

How to reduce your site's bounce rate

Bounce rate is a metric that gets a lot of press and for good reason. It often serves as a strong indicator that your website is not engaging the user, ultimately meaning that they leave a page without interacting with it (i.e. they 'bounce' off the page). However, like anything in SEO or digital marketing, improving your bounce rate is not a silver bullet. Yes, it should deliver results and deliver better results for other metric, but always keep in mind that the sum of all parts is far more important for an ROI-driven campaign.

For those of you who may be new to digital marketing, a "bounce" and "bounce rate" are defined by Google as:

- Bounce: "a single-page session on your site"
- Bounce Rate: "single-page sessions divided by all sessions".

Google's full explanation is actually pretty good. It goes into some detail with regard to when a high bounce rate is indicative of issues, and when it might not actually be that bad. For example, if someone is looking for a quick answer they may not be interested in further reading, in which case a high bounce rate for that particular piece of content is acceptable. On the other hand, if the page has been designed to convert customers through additional information or calls to action, then a high bounce rate may be indicative of poor

performance.

User intent and value permeate everything

Simply dictating x amount of steps to reduce your site's bounce rate will no doubt be useful to a lot of people; however, in many cases it is just as important (if not more important) to understand the *why* instead of merely the *what*.

People click on links to web pages for a reason, even though that reason might be incredibly trivial. They may just be wanting to see the rest of that intriguing clickbait picture or understand if “what he did next” was truly unbelievable. The point is that there is always a user intent, no matter how large or small. Before you start investing time addressing some of the points below, you should have a good idea of user intent. As a result you will be able to offer value to your users.

It is imperative to understand who you are trying to attract (buyer personas) and what they are trying to achieve by visiting your webpage/website. This information is not only important in helping reduce your bounce rate, but is also absolutely critical to producing marketing campaigns and website designs that achieve your goals – by helping your visitors to achieve theirs.

It's not just 'on-site' factors

This is not the first time that someone has written an article on bounce rates – far from it. In fact, this article is a refresh of a previous Search Engine Watch article. However, you will likely find that many of these articles will focus on your website. Factors such as design, calls to action and menu structure rear their heads time and time again, and for good reason: they impact bounce rates and should be addressed. But

this is only part of the puzzle. The user is already on your site and they have come to your site for a reason. Furthermore, it is possible that they are now browsing a particular webpage because of the marketing campaigns that you use.

You must make sure that your webpage aligns to your marketing campaigns and vice versa. They both have equal responsibility in this alignment. Both your marketing campaigns and webpages should be created with the same overarching goals (and buyer personas), but this does not guarantee that they will work together seamlessly. You should review both in conjunction. You may find that adverts are misleading in relation to the content that is on the page, or conversely, that the content of the page needs to be reformatted and upgraded in order to back up the adverts.

This exercise will pay dividends far beyond improving your bounce rate. If executed correctly, it should improve your quality score in AdWords, help to attract higher converting users via SEO, and impact the success rate of your other digital channels.

Think: user experience

Everyone uses the internet. You are reading this article on the internet; you're probably reading it on your phone. We are all users and as such, whether we are website designers or UX/UI, we should all be able to provide feedback on our user experience.

It's is easier said than done – especially if you have been looking at the same website for a couple of years. You can often feel flat out of ideas, but a fresh perspective is invaluable; someone with a fresh eye would be able to spot issues and recommend changes far quicker.

Perhaps you don't have the budget to hire a designer or

marketer to critique your website. Perhaps the changes will be too small to justify the expenditure of time, effort and money to bring in external help. Whatever the case, here are some onsite tips on how to improve bounce rate as a refresh.

Mobile

If you are still yet to address issues related to mobile users you better step on it. Mobile is no longer something that is on the horizon or soon to impact; it's here and it is costing you. Google has already started rolling out its mobile first index and mobile overtook desktop in terms of internet usage in 2016.

If your website isn't mobile responsive, or you have formatting issues on mobile, then read no further. If you take only one action from this article, then it must be: get your site mobile optimized.

Readability

You can have the greatest content in the world, but if someone leaves the page because it's too difficult to read, then it isn't worth much at all. Simple changes, such as increasing text size (especially for mobile) or line spacing, can have a real impact. Admittedly, we made the mistake of creating a blog that looked great when we re-launched our site last year. However, the grey text wasn't easy to read, meaning that we had to subsequently changed the text color. This shows that just because something looks nice, it doesn't mean that it is as functional as it could possibly be in achieving your goals.

Share this article

Related articles

Encourage engagement

Google states that some pages are likely to have a higher bounce rate than others owing to user intent. While this is certainly true, it is always a good idea to encourage further engagement with your website. As an example, a blog post may qualify for a higher bounce rate, but if you are invested in content marketing you will want the webpage to push users through a your defined inbound funnel.

Ensuring that there are clear calls to action to relevant content, internal linking, and a menu structure that doesn't require a code-breaker to decipher, will help contribute to a more positive bounce rate. In this way, addressing the initial issue of bounce rate could improve your conversion rate.

Intrusive ads should be banished

Have you ever landed on a webpage and immediately had to navigate a minefield of pop ups and adverts? How did you feel about it? Delighted or agitated?

The recently departed (from Moz) Rand Fishkin presented a very useful Whiteboard Friday on the subject. Google's very clever, so if you can't let go of annoying pop ups because they are delivering conversions, make sure that the user can quickly (very quickly) get back to the content they visited the page to read, view or listen to.

Load speed

This has become even more important as mobile usage has skyrocketed. We live in a impatient society, expectant of instant access. It needs little explanation therefore, that if your site is painfully slow to load you increase the risk of

users bouncing. There can be multiple factors affecting load speed, but common problems are low-cost shared hosting and high-resolution images. Of course, we want our images to look as good as possible, but a 20mb image on a page is going to cause some serious distress for the user.

Design

Users are now more discerning than ever before. We are no longer operating in a world in which having a business website is a luxury – it is a necessity. In a landscape where industry competitors are likely to be increasing spend on digital, the way your brand (and content) is presented to prospects is paramount. As stated earlier, there is sometimes a balance between design and usability, but do not underestimate the impact a poorly designed website can have on your bounce rate and general performance of the website.

There are, of course, many more factors that could be discussed, assessed and improved on that would have a positive impact on your bounce rate. The truth of the matter is that addressing your user experience as a whole should positively impact your bounce rate(s). As digital marketers we can get trapped in a results-driven circle, but simply focusing on providing the very best for the user will deliver the results we are looking for.

Simon Ensor is the Managing Director of Yellowball, a London-based digital marketing agency, and a specialist in SEO and social media.

Want to stay on top of the latest

search trends?

Get top insights and news from our search experts.

Related reading

There are many instances where a website might be required to ch

an
ge
it
s
do
ma
in
na
me
.
Fo
r
ex
am
pl
e,
yo
ur
we
bs
it
e
mi
gh
t
be
pe
na
li
ze
d
he
av
il
y
by
Go

og
le
,
an
d
yo
u
wa
nt
a
ne
w
do
ma
in
,
or
yo
u
mi
gh
t
wa
nt
to
re
br
an
d
yo
ur
bu
si
ne
ss
. In

th
is
ar
ti
cl
e,
we
wi
ll
fo
cu
s
on
th
e
to
ol
s
an
d
te
ch
ni
qu
es
th
at
wi
ll
al
lo
w
yo
u
to
mi
gr

at
e
Wo
rd
Pr
es
s
we
bs
it
e
do
ma
in
na
me
wi
th
mi
ni
ma
l
im
pa
ct
on
SE
O.

We
'v
e
se
t
ou
t
to

ta
ck
le
th
e
am
bi
ti
ou
s
ta
sk
of
ex
pl
ai
ni
ng
ea
ch
se
gm
en
t
of
Go
og
le
An
al
yt
ic
s
an
d
th
e

st
an
da
rd
re
po
rt
s
th
ey
co
nt
ai
n.
In
th
is
in
st
al
me
nt
,
we
'r
e
go
in
g
to
lo
ok
at
Au
di
en
ce

Re
po
rt
s:
wh
at
yo
u
ca
n
le
ar
n
fr
om
th
em
,
an
d
ho
w
yo
u
ca
n
ge
t
th
e
mo
st
ou
t
of
th
e

data that they offer.

Event tracking is one of the most useful features in Google Analytics.

al
yt
ic
s.
Wi
th
ju
st
a
li
tt
le
bi
t
of
ex
tr
a
co
de
,
yo
u
ca
n
ca
pt
ur
e
al
l
ki
nd
s
of
in
fo

rm
at
io
n
ab
ou
t
ho
w
pe
op
le
be
ha
ve
on
yo
ur
si
te
.
Ev
en
t
tr
ac
ki
ng
le
ts
yo
u
mo
ni
to
r
ju

st
ab
ou
t
an
y
ac
ti
on
on
yo
ur
si
te
th
at
do
es
n'
t
tr
ig
ge
r
a
ne
w
pa
ge
to
lo
ad
,
gi
vi
ng
in

va
lu
ab
le
da
ta
fo
r
im
pr
ov
in
g
yo
ur
si
te
.

If
yo
u
lo
ve
da
ta
(a
nd
wh
at
ma
rk
et
in
g
ex
pe

rt
do
es
n'
t?
) ,
th
en
le
ar
ni
ng
Go
og
le
Ta
g
Ma
na
ge
r
sh
ou
ld
be
hi
gh
on
yo
ur
pr
io
ri
ty
li
st
th

is
ye
ar
.
Bu
t
ge
tt
in
g
st
ar
te
d
wi
th
GT
M
is
n'
t
al
wa
ys
an
in
tu
it
iv
e
pr
oc
es
s.
He
re
ar

e
se
ve
n
co
ur
se
s
th
at
ca
n
he
lp
yo
u
ge
t
th
e
ha
ng
of
it
,
an
d
ta
ke
ch
ar
ge
of
yo
ur
da
ta

https://searchenginewatch.com/2018/05/04/how-to-reduce-your-sites-bounce-rate/