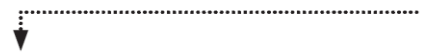


The Ultimate Guide on How to Use the
POWER of Others to Market and Sell for You.

E



engaging experience



By Greg Jameson
author of "Amazon's Dirty Little Secrets"

Engaging Experience

What kind of experience do customers have when they visit your site? The first page should be about what the reader is looking for – not about you! Let them know what the site will do for them. All too often I see websites where all the site does is talk about how great the company is, and never provides any information that is beneficial to the user. That is not the case with Amazon.

Amazon's home page is never the same. With sections like 'New for you', 'More items to consider' and 'Recommendations for you in video games' Amazon is constantly tracking what you've browsed and what you've bought, then adjusting their messaging to you. The featured items when you visit Amazon are most certainly different than if I visit Amazon, because they are targeting products specifically to you.

Amazon is so confident in its ability to personalize the site for each user that the company hardly ever creates classic customer-segment personas, such as "soccer moms" or "gearheads." Such marketing standbys are too imprecise for Amazon. The site is personalized for every single customer. Amazon is the king of customer experience, so my advice is to emulate them. This of course means that you will need to collect as much data on a customer as possible and to track their preferences so you can easily customize a page just for them.

Shopping on Amazon is easy. A really cool feature is that when you add an item to the cart, the cart is displayed (as one would expect), but additional products available for purchase are also displayed. Many online retailers like the idea of not displaying the cart, but instead sending the customer back to the product page so they can purchase more. The problem is, that isn't intuitive for the consumer, who then has to click on "cart" to see what is in there. And if they don't understand this system, they may inadvertently add the same item to the cart multiple times – which is a negative customer experience.

The alternative that most carts have adopted is to show the cart (like Amazon does), which is the logical thing to the buyer, but then have a button that says "Continue Shopping", because they assume that the customer won't understand that they can add other items to the cart without checking out, even though the navigation and search bar might be present. Amazon solves this neatly – they show the cart *and* they show additional products, all on the same page. Again, why not emulate this if it works so well?

Payment Solutions

If your order is under the \$35 limit, Amazon suggests topping off your order to get free shipping. When you proceed to the checkout page, if you have ordered with Amazon before, you can check out with a single click. It is not necessary to re-enter any information unless something has changed. Most shopping cart software allows you to sign-in with a user name and password

and your name and address is restored, but Amazon remembers you from previous visits, even without signing in. And they also store your credit card information – this is something that some consumers do not like (and they are given the option to turn off one-click checkout), and it is also something that as a small business owner, you may not be able to legally do. It's a great feature that for security reasons, your credit card company may not allow. The reasons for not being able to do this have to do with PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) requirements for storing credit card information. This is a time consuming and costly process. My recommendation for small businesses is that they use a hosted payment solution like PayPal, Evalon, ElementPS, or 2Checkout. I cover payment options in more detail in the module on "Win Their Trust".

Product Descriptions

But with Amazon, the customer experience doesn't stop there. When you visit a product page, you will see that the descriptions of the product (at least the ones sold directly by Amazon and not a 3rd party selling on their site), contain lengthy and robust descriptions. You can usually find out everything you want about a product before purchasing it. There is a single image of the product – there are multiple views, and you can enlarge any of them to see the product in more detail.

It has been shown that 67% of consumers who have visited an online store with the intent of making a purchase left the site because the retailer did not

provide enough information about the product in order for the consumer to feel comfortable enough to make the purchase online. That isn't the case with Amazon. People come to the Internet looking for information –so follow Amazon's lead and give it to them! As we saw in the information about SEO, Google also rewards sites with more content. Do not make the mistake of putting up only one product image with little or no information about it.

When it comes to the product descriptions, more is better. The length of copy should be longer than traditional ad copy. The Internet does not have a space limitation like traditional ads. Generally speaking, the longer the length of your copy, the more you are going to sell.

Here is a real example of a company that sells organic jams:

The screenshot shows an e-commerce website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links: Home, Store Front, Account, Search, Product List, Basket Contents, and Checkout. Below the navigation, there are links for Sign In and Affiliate Login. The main content area is titled 'Jams & Jellies'. On the left side, there is a vertical list of product categories: Jams & Jellies, Dip Mixes, Pepper Jellies, Organic Goodness, Spices, Cocktail Mixes, Organic Bread Mixes, Sauces, Bread Dippers, Relish & Mustard, Cocoa Mixes, Rim Dippers, Sugar & Sprinkles, Peppercorns & Sea Salts, Gift Baskets, and Gift Sets. In the center, there is a product image of a jar of 'American Berry' jam. To the right of the image, the product name 'American Berry' is displayed, along with its code 'AB', price '\$6.50', and 'Quantity in Basket: none'. At the bottom of the product section, there are two buttons: 'Add One To Basket' and 'Buy One Now'.


Compare this to one of my clients that also sells organic jams.

Colorado Mountain Jam Wine Jellies 15

Home | Products | Plum Daisy Kitchen | Gift Shows | Orders | Wholesale | Contact Us | View Cart | Checkout | My Account

Home | Jams | Organic Apricot Jam

Add to Wishlist Email this Print this

 **Organic Apricot Jam**

\$6.00

Availability: 204 In Stock

Click image for larger view

Qty: 8 oz Jars
8 Oz (\$6.00 each)

Originating in the mountains of China, the apricot has been cultivated for 4,000 years. For apricot lovers, Colorado Mountain Organic Apricot Jam is quintessential apricot. The organic apricots are picked at the peak of ripeness from our own orchard. The jam's thick, creamy texture, its pure, concentrated apricot flavor, and its piquant blend of sweet and tart make for an unforgettable—and potentially addictive!—taste experience.

Use as a spread on breads, French toast, waffles, pancakes, and scones; use as a filling in crepes and croissants; use to make marinades, sauces, and glazes for your own special gourmet dishes; serve as a condiment with meats; wonderful as an ice cream/dessert topping; mix into cottage cheese, yogurt, and smoothies.

Which one are you more likely to buy from?

I was once asked by someone who sold pond equipment to look at his website. He said he was getting lots of traffic, but not many sales, but said his competitors were getting lots of sales. I asked to look at both his site and his competitor's site. Here is an example of what I saw on one of his pump pages:

Matala Versiflow Pump

The Matala Versiflow pumps are perfect for heavy and continuous flow duty.



Price varies

Quantity:

Option

I didn't see anything that would make me want to buy his pump. Next I looked at his competitor's site. As you can see, it included lots of information, including how much water the pump actually discharged:

Cal Pump T10000 Torpedo Pond Pump w/ 100' cord



Price: \$349.00

Item Number: T10000-100

Manufacturer: Cal Pump

Quantity:

[View Larger Image](#)

The Cal Torpedo Pumps are the first pumps designed for the pond enthusiast that are lightweight, water cooled, use no oil and can be used in or out of water. Cal Pump Torpedo Pumps' high volume water flow and low energy consumption makes them the most unique pond pumps available.

- Can be used either submerged or in-line
- Oil-free
- High output for large waterfalls
- 1 year warranty

Pump Specifications	
Amps	4.8 - 13.6
Watts	575 - 1600
Max Flow	9900
Max Head	46'
Inlet- Outlet Size	3" MPT
Cord Length	40'
Warranty	1 year

GPH per foot of Head								
1'	5'	10'	20'	25'	30'	35'	40'	45'
9720	9120	8400	6650	5740	4660	3500	2100	300

I did another website review for a customer that sold leather purses. Like most people, they weren't complaining about not getting enough traffic to their website, but that they weren't getting enough sales. They asked me to look at their website, which included product descriptions that sounded like they came directly from the manufacturer. As the expert selling this product, they should have created their own descriptions. Here was a typical description on their site:

American West Purse #6530758 Carmel. Hand Tooled Leather. Guaranteed for life.

My recommendation wasn't that they just make a few changes, but instead to add multiple images of the purses, inside and out from all angles. Then create a whole new description that sounded appealing to the buyer's emotions and contained complete product detail such as:

The mere mentions of "AMERICAN WEST" conjures up images of cowboys and pathfinders in search of new frontiers. With this pioneering tradition, American West celebrates the human spirit that lives on in the hearts of many, still today, as in days gone by. It is this legacy that has inspired American West's products line, the leaders in Western handbags and accessories for more than 15 years. It is a legacy of quality, hand-crafted leather items made by hand – one at a time – that reflect the true values of the West.

American West stands behind their products with an unconditional manufacturer's guarantee by repairing or replacing the item, with no cost to the customer. All of their products carry a lifetime manufacturer's defect guarantee.

This vintage style collection blends basketweave and floral tooled designs on an aged mocha colored leather background. Leather whipstitching and antique silver spots add decorative details to this traditional collection and are highlighted with a Western star concho and buckle set. Whether you buy this for yourself or give it as a gift...this American West Ladies Handbag will be something that is cherished for a lifetime.

This outstanding three compartment leather handbag is made of 100% hand-picked leather and features:

- *Inside middle zipper compartment*
- *Two open compartments on either side*
- *Flap over top snaps shut*
- *Inside pouches and zip compartment*
- *11" Shoulder Strap drop*
- *This is made from hand-tooled vegetable tanned antique brown leather*
- *Features a silver buckle with the Texas Lone Star Concho*
- *Measures 14" x 10" x 5"*

Each tooled piece is created by individual strikes...one by one...which creates more than just another leather handbag...a piece of art is created. All of their tooling patterns are created by individual craftsmen using mallets and small tooling dies to create their intricate artwork on leather.

Each tooled product is the culmination of thousands of individual die strikes. Unlike die pressed patterns, small inconsistencies and changes are proof of an artisan at work. Buckle sets, conchos and other silver hardware items are cast in solid brass or zinc, the lavishly dipped in sterling silver. Since silver had a natural tendency to varnish and scratch, American West adds a protective layer of lacquer to each piece.

Obviously, crafting a description like this takes more effort and work, but remember, this is what sells!

The next example shows quite clearly how providing in depth information about your product can really help make the sale. This story is about a cowboy who lives in northern Wyoming. Each year he buys himself a new cowboy hat,

and sells his old one on eBay. Now what do you think a used cowboy hat would sell for, especially one that is beat up and doesn't have much wear left in it? As it turns out, this enterprising fellow sells his used hat for considerably more than a new one! Rather than just saying "used cowboy hat for sale", he goes to great lengths to describe all of the adventures he's had while wearing that hat. If he fell off his horse into a river, he'll talk about that. If he saw a bear while wearing that hat, he'll describe that. He's not just selling a hat, he's selling an adventure.

This is key when selling products on the Internet. Customers can't see your product, other than through the pictures or videos you provide. They can't feel the product or ask you questions. It is your job to sell the product, and to do this, you must make your description do the selling for you.

Create an Experience with Photos

Professional website designers will tell you that it is more important to optimize your website for humans than it is for search engines. Quality images are one thing that makes a significant difference to your human visitors. If your sales pages hope to cash in on international sales, you can't afford to overlook the universal language of pictures.

Nearly every website has some photos on it, and a photo can do more to improve your site than the fanciest design. But the inverse is also true. If you

have a bad photo or image on your site, especially if it's the logo or a product photo, you can damage your site's credibility and lose customers and sales.

Many eCommerce websites, especially start-up sites try to save money on web design and professional product photography. New merchants in particular make that costly mistake. Your online site is your business identity, and needs to reflect a professional, secure place for consumers to give personal financial information. The average consumer is accustomed to seeing very expensive advertising campaigns and they CAN see the difference.

We've all heard Confucius' famed quote "a picture is worth 1,000 words" at least 1,000 times. Online, pictures are worth more than words, they're worth dollars. But how many dollars depends on how effectively product images **speak** to customers. We're talking' *details*. Just like textual product descriptions *describe* a product in detail, enlarged images and alternate views better describe your products. And many products cannot be fully described with words. Poor photography will communicate to the customer that you don't care about your products.

According to a survey of online shoppers by the E-Tailing Group:

- 77% are "very to somewhat" influenced by the quality of content (descriptions, copy, images and tools) when deciding to purchase from an online retailer

- 79% “rarely or never” purchase a product without complete product information, including high-quality photographs
- When faced with incomplete information, 72% go to a competitor or research further
- Future Now did a customer experience study and found 63% of online retailers don’t offer multiple image views.
- Statistically speaking, you can literally increase the conversion rates of a website by 300% when using compelling graphics.

What is a “Web-Optimized” image?

User Friendly

Correct resolution

Help sell the product

Browser Friendly

Fast Downloads

Search Engine Friendly

Image Names:

DSC00324.jpg vs. woodicebox.jpg vs.
sku_Custom_Wood_Cooler.jpg

Alt Tags:

Search engines can’t read text within an image – add an “alt” tag so they know what the image is.

Good Images utilize the following characteristics:

- Composition
- Plain or blurred background (use zoom)
- Proper Lighting
- Different angles
- Get in tight on the subject



Ordinary image



Good image

Images can lift conversion rates by 147% by showing products “in context.”

This can reduce a shopper’s fears, uncertainties and doubts about a purchase like “how does this look on a person?” or “how large is this in real life?” Images

can also “sell” by triggering an emotion, showing the quality or versatility of an item or illustrating a products features and benefits. Showing clothing on

people gives the customer a better idea of the style of the garment. Is a hoodie fitted like yoga wear or loose like a track suit? Is it a cropped style or long?

Seeing an item on a person will also resonate with a certain kinds of customers.



These are some pretty radical earrings, they're not for everyone. A simple photo of the earrings alone could be deceiving - the customer could assume they are much smaller than they really are. In general, products with people sell better.

Photographing an object: lighting and backdrops

- Dark objects: use light back ground with a non-reflective matte finish like a roller shade.
- Light objects: use a dark background, light-absorbing material such as canvas, black velvet, or heavy felt laid over polypropylene.
- Use a green or blue background for transparency.
- Use a diffuse, even light from both sides to reduce shadows – a photographers “cube” or “tent” works well. You are trying to mimic a sunny day in the shade.

Understanding Resolution

DPI and Pixels

- DPI stands for “Dots per Inch”

- Useful for images that are printed on paper, but meaningless for computer monitors
- Computer monitors are measured in pixels.
- Typical resolutions are 800x600, 1024x768 and 1280x960. Some are much higher.
- Resolution is independent of screen size, which might be 15", 17", 19" or larger.
- Lower resolutions (800x600) displayed on a larger monitor (17") will make the image appear much larger than a higher resolution (1280x960) on the same size monitor, but you lose "real estate" on your screen.

Often, store owners and new website owners don't understand how images work on a web page. Specifically, the digital photographs they have taken of their products are way too big. Or, the images appear to be an OK size, but they are fuzzy.

The reason for this is that digital cameras are often of a high enough resolution that you can make prints from them. This resolution however, is much too great to display on a computer screen.

The result is that the images are too large. If these images are forced into a smaller space, they appear fuzzy; if left at their original size, they take up too much space.



Same size monitor, but different resolutions

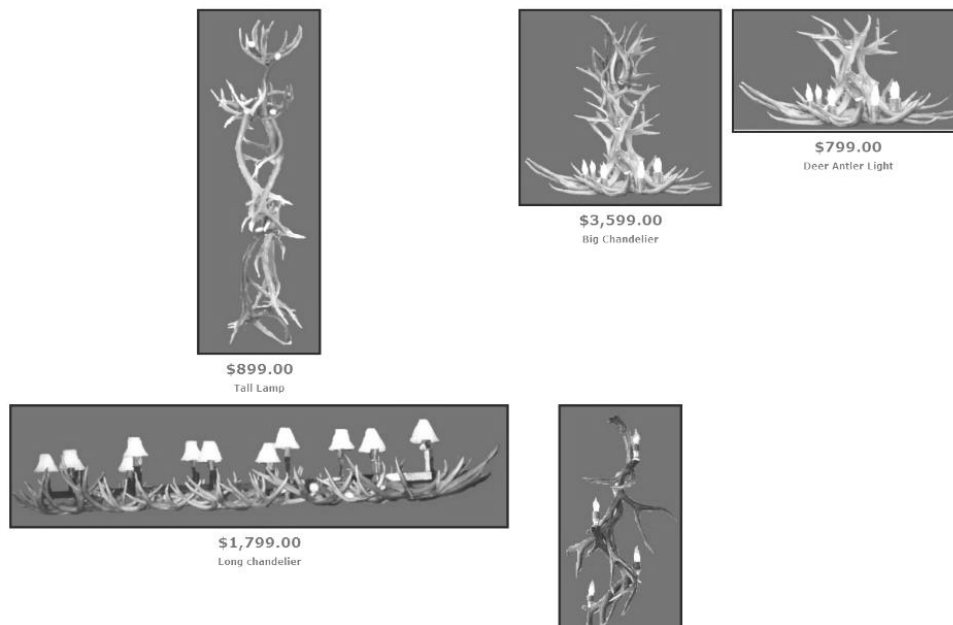
Digital images are measured in pixels. The more pixels there are, the better the picture looks when put on paper. But computer screens are limited in the number of pixels they can display.

While some high end graphics boards can display thousands of pixels, the typical person viewing your website will have a computer with a screen resolution of 1024x768 (1024 pixels wide by 768 pixels high). The digital photograph you have is likely many times that.

A 6.1 Megapixel digital camera will have a native resolution of 2832 x 2128 pixels. This equates to 39 inches by 29 inches at 72 DPI or 9.5x7 inches at 300 DPI. You are going to have to reduce the image size to fit on a web page, even with a wide-screen high-resolution monitor. You can do this by cropping the image or re-scaling it.

You will want 2 different images for each product: a large image so the customer can see the detail and a small image (called a thumbnail) for showing multiple images on one page.

Even if you have figured out how to re-scale your images so they work on a web page, I have seen many stores that don't use a consistent size for their thumbnail images. As a result, you get something that looks uneven, like this:



What we'd really like to see is that everything lines up nice and neatly. To do this, all of your thumbnail images must be exactly the same size. Remember, we aren't trying to show product detail in the thumbnail image, just a quick view of what it looks like so the customer can click on it. I recommend putting everything in a square, regardless of the shape of the object, and creating each thumbnail to be about 150 pixels by 150 pixels, like this:

Antler Chandeliers



\$899.00
Tall Lamp



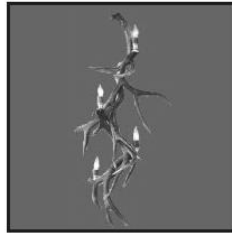
\$3,599.00
Big Chandelier



\$799.00
Deer Antler Light



\$1,799.00
Long chandelier



\$299.00
Wall Sconce

Optimizing images for the Web is an art and a science. As a Web designer, it's your job to create the best-looking images with the smallest file size. There are several common types of files used on web pages:

GIF stands for Graphic Interchange Format. These files are limited to 256 colors but can have a transparent layer. They can be sequenced together to create simple animations. Because of their limited color palette and lack of compression, gif files are best used for logos rather than photos.

PNG stands for Portable Network Graphics. These files were meant as a replacement for GIF files, but have never taken off the way it was expected.

PDF files re Portable Document Format. These are NOT image files, but print layouts. They cannot be inserted into other web pages (except as inline frames) and cannot be manipulated with graphics programs (although some graphic programs can output to this format).

JPEG stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group. The JPEG compression algorithm is designed for optimizing and compressing continuous-tone images, such as photographs or images with gradients or glows. The JPEG file format looks for areas with low contrast, subtle variations in color, and slight tonal shifts. It doesn't compress areas of solid color effectively and, as a result, doesn't work well for flat, graphic-style artwork (like logos). For example:



Compression: 1

Size: 65,580 Kb



Compression: 99

Size: 7,126 Kb

A great way to optimize a jpg file is to increase JPEG compression. The more you compress a JPEG, the smaller the file size. Unfortunately, adding too much

JPEG compression can cause unwanted compression artifacts. The trick is to find the balance between making the file small and making it look good. Here's how:

Add blur. The softer the edges, the smaller the file. Because the JPEG compression algorithm has an easier time when compressing areas with subtle transitions in colors and tonal range, adding a small amount of blur to your images can help reduce file size.

Decrease the saturation. The less color saturation, the smaller the file size. Again, because compression is easiest with subtle changes in colors and tonal range, decreasing the saturation in images can help reduce file size.

Decrease the contrast. The lower the contrast, the smaller the file size. The JPEG compression algorithm favors low-contrast images. Decreasing the contrast in an image can help reduce file size.



Compression: 1

Size: 65,580 Kb



Compression: 99

Size: 7,126 Kb



Compression: 99

Size: 6,134 Kb



Compression: 1

Size: 368,240 Kb



Compression: 36

Size: 93,176 Kb

With photos rather than logos, you might not even be able to tell the difference in these optimized images. Decreased saturation by 15%, Decreased contrast by 15%, compressed 33%, yields a file that is 3 times smaller and still looks good. When saved as a GIF, the size is 4x that of the JPG.

It is not uncommon that software was bundled with your digital camera to allow you to re-size and otherwise manipulate your photos:

- Paint – free tool bundled with Windows

- Image Forge, Gimp, Picture Resize, and other shareware programs
- PaintShopPro and Photoshop – a couple of great software packages out there that will allow you to get really creative with your photographs

Some shopping carts do not allow for the addition of more than one thumbnail photo and one full size photo. Typically, these images do not have to be the same. The thumbnail photo can show a single view of the product, while the full size image can have multiple photos combined into a single image using the software tools just mentioned. Explaining how to use each of these programs is beyond the scope of this book, but I recommend that you use either PaintShopPro or Photoshop if you are serious about having great web images.

Adding images to your website is simple enough. You resize the image if necessary to look good in a browser, upload the file from your computer to the server and reference it in your webpage. But what if you could put images on your site without using your own disk space and simultaneously have the images point other people to your site? In fact you can. All you need to do is set up an account at Flickr.com and upload your images (for free) to their server.

Now you need to do a couple of things. The first is to put descriptions on the images so that they can be easily found by others. Within the description, be

sure to put your domain name (i.e., www.yourcompany.com). Also be sure to add tags or keywords to help others find your images. After the image has been added, click on the photo to display it. Right click on the photo and select “properties”. This will bring up a box with the location of the photo, which will look something like:

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http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2352/3534132975_b39602cedc.jpg?v=0
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Don't worry that it's not very user-friendly, just copy the entire location link to your clipboard. Go to the administrative control panel of your webstore and build or edit a site page. When you are asked for the image location, rather than browsing your own server, paste in the location you just copied from Flickr.

That's all there is to it! You are using free disk space from Flickr and letting millions of people search their photo database for your images, which creates a one-way link back to your site, helping your site's page rank. That's making your images work for you!

Product Videos

To master the art of selling your products online, you first need to know the art of how to convince your potential clients to buy from you, and you need to know how to do this effectively.

A great way to be a virtual salesperson is to create a video about the product you are selling. You should create a video for every single product. If you look back to the section on YouTube, you will notice that I recommend uploading this product video to YouTube, tagging it with keywords about this specific product, and providing a link in the description back to the product page on your website. Then of course you need to embed this video on the product page. Today, people prefer to watch the Internet rather than read it. Imagine having a video associated with the products shown above: someone spreading jam on their favorite bread, the cowboy riding his horse as he talks about his hat, or viewing the pump in action.

Be sure to tell as much about your products as you can because it's likely that your potential customers will have little idea about them. Be as open as you can with your information, and the more you can give them, the easier their decision is to buy from you. Feed them the benefits, unique selling points, and features of your creations. Only by delivering such quality content like this, will they have good reason to take advantage of your products.

As a salesperson, you are responsible for getting information to your potential customer, and video is a great way to do this – use it!

“Traffic alone isn't enough. YOU are the expert; sell them on what you have to offer.” – Greg Jameson

Test Your Website

I can't stress enough how important it is to perform usability testing. I've seen numerous websites where the site owner knows how to navigate his or her own site, but their customers have no idea how to use it. In one case, when you clicked on the "Add to Cart" button, it appeared that nothing had happened (in fact it had, but the cart wasn't displayed). As a result, users would click on the "Add to Cart" button multiple times, and never see how to view the cart and checkout.

If you want to know whether your website is easy enough to use, watch some people while they try to use it and note where they run into trouble. Then fix it, and test it again.

When should I test? Ideally, once per month. You should be running small usability tests continuously throughout the development process. The tests should be short and simple, so you can conduct them almost any time with little advance planning. Perhaps it is best not to view Web design as a one-time project but as a continual work in progress.

How many users do I need? Three or four max. What kind of users? Grab some people. Anyone who can use a computer will do. The best-kept secret of usability testing is that it doesn't much matter who you test. It's a good idea to get representative users, but it's much more important to test early and often.

Don't be embarrassed to ask friends and neighbors. Get people with different operating systems (Mac vs. PC) and different browsers (IE, Firefox, Safari, etc.).

How much time will it take? Thirty minutes to an hour per user. Keep it simple. Keep it small. Although it does take extra time to conduct usability tests, even simple ones, ultimately you will save time.

One of the nicest things about usability testing is that the results tend to be obvious to everyone who's watching. The serious problems are hard to miss.

In addition to the random human test described above, you may want to perform some automated testing as well. Why? Here is an example:

Firefox recently made some changes to their popular browser software. Many of our customers updated this software automatically, and then called us to complain that their website wasn't working. Neither of us had made any changes to their site, yet a problem had occurred. What this means is that simply because your site worked last week, doesn't mean it is functioning reliably today. There are many reasons why site problems can occur. For example:

- Automatic software updates that include email, databases, web server administration, and shopping cart functionality.

- Most likely you are on a shared server with many other websites. Changes in bandwidth used by these other sites or the addition of large new accounts on the same server could affect you.
- The data center where your site is hosted could experience problems from server changes or power outages.
- Browser changes can affect not only how your site appears, but as mentioned previously, how it functions.
- Links on your webpage to external sites can fail if the target site deletes the page or changes the URL. I even see our customers deleting or changing the names of their own pages, without also updating the links that point to them.
- Third party providers such as credit card processing services can make unannounced changes that can cause failures with essential pieces of your site.
- Security failures could cause your site to be hacked or attacked.

It is impossible to prevent these changes from occurring, and even if these changes are positive, they may create a temporary problem for your site. One method for insuring that you know when your site has stopped working is to use site monitoring services. Site monitoring takes place invisibly without you having to change anything on your site. Their software just goes to your site on a regular basis to perform a test. You select the pages to test and the alerts

and reports you want to receive. Testing options include test frequency and the emergency procedures to follow when a problem is detected.

Testing your site on an hourly (or even daily) basis is not feasible except by using a software service. This is not a substitute for humans, who can test usability, but an additional form of testing to insure that the site is working. Site monitoring may just protect you from revenue loss, making it a cost effective insurance for your web business.

Mobile

With over 61 percent of the population now having a Smartphone, as part of testing your website, you want to be sure to test it on various mobile devices.

Amazon.com Inc. is the No. 1 mobile destination among mass merchants for U.S. smartphone owners accessing the mobile web and mobile apps, finds research giant Nielsen. In fact, a majority of smartphone owners who accessed the web or apps on their devices in 2013 shopped Amazon.com.

That is 76.1 million unique monthly visitors to Amazon's mobile website. On average, shoppers spent 38 minutes and one second on the m-commerce site or the Amazon app. One contributing factor to Amazon.com's success, mobile commerce experts say, is showrooming, which in this instance is when a consumer checks out a product in a bricks-and-mortar store but uses her

smartphone to compare prices and possibly buy the product via mobile or later online. Fifty eight percent (58%) of adult smartphone owners regularly engage in showrooming, and the mobile resource most used by these shoppers is Amazon.com

Of course, if we are going to follow Amazon's lead here, you should consider creating your own mobile app, not just a mobile-friendly website. An app makes it easier for your customers to do business with you and that can be a big calling card. With 85% of users preferring an app over a mobile website, this may be a smart move for your business.

Here are some of the advantages of apps:

Ease of Use: It is very easy for users to navigate through and interact with mobile applications.

Cooler visuals: The graphics and effects on a mobile website can be very limited because of the bandwidth and technology. However, mobile apps have the capabilities to have superior graphics and effects, presenting a cooler looking visual to your users.

Usable Offline: Users do not have to be connected to a network or wireless connection to use mobile applications. Mobile websites always require the

user to be connected to the Internet in some way while a lot of apps do not require Internet connection and can be used offline.

Speed: Mobile apps have the ability to run a lot faster than mobile websites.

Interactivity/Gaming: For interactive games (such as Words with Friends) an app is almost always going to be your best choice.

Easier to access data about users: Marketers are able to access a wide variety of data about mobile users such as demographics and geo-location through mobile apps.

Complex Calculations or Reporting: If you need something that will take data and allow you to manipulate it with complex calculations, charts or reports an app will help you do that very effectively.

Increase users' interaction time: When users have an app they like, they use it more frequently and for much longer amounts of time than the mobile website. Your app has to have enough value to get users to spend that much time interacting with your content.

Native Functionality or Processing: Mobile web browsers are getting increasingly good at accessing certain mobile-specific functions but if you need to access a user's camera or processing power, an app will do that much more effectively.

Learn more about mobile apps in the module "Offer Something for Free".

Shopping Cart Abandonment

Online retailers spend a lot of energy getting people to visit their sites, and once there, getting visitors to make a purchase. It can be discouraging then to view reports and see the number of people who have placed items in the cart, then don't complete the purchase. This is called cart abandonment, and it is a problem that faces most online stores. But is it really a problem?

How often does a customer begin their shopping experience online, primarily for price comparison, but then completes the sale at the physical store of the same merchant? This question is difficult to track. Frequently, however, someone will place items in the cart, and then complete the sale a few days later. I know I do this often – for example, I have a customer that needed some business cards. She wanted a price before ordering, so I went through the entire cart process, and then abandoned the cart, only to complete the sale a few days later after she had approved everything.

The average online shopper delays making a purchase by almost two days after initially visiting a retail site according to data from a leading Internet security company. After monitoring the shopping behavior of 163 million consumers completing 2.52 million transactions, McAfee SECURE discovered that the average customer waited 33 hours and 54 minutes, or nearly two days, between first visiting a retail site and making a purchase. In 64 percent of the cases, the shopper waited at least one day to buy.

This seemingly cautious behavior, which McAfee calls "digital window shopping," is really a somewhat normal shopping behavior wherein a potential customer loads items into a shopping cart and then leaves the retailer's site in search of more information, price comparison data, or even information about the merchant to ensure that the transaction and any customer service will be handled well.

What this suggests to me is that retailers should have a function to "save this cart", so the customer can log back in at a later time and complete the sale without having to start over. Amazon has this feature, but most online stores do not. Combined with an email reminder that they still have not completed the checkout process, this could be a major enhancement to sales.

Shipping

The single biggest reason for cart abandonment appears to be shipping costs. Some 46 percent of consumers surveyed by PayPal and comScore, said that they did not complete an online transaction because the shipping charges were too high. I have always recommended thatetailers build the cost of shipping into the product price and/or have a low flat rate charge for shipping. This lets consumers know up front what the final cost will be, greatly reducing the number of lost sales. If you are going to learn anything from Amazon, it should be to provide free shipping (either in the form of a membership site like Amazon Prime, or a minimum purchase amount like \$35 as Amazon does).

Here's an example: I recently purchased a pair of mountain bike tires on eBay for \$5 each. It sounded like a great deal until you read the shipping price: \$17. That meant I could go buy the tires locally for the same cost. But, the ad stated, if I bought more than one item, the shipping would be combined and I could save substantially. OK, I thought, I'll buy a pair, and the shipping of the second item should only be a few dollars more and it will be worth it.

Unfortunately, the way the eBay check out process works is that I didn't know what the total shipping for the combined purchase would be until after I had committed to buy. It turns out the cost of shipping the second tire was \$14 (a whopping \$3 savings!) Needless to say, I wasn't happy. This guy was making the tire look cheap, then making up for the price in shipping charges. That's a good way to lose people during the checkout process.

In fact, I have a customer who has been complaining that too many people abandoned their shopping carts on his website. The problem, according to this customer, is that the shipping costs are too high. (He uses real-time shipping calculations from UPS and charges the customer exactly what UPS charges him with no markup). Since I order stuff from him myself, and often pay \$10 in shipping for a \$10 item, I could see why his customers would be miffed and abandon their carts. So I made a suggestion to him: stop using real-time calculations from UPS. Instead, figure in the average shipping cost and add this to the price of his product. Then, advertise that he has free shipping. That way, there aren't any surprises during the check-out process and customers won't feel like they are getting ripped off. Instead, they'll feel like they got a great deal.

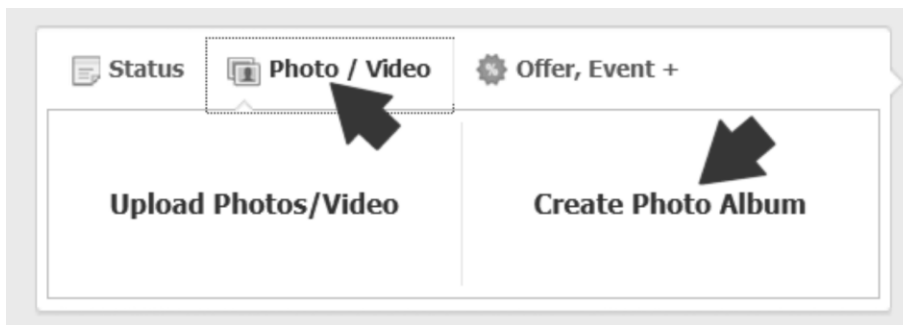
If your product is a physical one, then provide an option for 24 hour shipping. There's no one more demanding than a client whose waiting for their purchase; everyone wants everything – now. So gear yourself up accordingly and if necessary, charge a little extra.

Research shows that shipping costs are the number one reason for shopping cart abandonment. Sadly, the customer I mentioned above refused to consider my suggestion. If you really want a better conversion rate for people buying from your website, however, you need to figure out how to do free shipping. Don't let the customer get away!

Shopping on Facebook

As a business owner, have you ever wanted to sell your products on Facebook? This certainly sounds like a good idea, and there have been several "apps" built that allow you to do this. There are some problems however: most of these apps are not free, and people may never see your products. I've come up with a solution that overcomes these obstacles and anyone with an eCommerce website can implement this today. Here's how:

1. Go to your business Facebook page and create a photo album.



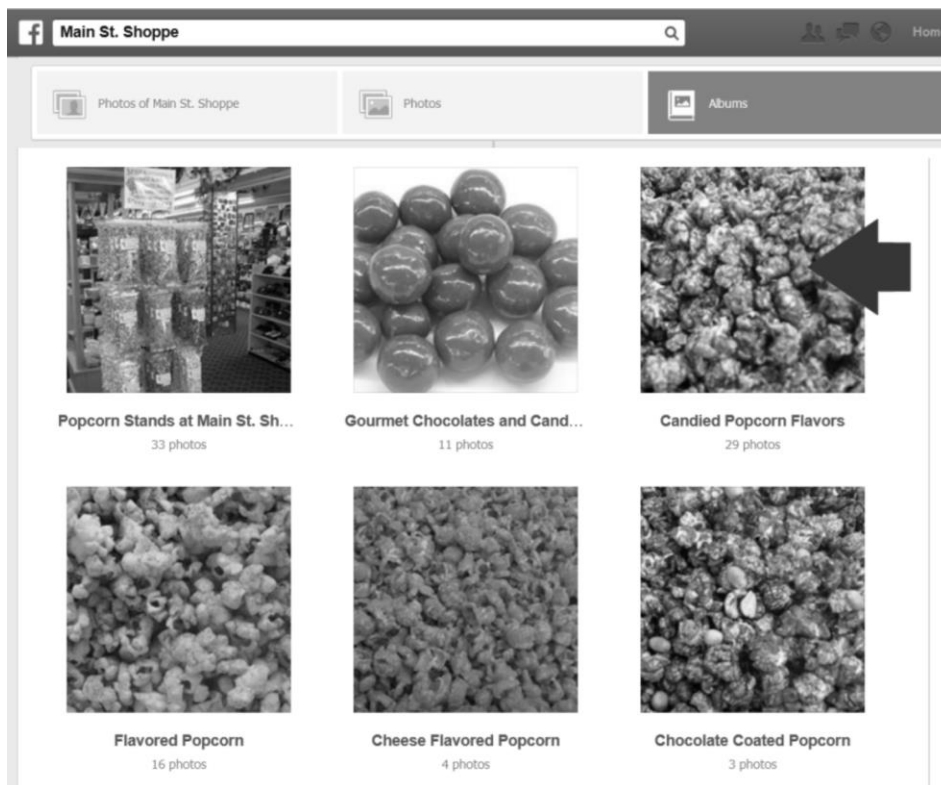
2. Name your album the same as you would categories in your store. For example, if you sell flavored popcorn, you might have categories like "Cheese Popcorn", "Candied Popcorn", "Plain Popcorn", etc.

3. Add an image of the item you want to sell. For example, if you sell a "Black Cherry Flavored Popcorn", add a photo of this flavor to the "Candied Popcorn" album you just created.

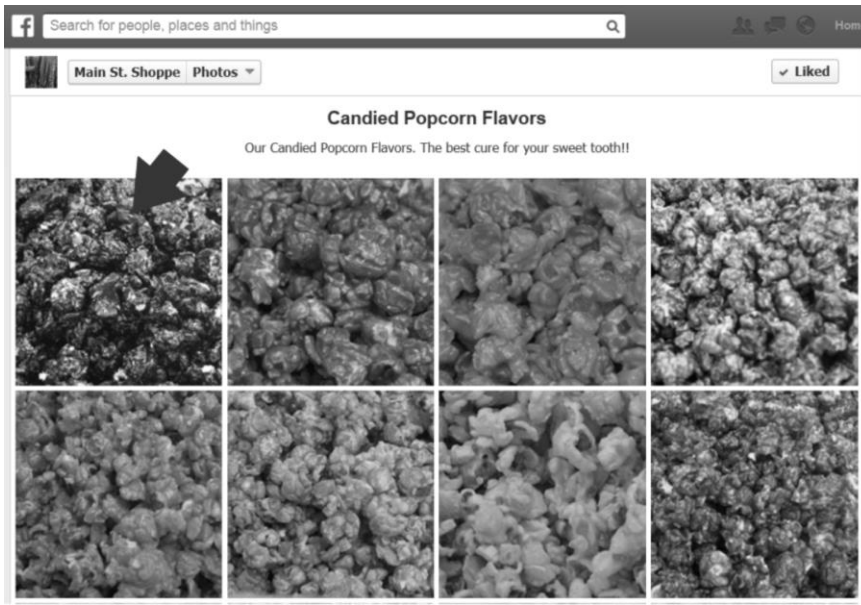
4. In the description, talk about how great this product is, then add a link (starting with http://) to the product page on your website where someone can buy this product.

Here's what it looks like to the user:

First, they pick on the album (category):



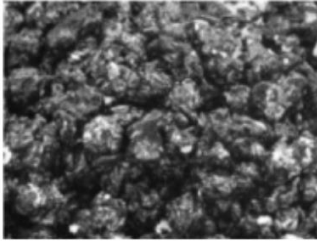
Next they pick the flavor they are interested in:











The image is displayed, along with the link you added to the description. While this example doesn't show it, you could add your product name (and even price) as text on the image:



The visitor to your Facebook page can now click on the link which takes them directly to your ordering page:



Black Cherry

ID	(Click to Select Flavor) Product	Description	Price	Order
	C-2s Black Cherry (Small Hanging)	Small Hanging Bag	\$4.00	1 Add to Cart
	C-2m Black Cherry (Medium Hanging)	Medium Hanging Bag	\$5.00	1 Add to Cart
	C-2l Black Cherry (Large Hanging)	Large Hanging Bag	\$6.00	1 Add to Cart
	C3-2s Black Cherry (Small Shelf)	Small Shelf Setter Bag	\$5.00	1 Add to Cart
	C3-2m Black Cherry (Medium Shelf)	Medium Shelf Setter Bag	\$6.00	1 Add to Cart
	C3-2l Black Cherry (Large Shelf)	Large Shelf Setter Bag	\$8.50	1 Add to Cart
	C3-2xl Black Cherry (XLarge Shelf)	XLarge Shelf Setter Bag	\$13.00	1 Add to Cart
	C2-2 Black Cherry (Clear Canister)	7 in. D x 6 in. H: 124 Fl Oz.	\$13.00	1 Add to Cart

Pretty simple, right? And there is an even bigger advantage to doing this versus using an app: Your image posts are added to your timeline, which can end up on your fan's newsfeed. This gives you significantly better exposure than having a tab on your page that most visitors are unlikely to click. With the recent changes to organic reach of Facebook pages, this is a huge benefit.

Stimulus Questions

Is the copy on my home page about what my customers want to hear or is it something that should really be on the “About Us” page?

Is it easy to add multiple items to the shopping cart?

Do my product descriptions really sell the product? Is there enough information for the customer to make a buying decision?

How do my product descriptions compare to my 3 main competitors?

Do I have enough photos to accurately display the products from all angles?

Are my photos of high quality? If not, call a couple of local photographers to see who will charge you by the hour rather than by the picture.

_____ % are “very to somewhat” influenced by the quality of content (descriptions, copy, images and tools) when deciding to purchase from an online retailer.

Do the images on my website have a file name that describes what the image is? Do the images on my website include an alt tag?

Have I tested my website on each of the following browsers:

- a.) Internet Explorer
- b.) Firefox
- c.) Chrome
- d.) Safari
- e.) Android phone
- f.) iPhone

Do I have videos showing how to use my products? What are the most important products that I have that need videos?

Test the speed of your website using the following sites:

pingdom.com

webpagetest.org.

developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed

How would Jeff Bezos make the user experience on my website better?

Action Item: List the way I intend to engage with my customers by creating a better experience on my website and social media platforms:

Additional Notes

