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“Blocking and Tackling”

- A quick take at some eCommerce fundamentals

eCommerce can be VERY complex. To offer a world class customer experience, retailers must incorporate technologies and functionality that exceeds rising customer expectations.

On the flip side however, site fundamentals still play a very large role in converting visitors into customers. Many retailers surprisingly lose sight of these site basics and leave significant sales on the table. This brief examines 4 quick “fundamentals” every eCommerce manager cannot afford to lose sight of.

Think Fast

Speed has become less of a problem due to the penetration of broadband, but don't forget that a significant number of people still shop by a dialup connection. When creating a site framework, designers and e-commerce teams should ensure that the site is developed with pages loading in less than 9 seconds (over a dial-up connection).

Our recommended page size is within 60-70k in bytes. At that amount, sites will likely load within the maximum wait time of 9 seconds. Online retailers should avoid flash at all costs within their transactional site. Flash's artistic aspects may help you establish a brand presence – but it will likely lose potential customers before they have even searched within your store.

Image is important

Images are a very important aspect of selling online and are often neglected. All product images should be of the highest resolution possible, be much larger than the product page original, and have

multiple views. Dynamic imaging capabilities can improve the user experience to an even higher level by increasing interactivity (zoom & rotate). At a minimum – retailers should have at least two additional views outside of the product page image to help build emotion.

Be my guest

Shoppers do not like being forced to do anything, especially when they are ready to open their wallets. Forcing a shopper to register on your site before purchasing is a sure way to drive a portion of your traffic to your competitors. Too often, shoppers do not have the time or the inclination to fill out a lengthy form explaining what types of information they desire.

Always offer the ability to checkout as a guest. You will see less customer leakage within the checkout process and can still offer the option to register when the sale is completed.

Make sure it's "above the fold"

Your homepage is the most important page within your eCommerce store. It sets the initial tone for the shopping experience and offers your best promotions and products to your visitors. Users typically visually scan a web page from top to bottom and then from left to right. All critical content and navigation options should be obvious to the shopper without having to scroll down. If you have your best promotions "below the fold" – you can bet that a large percentage of browsers are not scrolling down to see it.