is yours any good?

If it is a transactional site where people buy stuff, the ef-



fectiveness of your site could be the difference between you living the life of Mr Micawber or Sir Richard Branson.

You don't need to be told the internet is a competitive place, but it pays to reimagine it as a huge market square with many others selling something similar to you.

Your job first is to get suspects to spot and come to your

stall despite all the other choices around them.

It's not easy and the first lesson is that you need to pay close attention to the competition and not be afraid to copy what they might be doing to draw custom to them.

In a typical website, 96 per cent of visitors pop on to the site and leave without buying.

This begs the questions

- where have the 96 per cent gone? Who are the four per cent? Where did the four per cent come from? What did the four per cent do on your site?

Have you asked these questions of yourself?

Digging into the 96 per cent is where the gold is and there are a few key places to dig.

Imagine your website as a store with people wandering

around looking at items with empty baskets.

We are obviously concerned with traffic growth first, but the number one metric we all miss is the 'add to basket' rate.

If people don't put stuff in their baskets as they browse your store, then your children won't eat, but do you look closely at this statistic every day and at where items are added and where not? Thought so.

Of course, average order value is important as well, but so too is the 'basket to order' rate.

If you were running an actual shop and people kept dropping their full baskets and walking out, you would be all over them trying to understand why and prevent this loss of business.

The same thinking needs to apply to your website.

Benchmarking suggests that, on average, 11 per cent of visitors to a shopping site will add items to their basket, 55 per cent of these will proceed to the checkout, and of these 84 per cent will place an order.

These numbers vary a bit from site to site depending on whether it is an emotional or rational purchase, but these are good benchmarks from which to start.

If fewer than 11 per cent are adding to basket then something is probably wrong.

You may be bringing poor quality traffic or they are losing interest or getting stuck and unable to do what they need to do easily.

Monitoring bounce rates is essential and not just the home page but also category and product pages.

Is your site optimised for your target buyer? Are they competitive people, methodical, humanistic or emotional buyers?

If you haven't stopped to ask yourself who they are, you won't have optimised the journey for these people and your bounce rate will be higher than it needs to be.

● The Ultimate Guide to E-Commerce Growth by Hammerslev and Hammerslev.

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