

Conversion rate optimisation, or CRO, is the process of improving the number of website visitors who take a valuable action. For an ecommerce shop, that usually means placing an order, although actions such as signing up for email or adding a product to the basket can help explain what is happening along the way.

CRO is not simply a matter of changing button colours or copying what another retailer does. It combines customer research, analytics, testing and commercial judgement to find and reduce the barriers between browsing and buying. The aim is not just to increase conversion rate: it is to grow profitable sales without damaging average order value, margin or the customer experience.

That distinction matters. Ecommerce is harder than it looks. Shoppers can compare prices in seconds, switch between retailers and read reviews before they commit. At the same time, retailers face rising acquisition costs, delivery expectations and tight margins. A change that produces more orders but cuts profit or attracts the wrong customers may not be a good result.

What does CRO mean for an ecommerce business?

In practical terms, ecommerce CRO involves understanding how people use a shop, identifying what may be stopping them from buying and testing improvements. Those improvements could relate to the product range, site speed, product information, navigation, delivery details, trust signals or checkout.

A conversion rate is commonly calculated as orders divided by sessions, expressed as a percentage. It is a useful measure, but it does not tell the whole story. A better view includes measures such as revenue per visitor, gross profit, average order value, returns, cancellations and repeat purchases. A retailer selling lower-margin products should be especially careful not to optimise purely for order volume.

CRO also needs to account for how people shop. A visitor may discover a product on a mobile phone, return later on a laptop and complete the purchase after checking delivery dates or reviews. Analytics can help reveal those patterns, but no single report explains customer behaviour on its own. Good optimisation uses quantitative data alongside customer feedback, usability research and knowledge of the business.

Why ecommerce conversion is more challenging than it appears

Competition and price transparency

Online shoppers can compare products and prices across several retailers without leaving the sofa. If an item is widely available, price may have a strong influence on the decision. That does not mean every retailer should race to the bottom. Clear product information, reliable stock, useful advice, strong reviews and convenient delivery can all help explain why buying from one shop is worth it.

Price is also connected to profitability. A discount might improve conversion, but it can reduce the contribution from each order. Before testing offers, check what they do to margin, basket size and the likelihood of customers waiting for a sale. A successful CRO programme looks beyond the number of transactions.



Trust, reviews and delivery

Customers need confidence that a product will meet their expectations and arrive when promised. Reviews can answer practical questions that product descriptions miss, while clear delivery costs and timings help shoppers decide whether to proceed. Unexpected charges or vague delivery information, especially when they appear late in the journey, can create doubt and basket abandonment.

Reviews and delivery information are therefore not decorative details. They can influence a buying decision at the product page, in the basket and during checkout. Make them easy to find and keep them accurate. Avoid overstating review claims or promising delivery times the business cannot reliably meet.

Speed and mobile usability

Slow pages can frustrate shoppers, particularly on mobile connections or older devices. Site speed ecommerce work is not only about chasing a technical score: it is about making key shopping tasks feel responsive. Product images, scripts, third-party tools and complex page layouts can all affect performance.

Mobile visitors may also be dealing with small screens, awkward forms or payment options that are hard to use. Test the full journey on real devices where possible, rather than assuming that a page which looks fine on a desktop will work equally well on a phone.

What do CRO specialists test first?

There is no universal first test. A specialist should start by understanding the business, the customer journey and the quality of the available data. They will usually look for problems that affect [check here](#) a meaningful number of visitors and have a plausible link to revenue or profit.

1. **Check the measurement.** Confirm that analytics records key events consistently, including product views, add-to-basket actions, checkout steps and completed orders. Compare analytics with the ecommerce platform and investigate any large discrepancies before interpreting a test.
2. **Find where shoppers drop out.** Review the journey from landing page to order. Break performance down by device, traffic source, product category and new versus returning customers. A store-wide average can conceal a major issue on mobile or on a high-traffic product page.

3. **Look for customer friction.** Use search terms, customer service questions, site-search behaviour, reviews, surveys and usability sessions to understand what shoppers cannot find or do not trust. Analytics can show where people leave; research helps suggest why.
4. **Prioritise evidence-based changes.** Estimate the reach of a problem, its potential business impact, the strength of the evidence and the effort needed to address it. Test changes that solve a real customer problem, not merely those that are easiest to design.

Specialists often begin with high-traffic pages or steps where small improvements could affect many shoppers. But a prominent position in the funnel does not automatically make a test valuable. A poorly performing page with little traffic may be a lower priority than a modest issue affecting thousands of product views.

Product page tests that can make a difference

Product pages are a natural place to investigate because they bring together the information and reassurance shoppers need to make a decision. Product page tests should be based on the category and the questions customers actually ask, rather than a checklist applied identically to every product.

- **Clarify the product proposition.** Test whether the title, key benefits and specifications make the item easy to understand. Put decision-critical details where shoppers can see them, and avoid vague claims that are difficult to verify.
- **Improve imagery and product information.** Test useful image sequences, zoom or clear views of relevant details. For products where fit, scale or compatibility matters, consider whether size guidance, measurements or comparison information is easy to find.
- **Make reviews useful.** Explore how review scores, written feedback and relevant review filters are presented. The goal is to help shoppers assess suitability, not simply to make the highest rating more prominent.
- **Show delivery and returns information clearly.** Test whether delivery costs, estimated timings, stock status and returns information are visible at the point they help a customer decide. Ensure that information matches operational reality.
- **Make the next step clear.** Review the visibility and usability of size or colour selection, stock messages and the add-to-basket action, especially on mobile. Check that errors are clear if a required option has not been selected.

When evaluating product page tests, look beyond clicks on the add-to-basket button. A treatment may increase basket additions while also increasing returns, cancellations or low-value orders. Consider downstream outcomes and allow enough time to understand the effect.

Checkout optimisation: remove uncertainty and effort

Checkout optimisation focuses on helping customers complete an order once they have decided to buy. The first step is to map the checkout and identify where shoppers stop. Common areas to investigate include unexpected delivery charges, account creation requirements, unclear form errors, limited payment choices and unnecessary steps.

Possible tests include offering a guest checkout, reducing avoidable form fields, making delivery costs visible earlier, improving error messages or presenting payment options more clearly. Each change should be checked against the retailer's fraud, fulfilment and customer-service requirements. Fewer fields are not automatically better if essential information is lost or fulfilment becomes harder.

Test the whole experience on mobile as well as desktop. Check how fields behave, whether the keyboard matches the information requested, whether address entry works reliably and whether customers can review their order before paying. Reassurance about security and returns may help, but it should be relevant and credible rather than added as clutter.

How to run a useful CRO test

Before launching an experiment, write down the problem, the evidence behind it, the change being tested and the outcome that would indicate success. Choose a primary metric tied to business performance, such as conversion rate or revenue per visitor, and keep an eye on guardrail metrics such as average order value, margin, returns and checkout errors.

Tests also need enough traffic and time to produce a meaningful result. Avoid calling a winner after a short burst of data or changing the test midway because the early numbers look promising. Account for normal variation in sales, including differences by day of the week, promotion activity and traffic mix. If traffic is too low for a reliable A/B test, qualitative research and careful staged changes may be more appropriate.

Not every test will win. A result that shows no improvement can still be useful if it rules out an assumption or helps refine the next idea. Keep a record of the hypothesis, audience, dates, results and any limitations so the business can learn from the work over time.

What about tools such as the AddToAny sharing widget?

An AddToAny sharing widget can make it easier for visitors to share a product or page. Whether it deserves attention in a CRO programme depends on the business and the evidence. For many stores, improving product clarity, delivery information or checkout friction is likely to be more directly connected to orders than adding or repositioning a sharing tool.

If sharing is a meaningful behaviour for a particular audience or product, measure it rather than assuming it will improve sales. Look at whether shares lead to qualified visits or assisted purchases, and consider whether the widget adds visual clutter or affects page performance. A tool should earn its place through customer usefulness and commercial evidence.

Build a profitable testing priority list

A sensible CRO roadmap starts with the biggest evidenced barriers, not the most fashionable ideas. For each opportunity, ask how many customers it affects, how serious the problem is, how confident the evidence is and what the change could mean for profit. Include implementation effort and operational risk in the decision.

Area to review Questions to ask Useful outcomes to monitor Site speed Are key pages responsive on mobile and desktop? Conversion, engagement and page performance Product pages Can shoppers understand suitability, reviews, stock and delivery? Add-to-basket rate, revenue per visitor, returns Checkout Are costs, steps and payment options clear? Checkout completion, order value, errors Commercial impact Does the change support profitable orders? Gross profit, margin, cancellations and repeat purchase

CRO is ongoing work, not a one-off redesign or a guarantee that every experiment will lift sales. The most effective specialists combine customer understanding with commercial discipline: they investigate the journey, prioritise meaningful problems and measure what happens after the click as well as before it.



For ecommerce retailers facing tight margins and intense competition, that focus is essential. Better site speed, ecommerce, relevant product page tests and thoughtful checkout optimisation can reduce friction, but the real measure of success is whether customers can buy with confidence and the business can serve them profitably.