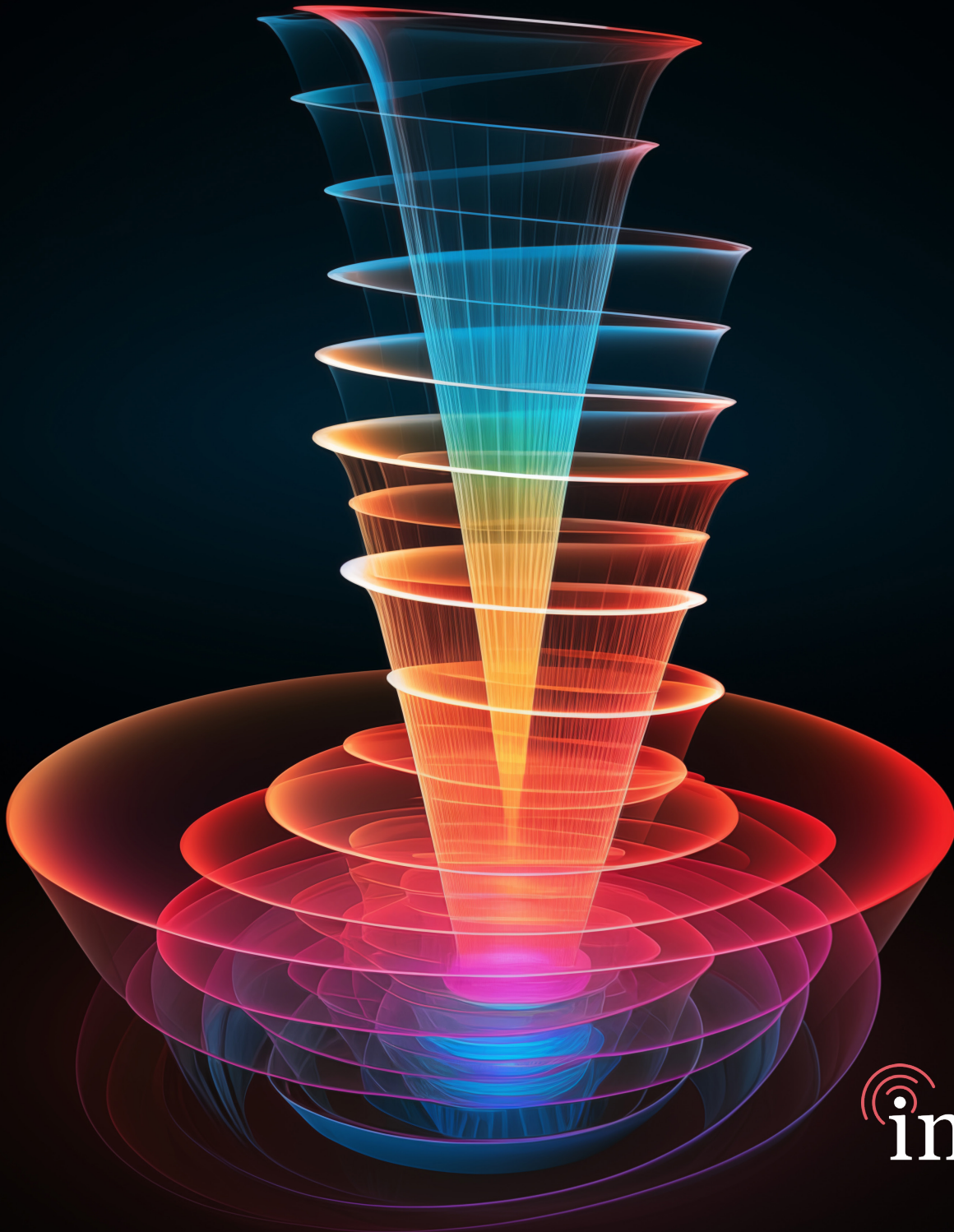


Conversion rate optimization strategies

FOR ANY BUDGET





Introduction

If you're reading this, you're most likely involved in managing your organization's customer-facing website. For decades now, marketing teams have been experimenting with different products, messages, and branding in an attempt to generate demand and convert website visitors into paying customers. While the details of these experiments may differ by industry, the tools and techniques used to optimize website conversion rates are universally applicable. We hope these insights will help you plan for and successfully implement your own CRO strategy.

WHAT WE'LL COVER

1. **What is Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)?**
2. **Why do you need a CRO strategy?**
3. **How do you implement a CRO strategy?**
4. **CRO success stories**
5. **Checklist for CRO success**



What is Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)?

The conversion rate of your website is the percentage of visitors who convert into leads. For example, if 1 out of every 10 people who visit your website complete the intended action (make a purchase, sign up for your service, etc.), you have a 10% conversion rate. Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) is the act of increasing this percentage through improved messaging, design, or user experience.

Why do you need a CRO strategy?

If you have a website primarily to sell goods or capture leads, the benefits of a CRO strategy should be pretty obvious.

Regardless of the intended action of your website, by implementing a CRO strategy, you'll likely see an increase in traffic, customers, and sales, while you stay ahead of the competition.

Small changes add up when it comes to your CRO strategy. Improved page load time has proven to decrease bounce rates which positively impacts the conversion rate of that page. Layout, content, and design changes all play an equally important role in helping to increase conversion rates.

How do you implement a CRO strategy?

Developing a sound CRO strategy is a cyclical process. It begins with identifying how your site is performing today, running tests to identify how it can be optimized, implementing those new changes, and then starting the process over again from the beginning. We follow this process for implementing CRO strategies at Imarc:

1. Review and optimize the current state
2. Conduct and monitor testing
3. Analyze results and implement changes

A NOTE ON PRIVACY

Many CRO tools rely on tracking visitor behavior and history. It can be challenging to understand what is acceptable when it comes to establishing a **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)-compliant** CRO strategy. The tools highlighted in this post vary in their interpretation and rigidity, but they are all considered GDPR-compliant. The content of this ebook should not be taken as legal advice.



Review and optimize the current state

Before you can start CRO testing, you need to ensure your site's technical health is in good standing. Like building a new home, a good foundation creates a baseline for your tests, removes additional variables that could affect conversion rate, and typically leads to improvements in bounce rate, time-on-page, and more. Here are some exercises you can run through to review your website's health.

CHECK YOUR PAGE SPEED

While a lot has changed over the past few years, the correlation identified in **Pingdom's 2018 analysis** between page load time and bounce rate is still valid. If you haven't already done so, run your homepage and a handful of your high-traffic pages through Google's free **PageSpeed Insights** tool. This tool provides you with a score for both mobile and desktop, but one of the most important metrics they measure is First Contentful Paint (FCP). FCP is important because it measures the perceived load speed of any given page. Learn more about FCP **here**.

COMPRESS YOUR IMAGES

Images that were downloaded directly from a stock image retailer tend to be the biggest culprit (literally) when it comes to slow page load times. Here are a few tips for handling those larger images:

- Work with your graphic designer to ensure image compression and resizing are built into their workflow.
- If you're using WordPress as your CMS, consider a well-established/rated plugin like **WP Rocket** to improve page speed, or **Smush** to help automatically compress your images.
- Pay for an image compression tool like **Kraken.io** or something similar.

AUDIT YOUR THIRD-PARTY SCRIPTS

Before you get a developer involved to help with the creative loading of your third-party scripts, perform an audit of the tools getting loaded on your site. There are some helpful free tools to help you perform this audit, including **Wappalyzer** and **BuiltWith**.

If you do have additional development resources and you would like to tackle third-party scripts contributing to poor performance, look into a monitoring tool to gain deeper insight into the overall health of your site on a more regular basis. Get in touch with your IT department or engineering team to understand what tools may already be available. We have seen companies successfully use tools like **Pingdom** or **Datadog** for monitoring uptime, user interactions, and



even testing forms.

In general, third-party script audits are made easier if your team takes advantage of **Google Tag Manager** for consolidating, loading, and managing all of your third-party scripts.

IDENTIFY TOP-PERFORMING PAGES

Once your site is technically sound, begin collecting information on how users interact with the current website and content. This analysis will help you identify high-traffic pages, user flows, top-converting pages, and opportunities for optimization.

To identify the top-performing pages on your site, you'll want to utilize the Engagement section of your Google Analytics account. From there, you'll want to select Pages and Screens to view metrics that will identify top pages on your site. Metrics include views, users, views per user and average engagement time. However, if there are different metrics that you are looking to reference, there is flexibility on what metrics to pull in based on your KPIs.

At the end of the day, you shouldn't let limited resources hold you back from getting started on this phase. Any improvement to the technical health of your website should yield better bounce and conversion rates. The great news is, if you work with an agency, website health concerns are part of their development workflow.

Conduct and monitor testing

Experimentation is probably the most exciting part of the CRO strategy. There are so many possible variables to take into account. As a result of this complexity, we won't go into specific experiments, but rather provide you with guidelines for testing.

TYPES OF CRO TESTS

While people typically think of A/B testing when talking about CRO, that's just one piece of it. Let's take a look at other types of testing you can employ.



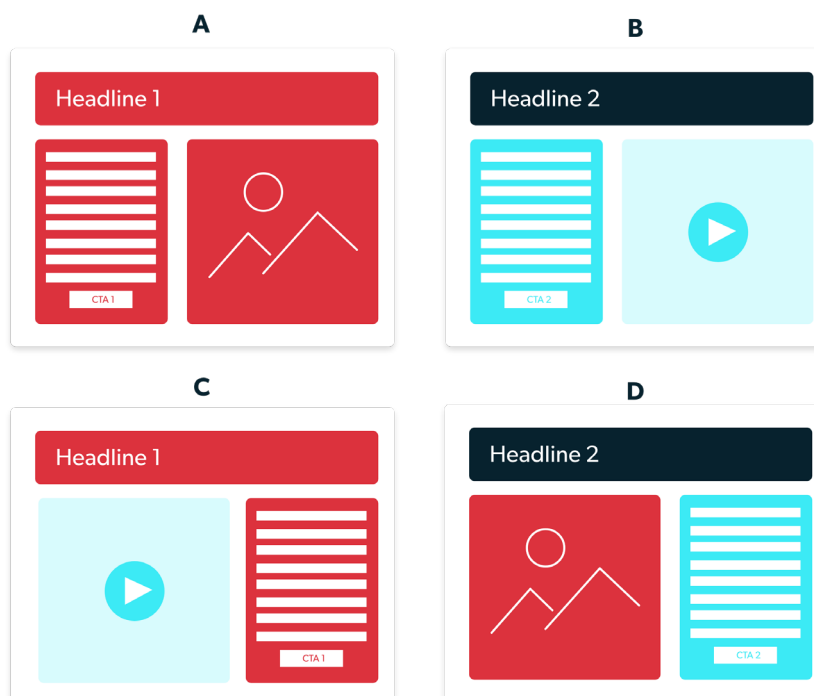
A/B testing

A/B tests consist of a randomized experiment with two variants, A and B. A/B testing is a way to compare two versions of a single variable, typically by testing a subject's response to variant A against variant B, and **determining which of the two variants is more effective.**



Multivariate testing

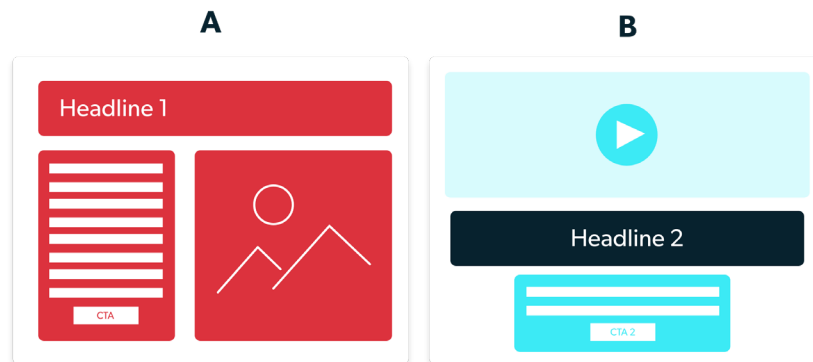
Multivariate testing uses the same core mechanism as A/B testing, but compares a higher number of variables, and reveals more information about how these variables interact with one another. This process shows which elements on a page play the most significant role in achieving the page's objective.





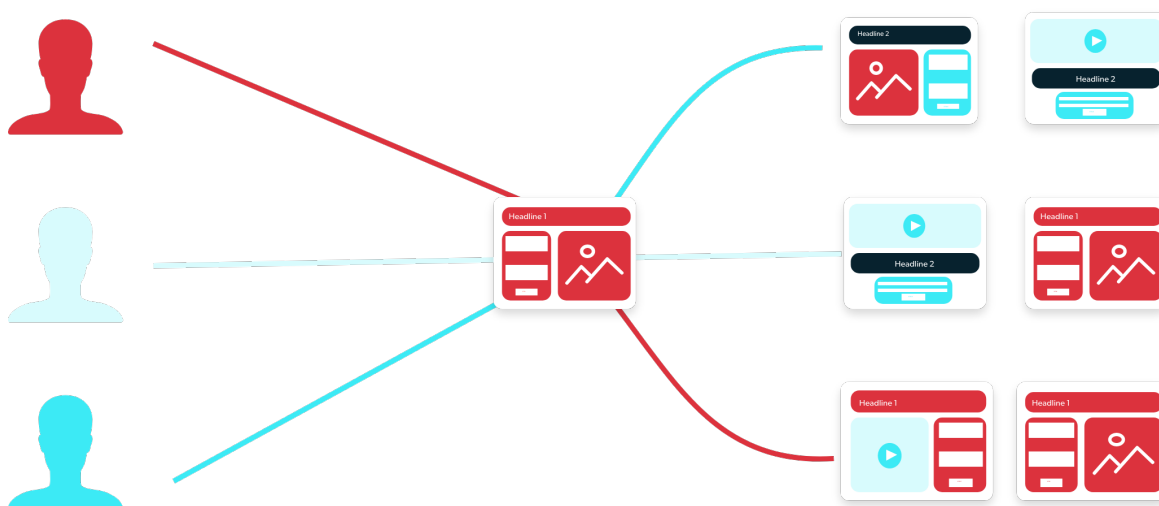
Split (Redirect) testing

Split testing consists of taking two or more variants of a web page and dividing your website traffic between them. Variants are fully developed web pages, which are stored on the server, and are accessed via different URLs. The mechanism used to split the incoming traffic across variants is known as redirection, and for this reason, the technique is also often known as a redirection test.



Personalization testing

Personalization testing serves the most relevant page to the most appropriate user. Rather than serving a random page like with A/B tests, personalization testing segments traffic based on user factors like demographics, behavior, referrer, etc., then serves a page tailored to those factors.





ALIGN YOUR TESTING WITH MARKETING STRATEGIES

With so many resources at your disposal, it's easy to get carried away with the complexity and frequency of your testing. Align your tests with your organization's priorities to add structure to your tests. Here are some examples of organization-wide priorities you may be able to align with your process.

MARKETING PRIORITY	Promote the Partner Marketplace and Increase Marketing Attributed Revenue Share Dollars by 30%	Increase Customer Marketing Attributed Leads	Grow Weekly Webinar Attendance
ANALYSIS AND TESTING EXAMPLE	Identify where the problem lies. Is there not enough traffic getting to the Marketplace, or are there simply limited conversion opportunities on the Marketplace pages? Test: Add the "Marketplace" page to your primary navigation.	Identify current traffic levels and bounce rate of Customer Marketing pages (customer success, case studies, trust pages, etc.) Test: Pick a gated case study and un-gate it. Make a landing page version of it (as opposed to a PDF) and strategically place CTAs for live demos throughout.	Identify the bounce rate of your Webinar landing page. Test: Add a checklist of items you'll cover on the webinar. Consider offering a social share option to your landing page experience.

As you can imagine, aligning your testing strategy can become much more manageable if you bucket experiments into just a few overarching categories.

GO BOLD WITH YOUR TESTS

If possible, **spend time coming up with unique experiments that are drastically different from the current state.** This approach will typically yield clearer results than the traditional incremental changes often employed by enterprise-level companies. With that said, any experimentation is better than nothing.



Experiment with components that can be easily used throughout the site. It will be easier to implement a reusable component across your site. In other words, don't come up with an alternative experience that could only ever apply to your experimentation page.

We put together this [Google Sheet template](#) to help you organize some of your upcoming experiments.

Analyze results and implement changes

If you're a small company, you likely won't have tens of thousands of visitors hitting any given page every day. This means some of your experiments might take significantly longer to reach statistical significance. Simply put, statistical significance is the acknowledgment that there is enough valid data to support that the outcome of an experiment didn't happen by chance.

DON'T RUSH IT

When your shiny new button or experience yields minimal change to the conversion rate of a specific page, or it has never reached statistical significance, you are likely to feel some level of frustration or disappointment. "How could this have happened?" you ask. "The new experience is so much better!" you say. You might be tempted to simply go with the new button or experience because it "looks better," but don't! This is part of the process. In a 2018 industry report of 3,900 marketers, [UserTesting](#) identified that most respondents saw a <40% success rate of their A/B experiments. This isn't intended to discourage you from running A/B experiments, but rather to set expectations that a number of your tests will likely not reach statistical significance.

This is where the analysis of your key pages is so important. If you can identify one or two of your most frequently visited pages to run experiments on, you will have an easier time reaching your goals.

GO FURTHER WITH YOUR ANALYTICS

You will likely already be working with a marketing automation tool that allows you to track traditional form conversions, but what about understanding how those individuals made it to the form in the first place? This is where enterprise-level attribution tracking tools like [Neustar](#) or [Adobe Analytics](#) come into play. If you don't have the resources for these tools, simply spend a little more time working with the Google Analytics attribution reporting and your marketing automation tools. You may not necessarily get the multi-touch reporting capabilities you're looking for, but you can



make educated guesses based on the Google Analytics User Flow report and total conversion in a given timeframe.

KEEP TESTING

CRO testing isn't one-and-done. As we mentioned earlier, it's a cyclical process. You should be taking what you learned from your test, implementing changes, and then using that as the baseline for your next experiment. Continue setting realistic experimentation goals and consider creating a calendar or running list of experiments you want to implement. Keep an organized list of experiments to keep you motivated as you continue testing.

Additional tools and resources

For organizations just getting started with CRO, we recommend embracing the free suite of Google tools. When it comes to defining statistical significance, Google and other CRO tools typically calculate and track this for you. This way, you don't need to worry about becoming a mathematician in the process. Some tools allow you to set your threshold (or p-value). These tools include:



Google Analytics

A free web analytics tool to help you track website traffic, bounce rate, time-onpage, attribution, and much more. Use this tool to identify the pages on your site that get the most traffic as well as the pages that contribute most to your site's overall bounce rate.



Google PageSpeed

A free tool to help you understand the overall health of a specific page. Select a handful of high-traffic pages and run them through the PageSpeed Insights tool to help identify where to focus your attention.



Web.dev

Google's web development blog has lots of useful information. The content is geared towards a more technical audience, but there is plenty of educational content for webmasters of all abilities and experience levels.



Hotjar

A great tool for getting started with heat mapping and understanding user flows.



If you're ready to dive in further, we've also had direct experience with the tools listed below. They can help your team build a more structured CRO strategy, expand their A/B testing, split URL testing, heat mapping, and personalization toolkit.



Pingdom

Pingdom offers website monitoring tools for companies of all sizes, but primarily focuses on those with the larger team and monitoring needs. Their services include uptime monitoring and synthetic monitoring, which is the simulation of visitors interacting with your digital experiences. This is especially helpful when trying to identify broken third-party embedded forms.



Datadog

Similar to Pingdom, Datadog offers synthetic monitoring services in addition to cloud application performance monitoring.



Neustar

An enterprise-level multi-touch attribution tracking system to help you better understand visitor behavior on your site.



Optimizely

While their focus has shifted to larger-scale applications and not necessarily websites, the core functionality still stands. Take advantage of their complex Feature and A/B testing tools to go beyond button color changes and content updates.



Freshmarketer

A great, affordable, all-in-one platform for A/B testing, heat mapping, personalization, etc.



Omniconvert

Another solid CRO tool with great documentation and blog content to help get you started.



VWO

A step up from Freshmarketer, VWO offers an all-in-one platform with solutions that seem to be purpose-built for the enterprise.

***Note - we purposefully did not account for CRO tools included in Content Management Systems (CMS) like HubSpot and AEM.**



CRO success stories

Imarc continues to work with our clients to ensure their success long after website launch. In these two cases, our team worked with our recent clients to optimize their sites and drive conversion rates.



How Devo increased its homepage conversion rate with split testing

In 2021, Imarc launched the redesigned Devo Technology website. To take the website to the next level after launch, Imarc's marketing team worked with UX strategists to implement customized solutions for conversion rate optimization (CRO) on the homepage. The revamped homepage increased "Request a Demo" conversions by 42%.

Read the full [Devo case study here](#).



How split testing was used to increase demo conversions for Skillsoft

Imarc has partnered with Skillsoft since 2020 on a variety of web projects including a complete redesign of their website. Skillsoft leveraged the digital marketing capabilities of Imarc to increase conversions on its "Request a Demo" page form. Imarc designed, developed, and tested three alternative versions of the "Request a Demo" page against the baseline page. Variant A saw a 51% increase in conversation rates compared to the baseline form.

Read the full [Skillsoft case study here](#).



Checklist for CRO success

We hope you learned something new today! In summary, regardless of your resources, existing tools, or experience, optimizing your site for conversion should be a major priority. Start small and work your way up to a more structured testing plan, and align it with your marketing team's priorities.

Below you will find a checklist of action items to set you up for success with your CRO strategy:

- ☒ Read this ebook. Keep it up, you're on a roll!
- ☐ Run your homepage through Google PageSpeed Insights and other site health tools.
- ☐ Identify the top 5 high-traffic pages your site.
- ☐ Sign up for a free trial of a CRO tool listed above.
- ☐ Test one element on a high-traffic page that aligns with your marketing priorities.
- ☐ Identify the winning variation and, if applicable, make improvements to your site.

Looking for some assistance updating your website or optimizing your digital marketing strategies? [Let's talk!](#)