

MarketingWeek

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Using a website as a proactive sales tool

John Lillie, vice president of UK and Southern Europe for Tealeaf, evaluates how websites should be used as a proactive selling tool.



Websites are the focal point and key source of revenue for online businesses, but regardless of the size of business, website errors are still a regular occurrence due to the dynamic nature of ecommerce, ongoing updates and changes to content.

The impact of unexpected glitches can be huge, from losing revenue, giving the customer a bad brand experience or even having your company name blackened on social media platforms. Marketing departments spend considerable sums driving traffic to web channels, but if site errors lead to customers abandoning before converting, it is all wasted.

Research commissioned by Tealeaf in 2009, found that 77% of UK consumers experienced some sort of issue when completing an online transaction. 35% of these said they would contact the company's customer service team to sort out the problem, but when they did, 51% did not have their issue resolved.

This can result in a damaging long-term effect on a company's bottom line, with 52% saying that if they experienced bad customer service from a call centre, they would subsequently stop doing business with the brand entirely.

So how does an online business even know that there is an error impacting site performance unless a customer calls in or if there is a noticeable impact on conversion rate? And when an error is apparent, how does the web team find out exactly what and where the error is? Even when the problem is identified and rectified, there is no telling how that negative experience may have impacted the customer's perception of the site and likelihood of coming back.

And what about customer struggle? Many customers may be having problems completing simple tasks on your site, but this isn't something that will be immediately apparent.

There is now a solution to this problem. By giving brands more comprehensive visibility to what is happening on a website at all times, they can view exactly how customers are using the site and can even drill down and replay individual sessions in order to identify problems and customer struggle.

Brands are able to see if a customer had problems putting an item into a basket, registering their credit card details or were not able to view a purchase properly, and then take steps to prioritise and rectify any issues. However, identifying errors on a site is only half the story. Inevitably problems will occur and whilst finding and fixing them is vital, they can present an opportunity to the business to reach out to the customer,

turn their negative experience into a positive one, by completing the transaction on their behalf and even upselling in the process.

Any marketing spend on driving traffic to the site is not lost as sales can continue away from the online world. Customer sessions can then be sent to the ecommerce team for analysis so that the issue can be rectified and won't happen again.

Turning website errors into a positive experience for the customer is crucial to ensuring people remain loyal to a brand. Rescuing a lost sale and immediately contacting a customer who has dropped off the site at checkout point will not only increase revenue, it will ensure a more informed service is provided and in turn improve affinity with the brand.

One of the best examples of this happening in practice, comes from travel-company netflights.com, a brand of Gold Medal Travel. The team at netflights.com knew that high value customers were dropping off their site at key moments before converting, but didn't know why this was and had no way of proactively getting in touch to offer assistance.

Their existing solutions did not provide the ability to extensively capture customer information making the recovery of sales nearly impossible, resulting in vast amounts of lost revenue.

Using Tealeaf, netflights.com has been able to set up alerts for customers with certain basket values that dropped off for a particular reason e.g. being stuck in a loop or credit card failure.

Because Tealeaf captures the entire session of every web visitor, it is easy for the contact centre team to use details that were entered during checkout, such as email addresses and telephone numbers, and then proactively get in touch with the customer.

Using this information, the outbound team now delivers more revenue per hour than any other reservation group in the company and has generated a 340% increase in revenue year on year. This represents 20% of all revenue received through netflights.com.

The netflights.com example is a clear demonstration of how brands are beginning to think about their websites in a very different way. Rather than spending vast sums driving traffic and then the majority of these visitors not converting, with no explanation why, businesses are using increased website visibility to really understand the experience of their online customers and then take steps to improve this. Site errors can occur due a number of reasons and will continue to do so.

A strategic customer experience management strategy will arm businesses with insightful qualitative data, rather than simply quantitative, allowing them to determine exactly why customers abandon, helping to increase customer satisfaction and retention while protecting and increasing business revenues