OROCommerce™

Growing Your B2B eCommerce Website Traffic and Revenue

PART 1 – BOOST TRAFFIC FROM SEARCH ENGINES

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It's bound to happen. You launch your B2B eCommerce site with gusto and immediately generate traffic. Traffic converts, and the sweet smell of new sales fills the air. Everyone is happy. Then traffic slows and your analytics dashboard flatlines. There's a new smell in the air and it's the stench of a plateau. Traffic and sales are flat and they just won't budge. No one is happy and it's your job to do something about it. Fast!

So, what happened? Well to start with, you aren't Kevin Costner. Just because you build it, doesn't mean they will come. Plateaus are almost inevitable, but they can be overcome. In this two-part guide we will help you identify issues that can cause online sales and traffic to plateau and provide insights to help you get growing again.

Part 1 will focus on analytics, website performance, search engine optimization (SEO), and pay per click (PPC) digital marketing strategies. Because search engines are the lifeblood of an eCommerce website's traffic, you aren't going to beat a plateau until you perform well in search.

In Part 2, we will look at improving user experience, customer re-engagement, creating content, and developing alternative sources of traffic and sales such as promotions, co-marketing, and making sure everyone is on-board.

So let's begin.

Fully leverage all sources of analytics and tracking

Do you have the data you need to guide the decisions you must make? Do you have insights into customer behavior and purchasing habits? Do you know how visitors arrive at your website, how they move about the site, and where they leave?

eCommerce makes capturing customer metrics easy, but you need to capture data with intention. Don't drown in data that doesn't measure what makes your company successful. We recommend that you focus on a limited number of meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs).

Use KPIs that represent of each stage of your B2B sales funnel as well as customer lifetime value and churn rate.

Image source.

As visitors enter your funnel and become leads, and these leads become qualified and eventually convert into customers, you must capture the data you need to identify bottlenecks, lost opportunities, and the root sources of your plateau. Here are five KPIs to get you started:

KPI Name	Source	Formula	Relevance
# of Visitors	Analytics Dashboard	Raw number of site visitors – this can be further broken down into organic traffic, paid traffic, social media traffic, etc.	This tells you how much traffic your site is receiving – this is ameasure of your overall website reach.
Conversion to Leads	CRM	Leads ÷ visitors = Conversion %	For B2B eCommerce websites, leads are usually website visitors that fill-out a form or perform some sort of desirable action. This metric measures the quality of traffic received and the ability of the website to engage visitors.
Leads to Marketing Qualified Leads (MQL)	CRM	MQL ÷ Leads = Conversion %	This metric measures the quality of leads generated. The average conversion rate to MQL is 50% in B2B. These are leads that should be qualified but are not ready to buy without more nurturing from sales and marketing (e.g., price list requests, abandoned shopping carts).
MQLs to Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs)/Opportunities	CRM	SQLs ÷ MQLs = Conversion %	This metric measures lead quality as buyers move through the funnel. It's important to know the quality of the lead pipeline and the effectiveness of sales efforts. Average ranges are from 13% to 31%.

Qualified Leads to Customers*	CRM	Leads ÷ New Customers = Conversion percentage	This metric measures the ease of the purchase process. It shows if qualified leads are closing into actual customers. Optimizations may need to be made either in the checkout or sales process. Depending on the industry, your conversion rate from top of the funnel to bottom should be from 2% - 10%
*Use this KPI if your sales funnel fits a B2C model. This can be if your business does not utilize an RFQ flow and the vast majority of leads flow directly into sales. In this case, the division of leads into MQL and SQL might not make sense.			

The above KPIs can be captured by new organizations or those just new to eCommerce. Because they are dynamic and capture your ability to obtain new customers, they can be quickly gathered.

Once you've been engaged in eCommerce for four or more years, it's important to start measuring retention KPIs. These KPIs measure what happens after you earn a customer. Use retention metrics to ascertain the dynamics of customer relationships and the profitability of those relationships over time. The following metrics will alert you to issues with existing customers and potential problems with customer loyalty.

Churn Rate. Churn rate tells you if you can keep customers once earned. The number is a percentage of clients that no longer buy from you over a given period of time, and it can provide insights into how satisfied customers are with your goods and your support after the sale. Calculate as follows:

Step 1 – Determine time frame to consider – should include several sales cycles

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Step 2 – Calculate Customers Lost - Number of Customers at Beginning less Number at End

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Step 3 – Divide Customers Lost by Number of Customers at Beginning

Growing churn rates indicate customers are not satisfied; it's up to you to determine why. You can find more information on Churn Rate in this post.

Customer Lifetime Value. This measures the value generated by a customer over the lifetime of the relationship. Unlike B2C relationships, which are built on one-time purchases, B2B relationships span many years and many purchases. This metric tells you if you are maximizing the value of your existing client base. Remember it always costs less to close sales with existing clients than a lead.

Calculate as follows:

Average Order Value X Number of Repeat Sales X Average Length of Relationship

You can find more information on Customer Lifetime Value in [this post.](#)

KPIs in Action

These KPIs can be used to evaluate sales and marketing efforts as a whole, as well to drill down to specific customer segments or marketing sources and campaigns when you spot an issue. For example, analysis might show that the Leads Conversion rates are good, but your sales funnel is starved for Qualified Leads (or Opportunities). By zeroing in on Leads Quantity you determine that the number of leads has not plummeted, but the quality has declined considerably. By analyzing the traffic that supplies leads you realize there's been a dramatic decline in direct traffic. And direct traffic has always been the source of your "warmest", high quality leads. Because a direct traffic decline usually identifies brand awareness or reputation issues, a look at your PR and Communications strategy may be in order. In addition, you may need to carefully study unaddressed customer complaints, company issues that reached social media, or any negative mention by industry influencers.

Google Analytics

Google provides many tools to help you understand what is happening with your search engine rankings and pay per click ads performance. Make sure you are taking full advantage of these tools. Think of your Google Analytics and Google Search Console dashboards as the place to monitor the vital signs for your site's traffic. By linking your AdWords account to your Analytics dashboard, you can associate ads with traffic and follow Analytics metrics like events and goal conversions on your AdWords console. Use this data to identify opportunities to optimize your ad campaigns.

Assess website performance

"All organizations are perfectly designed to get the results they are now getting. If we want different results, we must change the way we do things." ~ Tom Northup, CEO and organization management thought leader

Amazon has perfected the B2C experience and trained today's B2B buyer to research products and make purchases online. That's good news for building your business. Unfortunately, it has also resulted in buyers with the attention span of a two-year old toddler. Did you know **40% of people will abandon a site if it takes more than three seconds to load?** Desktop users expect a page to load in two seconds. And two of every three minutes spent online is spent on a mobile device, whether it is a phone or tablet.

13% of adults **use mobile devices exclusively** to access the internet. Google found that [50% of B2B queries are made on smartphones.](#) Your website must be fast and sticky. Speed is how quickly the site loads and stickiness is how long visitors stay on the site once they arrive.
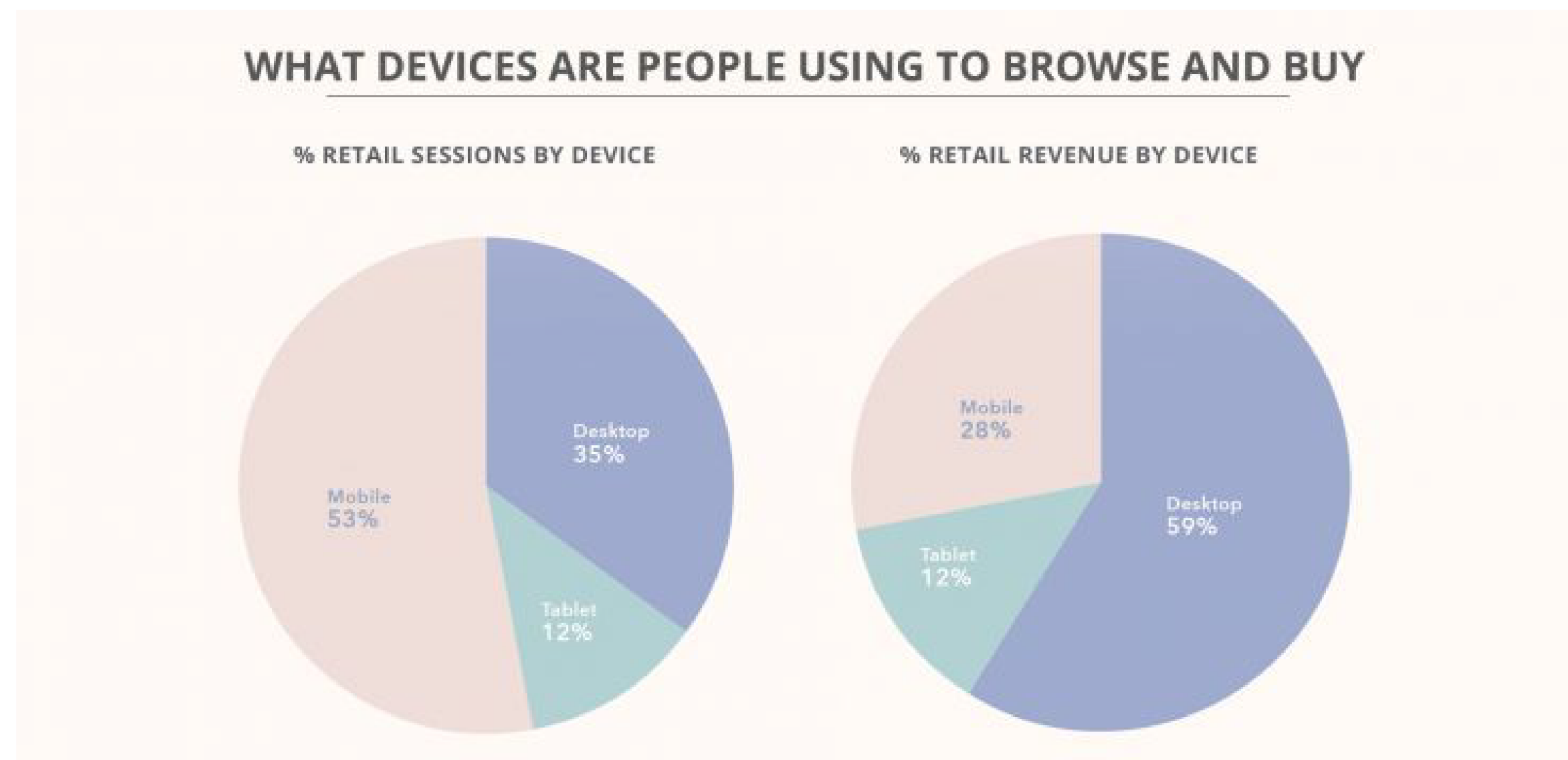

Image [source](#).

Is your site mobile friendly and is it loading quickly? Users want speed and if your site isn't speedy they click away. When they click away you've got several problems.

First, you lost a potential customer. Second, when Google crawls your site, it is looks at load speed. If your site loads slowly you won't rank high. In addition, one of the many ranking signals Google uses is bounce rate. So, if your traffic bounces back to search results because your site loads slowly it's a double whammy. Google will stop sending you traffic. A slow loading site can defeat your best efforts at search engine optimization. If you aren't sure how fast your site or pages are loading, you can use on-demand tools such as [GTmetrix](#) or [Google PageSpeed](#) to check your site speed or [Pingdom](#) to check your site speed continually.
If your site needs to load faster, verify the following:

- Servers can handle your traffic volume and are in an optimal location for your target traffic.. You may need to upgrade your servers or utilize a content distribution network (CDN) to increase speed.

- eCommerce platform scales with the company and does not hamper performance. Some B2C platforms repurposed for B2B rely on numerous plugins and modules to create an inefficient architecture that slows load times to a crawl. OroCommerce was built for speed and easily handles multiple catalogs north of 70+ million SKUs with no degradation of performance.

- Images are optimized for quick loading. High-quality images are important, but they must be compressed to load quickly. For product images, consider loading a thumbnail and only serving the full-size image when it is clicked. Don't scale images from large to small. The image may be smaller, but the file is just as large.

- Scripts and CSS are optimized for quick loading. CSS sprites reduce server requests, save bandwidth, and speed load times. Minification, Gzipping, and caching will reduce the size of the HTTP response.

Amazon figures every [1 millisecond in latency costs them 1% in sales](#). Your plateau could be caused not by lack of interest, but by lack of speed.

The other factor to consider in website performance is how well you hold the visitor's attention in the site. You want them to stick like a fly in a spider web. You must know how many pages users visit and how much time they spend on the site. In a recent [Moz Benchmark KPI Study](#), time spent on a website and the conversion rate are highly correlated. Increasing time on site by 16% can increase conversion rates by 10%. Pages per session also correlated solidly with revenue growth (0.25).
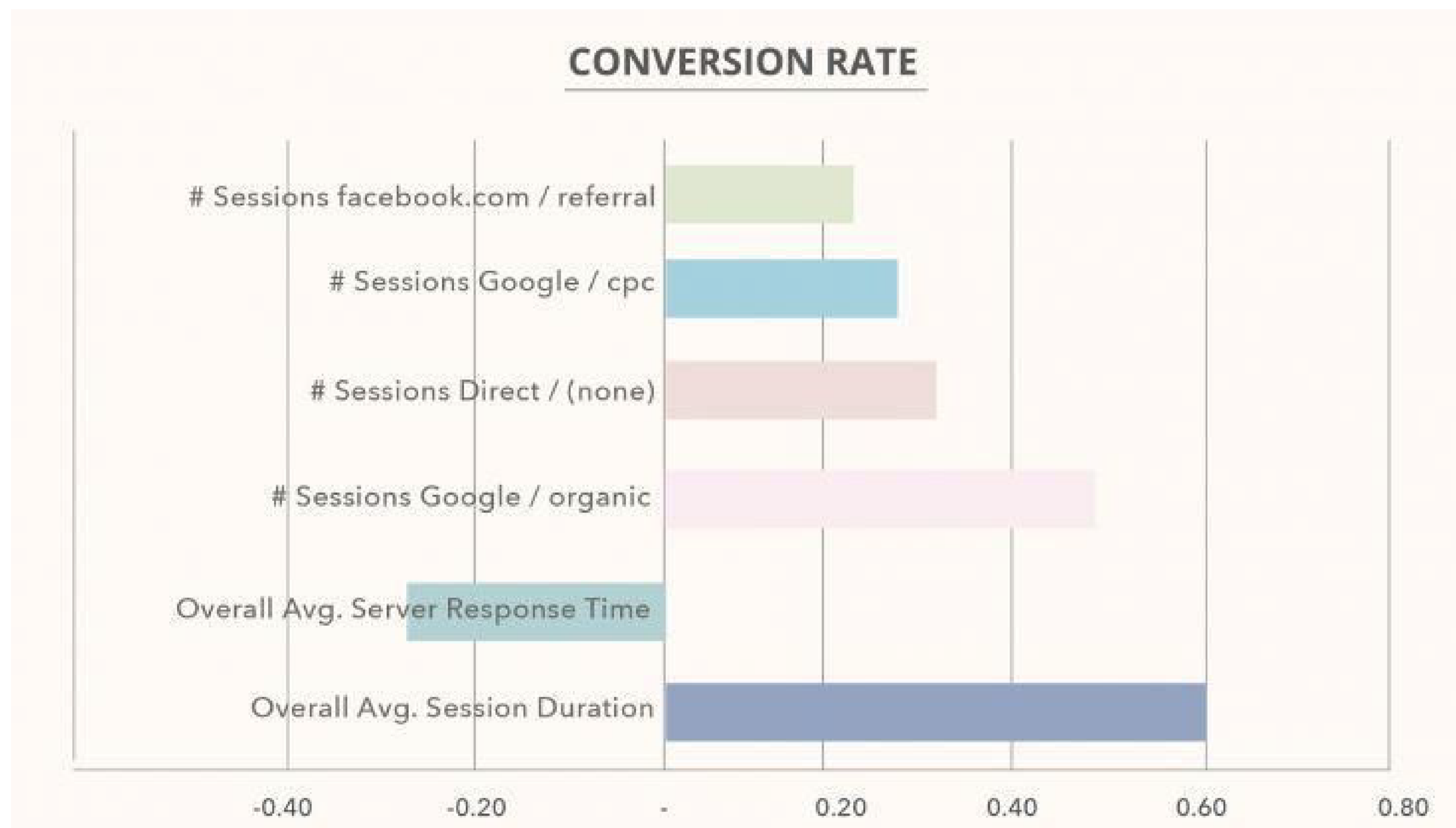

Image [source](#).

Make sure your site offers:

- An engaging experience and a compelling reason to stay. Once your visitor finds the information they need, you want them to see what else you have to offer.

- Extra value. What else do you offer in support of your products or services? User manuals and support documentation keep visitors on the site. Providing related content shows your customers you understand their pain points and are willing to help.

- Blogs, videos, or online newsletters to keep readers visiting more pages. Remember, the longer and more often visitors engage with your brand the more likely they will convert.

Leverage the Power of Google

"Some say Google is God. Others say Google is Satan." ~ Sergey Brin, Co-Founder, Google

eCommerce thrives on search engine traffic. 85% of all product searches start with Google. And as the chart below shows, over 50% of all traffic comes from big G. Because Google dominates the SEO and PPC landscape, we'll focus on ranking there. However, these tactics can be applied to other search engines as well.

WHAT SOURCES GENERATE MOST TRAFFIC

	Google Organic	Google CPC	Direct	Email	Facebook Organic	Facebook CPC	Bing Organic	Yahoo Organic	Others
Retail	38%	24%	18%	3%	3%	1%	1%	1%	12%
Multi-Channel	40%	24%	17%	4%	3%	0%	1%	1%	9%
Online Only	32%	23%	21%	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%	16%
Travel	45%	18%	20%	2%	2%	0%	2%	1%	10%
Overall	39%	23%	18%	3%	3%	1%	1%	1%	11%

Image source.

Whether you are using SEO, PPC, or a combination of both, you've got to be using Google. More than 50% of web searchers can't tell the difference between Google paid ads and organic results, but they still rely on Google to help them find what they want. So, review what you are doing and what you should be doing with Google, starting with SEO.

SEO

The number one reason so many eCommerce projects fail to get decent organic traffic is lack of patience and consistency. Number two is neglecting the basics. Are either of these the cause of your traffic plateau?

SEO takes commitment. Unlike PPC, you don't see immediate results and Google isn't going to tell you how to make it to the top. In addition, you can't start SEO today and forget it tomorrow. Google's algorithm is fickle and constantly changing. You must change with it. **Minor updates to the Google algorithm are made 500 to 600 times per year.** Thankfully there are far fewer major changes. While SEO takes effort, the rewards are great, and the results are progressive. That means unlike PPC results, once SEO begins to payoff, your SEO benefits can continue to increase without additional investment.

Review your website for the following:

Google penalties. From Pigeons that added weight to local results to Pandas that laid waste to poor quality, thin content to Penguins that froze out low quality links, the most widespread penalties that eCommerce websites suffer are related to major updates to the Google algorithm. These penalties cause traffic to plummet and affected sites all but disappear from search engine results.

While Google doesn't generally announce these updates until they are in place, their arrival is quickly noted by SEO blogs and articles. If you haven't been paying attention to Google, start. Follow SEO influencers on Twitter or subscribe to SEO blogs to find out about major Google updates as they are released. Not sure whom to trust? We recommend you start with Backlinko, Rand Fishkin, and Neil Patel. If you've seen a dramatic and sudden drop in traffic, troubleshoot to determine if your site has been hit by one of the major updates. This infographic will help.

Site security and speed. Google has officially confirmed security as one of their numerous positive ranking signals. So, SSL is a must if you want to rank well in Google. In addition to purchasing the necessary SSL certificates, it is a good idea to set up HTTPS on your servers if your website pages include any user input fields. If your servers are not HTTPS, you will suffer a slight penalty. More importantly, any visitor using the Chrome browser will display a "Not secure" warning on your pages.
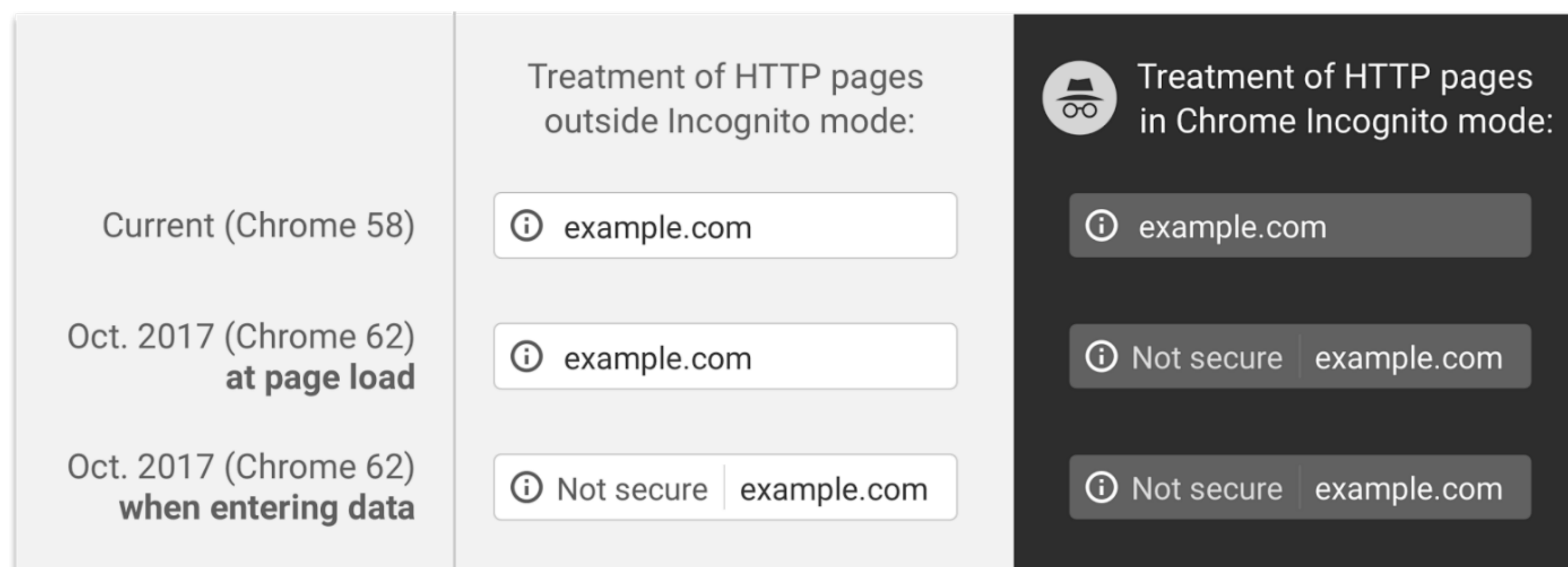
That "Not secure" warning may be the difference between a potential lead filling out a contact form or a customer completing an order. Either way, it doesn't instill trust in your site.

And don't forget, site speed is a factor in ranking. In addition, slow loading sites may have higher bounce back to search rates and Google ranks such sites poorly.

Indexation, broken links and duplicate content. Google abhors duplicate content and it is anathema to SEO. It's a problem if your eCommerce platform generates duplicate URLs for the same product in multiple categories. Personalized price lists and catalogs are key to providing customers the content they want, but Google can see those as duplicate content. Make sure you exclude these from indexing when the site is crawled. Do make your site easy to index. Set meta tags for specific pages and create search engine friendly slugs. Make use of rel canonical tags, xml, and html sitemaps to control how the site is indexed. Broken links are bad for user experience and Google penalizes for high numbers of broken links. Make sure outbound and internal links go where you want. If your eCommerce platform isn't SEO friendly, regularly monitor duplicate content with Google Search Console and check for broken links with tools like Xenu Link Sleuth.

Keywords and copy. Your site isn't going to rank by itself. You must identify strategic search queries as your target keywords. These are the words and phrases that people use when searching for your brand, products, and services. Keywords must populate the titles, page copy, page descriptions, and alt tags of relevant pages. If you haven't identified keywords, start with tools such as Google Keyword Planner or Moz Keyword Explorer.

<u>Optimize product pages</u>. Product pages are perfectly suited for SEO optimization. Make sure your product descriptions are original. Wholesalers or distributors that rely on the manufacturer's product description will suffer the duplicate content penalty. In addition to being original, make sure product descriptions include your keywords where appropriate. Create URLs for product pages that clearly indicate the product and make sure alt tags for pictures include the product name as well. Leverage customer reviews to provide the new, fresh content Google loves. The Google Customer Reviews badge lets visitors know you collect and share feedback from verified purchasers. Human visitors respond well to reviews too. One customer review on the product page can increase conversions by 58%.

<u>Backlinks</u>. Quality backlinks continues to be an important ranking factor. Yes, generating legitimate links for an eCommerce website can be a challenge. Concentrate on quality and make sure your partners and suppliers are linking back to your website **anytime** they mention your company. Submit articles to industry publications and make sure a link is in the bio or byline. Also, put your blog to work generating links and think creatively. Offer a guest blog. A CPA firm could backlink to quality content on getting and keeping organized from a Life Coach. CNC tool manufacturers can backlink to Gcode software providers. If you are stuck for ideas, try this to get inspiration on link-building.

PPC

If traffic is stagnant and you need immediate results, pay per click advertising can do the job. If you've never used AdWords before, put in the time and money and try a few campaigns. If you tried AdWords before but were disappointed in the results, review those prior campaigns and see if the problem was campaign execution. PPC isn't a strategy that fits all B2B businesses but it's important to recognize the difference between lack of fit and ineffective execution for previous campaigns. Use this Checklist to Avoid PPC Pitfalls:

<u>Clear and Realistic Goals.</u> Make sure that the goals you set are clearly defined and communicated. Starting with overly ambitious and unattainable goals is the best way to set yourself up for failure. Measure success in profit. Your ROI is determined not by the cost per lead but how much it attributes to sales. Tie your PPC through to the bottom line so you can clearly see the ads that produce the leads that close with the least cost. This makes it extremely important to have proper attribution. Custom URLs that include Urchin Tracking Module (UTM) codes are a common and effective ways to manage this.

<u>Campaign Structure and Settings Match Goals</u>. Make sure that the goals you set match your campaign settings. For instance, if the goal is to drive more traffic (that's why you are reading this guide) you need clicks, not impressions. If you are just concerned about branding and have plenty of traffic (you probably aren't reading this guide) then your settings should focus on impressions. If you want users to take a direct action, you should use settings geared for conversions. Confused? Just remember:

• to get clicks, use Search Network with Display and set your Bid Strategy to Maximize for Clicks

• to get impressions, use Display Network and set Bid Strategy to Target CPM

• to get conversions, use Search Network and set Bid Strategy to Maximize for Conversions

Effective Keywords. PPC advertising is about obtaining and growing market share. To do that you must identify keywords that are relevant to what your customers want and need. As in almost every other aspect of business, Pareto's Principle applies. About 20% of your keywords will generate 80% of your results. Your job is to identify and refine those top performing keywords. Too many keywords kill a budget quickly. Low-performing keywords suck budget resources from your top performers. Find them and kill them. Run Conversion reports in AdWords and evaluate keywords in terms of relevance and volume. Don't disregard keywords with low volume if they produce. We recommend staying away from Broad Match terms. Do use negative keywords to specify the searches where you don't want to appear. In other words, if you sell shoes for footwear, make sure you specify "brake" as a negative keyword to filter out automotive parts shoppers. If you sell high-end, premium products then make sure "discount" and "cheap" make your negative keyword list as those aren't the visitors you'll want. The reverse is true. Exclude "luxury" and "premium" keywords if they don't describe your products. After culling your keywords and honing your negative keyword strategy you may find that overall traffic drops temporarily. That's okay because you don't want to pay for traffic that doesn't convert.

Structured Campaigns. Use smart strategies to make managing your campaigns much easier. When you set up ad groups, consider using one keyword in the group. This Single Keyword Ad Group campaign structure strategy may seem like extra work, but it will make your campaigns easier to maintain and increase the Quality Score of your ads. And of course, quality gains increase the profitability of your PPC marketing efforts. Troubleshooting campaigns is less complicated as well. You'll find it is easier to develop much more focused copy. Keywords won't compete for ads. Each ad is relevant to one keyword.

Target Audiences and Locations. Know your target audience and their demographics. Make sure your PPC campaigns are structured to reach your buyer persona. Google, makes it easy to target geographic locations, genders, age ranges, and interests. Only your target audience will see your ads. Schedule ads to only run when your target audience is looking. If your business is local, don't run ads in the dead of the night. Your buyers will be asleep. Schedule ads to turn on and off automatically. This is just another great way to maximize the value of your spend.

Remarketing for Search. Don't forget to leverage remarketing for Search as well as Display.   While almost every company uses retargeting for Display ads, very few duplicate the effort for Search ads. That's a hole in your competitor's strategy you can exploit. Retargeting lists in Search lowers your cost per click up to 10 times while also increasing the conversion rates of traffic and leads.

Dynamic Search Ads. Use product page content to create an ad that exactly matches the search query. Dynamic ads generate perfectly targeted ads. This lowers your CPC while increasing conversions. If you wholesale automotive parts and someone searches on "wholesale brake pads Seattle", the copy from your brake pad product page will generate an ad "Wholesale Brake Pads – Seattle" and direct the searcher to the appropriate page.

Use Ad Extensions. Ad Extensions can triple the click through rate of your ads and slash your cost per click. Extensions add additional information from your website to the ad. The most effective Ad Extensions include:

• Sitelink Extensions - pulls 2 – 6 links from your site to direct users to specific pages

How a Search Ad with Sitelink Extensions Appears

• Callout Extensions – Use these to bring attention to specific offers. These are highly flexible.

How a Search Ad with Callout Extensions Appears

• Structured Snippet Extensions – These call attention to specific aspects of your products. Select from predefined headers and then add specific values.

How a Search Ad with Structured Snippets Appears

• Call Extensions - These ads only display on a device capable of placing a call. They urge people to call your business.

How a Search Ad with Call Extensions Appear

Use Google Shopping Ads. Google shopping isn't just for B2C. B2B buyers are shopping online, so make sure they find your products easily. Google Shopping is part of AdWords and includes product images, making it eye-catching on the search engine results page. Creating the product feed takes a bit of work, but once submitted and approved is easy to maintain

Shop for Dell laptops on Google · Sponsored ⓘ
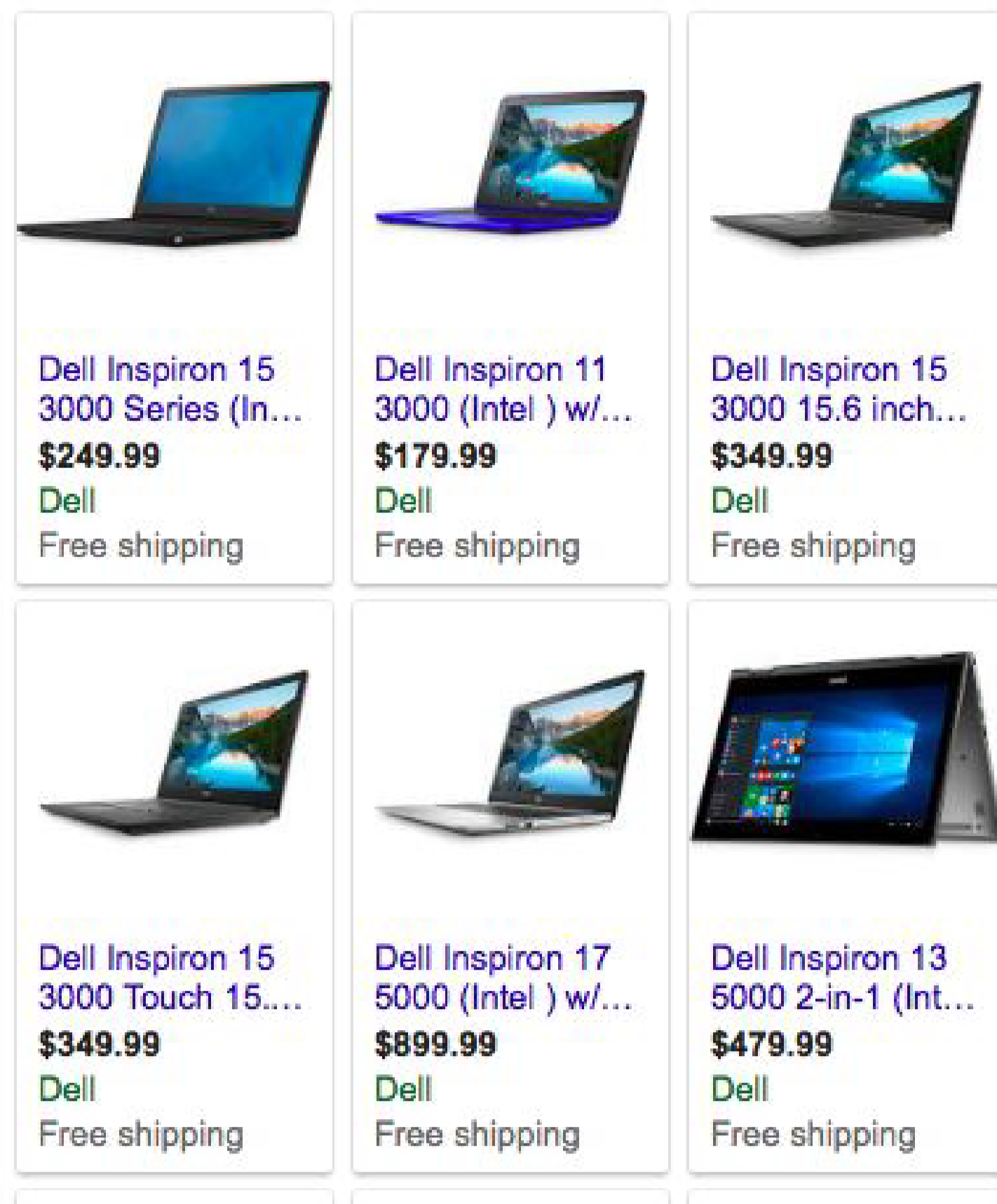
Keep the following in mind when creating the shopping feed:

- Feed must be submitted for approval as a spreadsheet

- Make sure you submit the highest possible price for the product vs wholesale rates, for example

- Price on the feed must match price on the page

- Must include prepackaged measurement per unit or per quantity

- Images must meet Google specified criteria

- Each product must have a unique URL

In addition, your landing pages must be clear. A clear and prominent refund policy must be on the landing page or a link to the policies must be prominent. The landing page must also prominently feature the gross price including the Value Added Tax (VAT) if required for the target country. This price must be more prominent that any net price and it must match the price on the feed. The checkout process must be secure and minimum order values must be revealed before checkout. For certain countries, you must include the freight cost in your ads. Luckily, Google provides detailed instructions on creating a Google Shopping Ads feed for B2B businesses. Look it over before you begin building the feed.

Conclusion

Part 1 of this guide was devoted to helping you identify what you can do right away to get traffic flowing again and sales back on track. It's obvious, you must gather the right data, monitor site performance, optimize for SEO, and invest in PPC advertising. If your B2B eCommerce platform isn't ready to handle the complexities of B2B transactions, provide the tools you need to generate traffic and sales, and capture the data you must have to make key business decisions, it's time to look at a new solution. OroCommerce was built from the ground up for B2B eCommerce and provides the functionality you need to support eCommerce as well as a robust CRM for on and offline sales.

Stay tuned for Part 2 and get ready for a broader view of what can cause traffic and sales to go flat. We'll take a look at dedicating resources where appropriate, the importance of user experience, content, promotions, keeping customers engaged, onboarding staff and customers as well as other marketing opportunities.

About OroCommerce

The #1 B2B eCommerce Platform

Build Your Online Presence

It doesn't matter if you're a manufacturer, distributor, wholesaler, retailer, or brand. Expand your business into new markets with an online and mobile presence.

Get eCommerce & CRM. All-in-One

Get a 360-degree view of all customer touch-points across sales, marketing, customer support, and eCommerce with a built-in CRM.

One Platform for All Your Commerce

Addresses all B2B, B2C, and B2X (B2B2B, B2B2C, etc.) scenarios in a single platform. Easily customize it to fit your needs.

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