

Avoiding CRO nightmares

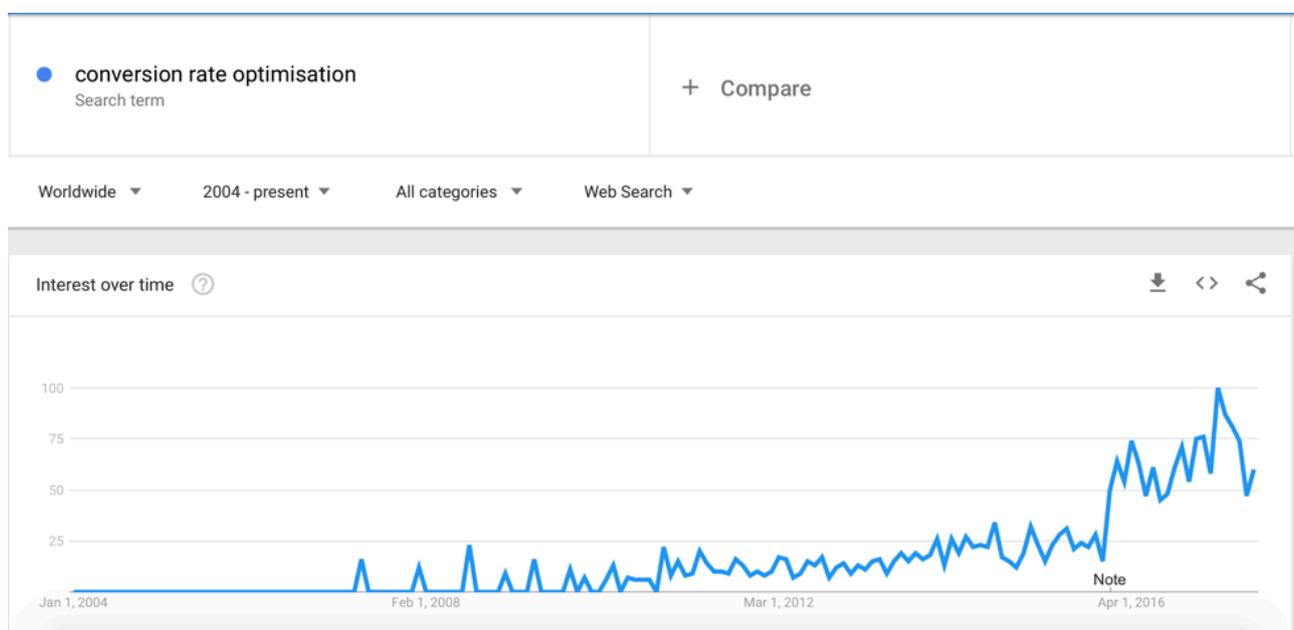


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What you'll get from this guide

Conversion rate optimisation. 10 years ago, it was a term used by few and understood by even fewer. But over the last decade CRO has soared in popularity and become a staple for the modern marketer.



CRO's increased popularity is most definitely positive. However, as with any meteoric rise to fame, there are a number of drawbacks that marketers need to be aware of.

Every week, hundreds of 'experts' publish content examining 'advanced' CRO tactics like CTA colour changes and USP definition tactics that promise to increase your conversions.

These tips, whilst sometimes effective, are not always the silver bullet you're looking for.

Effective CRO is – and always will be – centred on providing a more cogent, logical and overall

pleasant customer onsite journey. In fact, we'd argue that CRO is actually evolving to [CJO \(Customer Journey Optimisation\)](#).

The problem is that many traditional CRO tactics – in pursuit of a line of best fit and a quick win – can undermine that customer journey. In a worst-case scenario, [they can do more harm than good](#).

In this guide, we're going to examine the often-lauded tactics that when implemented incorrectly, can become nightmares. Don't be scared – this is as much about conversion optimisation best practice as it is about horror stories – so be brave and read on...

Arming yourself against CRO nightmares

Before we dive into the nightmares, let's talk prevention.

Protecting yourself from a CRO horror doesn't involve holy water or wooden stakes (or even avoiding cheese before bedtime). Most CRO nightmares can be easily prevented by taking two simple pre-emptive actions.

1 – A clear experience-first strategy

When it comes to CRO, it's important to look beyond the immediate. This is why we believe that CRO 'as we know it' is coming to the end of its reign, to be replaced by [CJO](#).

Why? When you look at your conversion rate, it's tempting to zoom in on small elements of your site very quickly, hoping that a button-change will mean more clicks. This is a little reductive, putting tweaks and twists in place that don't necessarily help your customer's experience.

The real safeguard against turning a CRO dream into a CRO nightmare is to have a watertight strategy that puts your customer – and their journey – front and centre. Hence 'customer journey optimisation'.

Starting with a smart segmentation strategy and then mapping the journeys of those variant segments, evaluating those journeys both as a whole and touchpoint-by-touchpoint will pull you away from simple 'lines of best fit' to effective, targeted CRO.

2 – A clear hypothesis

CRO is not based on gut feelings or sticking a pin in your sitemap. It's a data-driven process, taking your existing engagement data and formulating a repeatable process that allows for incremental gains and uplifts.

It begins with analysing your current engagement to identify potential test ideas. This data can either be gained through analytics and engagement data (such as funnel progression analysis), heatmaps or direct customer surveys and questions.

Once a potential test idea has been proposed, the next step is to draw up a hypothesis. Without this, you're unable to properly track success and iterate on it. It doesn't have to be complicated, but it needs to include the below three elements:

1. What you're going to do
2. What you believe it will achieve
3. How you're going to track it

Let's look at an example. Imagine you're experiencing a high bounce rate and low sales for first-time users; after surveying them on-site, you discover they're shopping around for the best deal.

A quick brainstorm later and you decide that you need to incentivise them to stay on the site and continue their journey with you. **You devise the following hypothesis:**

- By offering a limited-time 10% money-off incentive to first-time customers we should elicit immediate action leading to an increase in revenue.
- We will know this by the number of people who use the code "FirstTime10" and overall revenue numbers.

Hypotheses are the backbone of any test. They keep your testing on track and help highlight which actions bring the best results and are worth repeating.

For the best results, you have to link it to your overall strategy: one without the other is an incomplete solution and leaves you underprepared and ill-equipped for continual gains.

All that said, let's now look at some specific CRO nightmares that derail campaigns through lacking these two necessary elements.

CRO nightmare #1: Calling A/B tests too soon

This is a mistake far too many businesses make.

They either call tests successful as soon as they see an uplift, or cancel it immediately if conversions take a dip. It's shortsighted and could lead you into making the wrong decision.

When you're running A/B or multivariate tests you have to follow the below two rules:

1 – Run your tests until they hit at least 95% statistical significance.

95% statistical significance means your test has only a 5% chance of being inaccurate. Anything below 95% isn't enough to make a confident decision.

You can't optimise for the masses based on the preferences of only a few. You have to ensure that your data – and the actions you derive from it – are based on the actions of the majority of users.

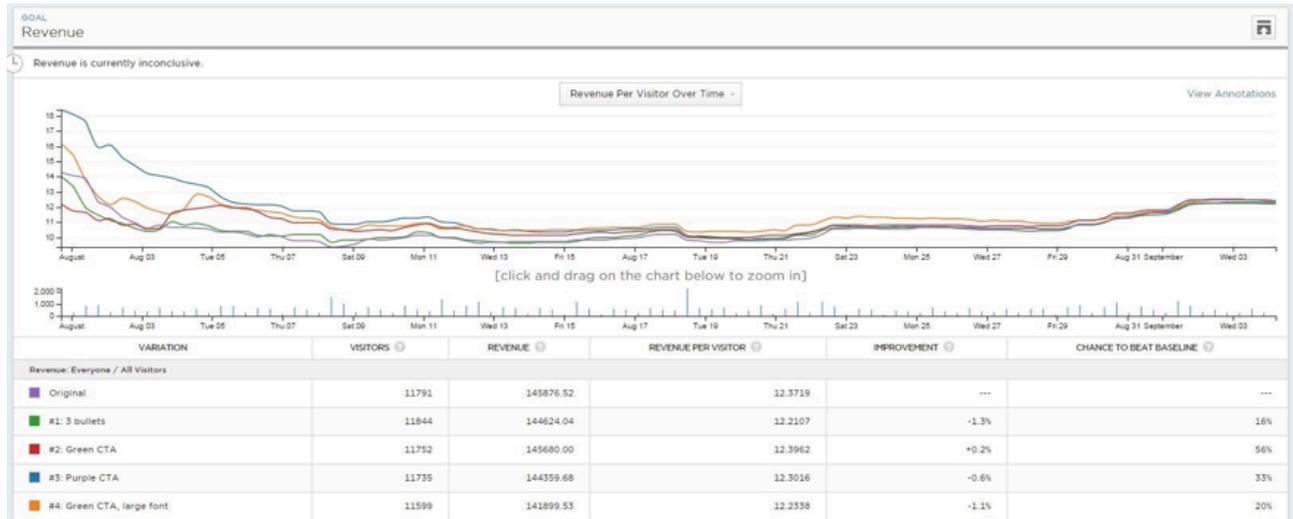
2 – Let tests run for a full sales cycle

The second element to accurate results is the test duration. You may have a huge amount of traffic, and therefore hit statistical significance of 95%+ in a couple of days. However, that doesn't mean you should be declaring a winner so soon.

Seasonal differences, days of the week and even times of day can have an impact on the number of sales you make. Variation B may have proved the more profitable test, but if it was down to a

seasonal change in purchasing behaviour rather than the test itself, you might be making a mistake.

Take a look at this study from [Peep Laja of ConversionXL](#). In the graph below you'll see the blue variant is winning for the first 14 days. However, from day 14 through 30 the results stabilised, leading to no overall winner.



To achieve the conversion dream: You want to be running tests for an entire sales cycle to really understand which variant is best. That's not always possible, so as a baseline you should be aiming for a full week's worth of data as the bare minimum.

Achieving 95% statistical significance and running longer tests gives more accurate data for better optimisation.

CRO nightmare #2: Not interrogating your data

“We’ve seen an X% increase in metric Y and a X% reduction in our budget spend.”

Statements like this sound great in meetings, helping justify your overall approach and improving motivation.

But they’re just statements of results.

Your test data is far more detailed and useful than an overall uplift or reduction. Data gives insight and helps you to understand your customer and their journeys. Delve into it to learn their habits, actions and intent when visiting your site.

Let’s take a look at data from one of our example reports. Have a look at this mobile campaign:

Running since 01 Aug 2017		Users	Sales	Conversion	Revenue	Revenue uplift	Sales uplift	Confidence
Overall	50% overlay	3,197	84	3%	\$5,115.82	+\$989.74	+10.51	60%
	50% no overlay	3,393	78	2%	\$4,379.04			
Desktop	50% overlay	2,355	66	2%	\$4,410.04	+\$927.72	+4.88	34%
	50% no overlay	2,543	66	2%	\$3,760.31			
Tablet	50% overlay	115	5	4%	\$160.90	+\$106.76	+4.02	90%
	50% no overlay	117	1	0%	\$55.08			
Mobile	50% overlay	727	13	1%	\$544.88	-\$14.16	+2.09	33%
	50% no overlay	733	11	1%	\$563.65			

The test with no overlay achieves fewer sales, but has a marginally higher order value. If those statistics stayed true until it hit 95% significance then an obvious conclusion would be that the overlay is damaging ROI, which could lead you to the shortsighted decision of removing all overlays.

However, a smarter approach would be to **examine the entire customer journey** to understand **why** overlays were causing a CR drop on this device (while presumably continuing to perform well on others). Without further data, a couple of reasons could be:

- **Overlays being too intrusive on mobile and needing a redesign**
- **Too many notifications from previous journey steps causing user frustration**
- **Overlay messaging not matched with the page or stage of the customer journey**
- **Pages linked from the overlay not well-optimised for mobile**

To achieve the conversion dream: Analyse the steps both preceding and following the test to better understand why things might not be working and how to better optimise for your users.

Data isn't just a read-out of your successes and failures. It's an indication on how to better serve your audience by understanding their specific needs and gain more conversions by optimising their experience.

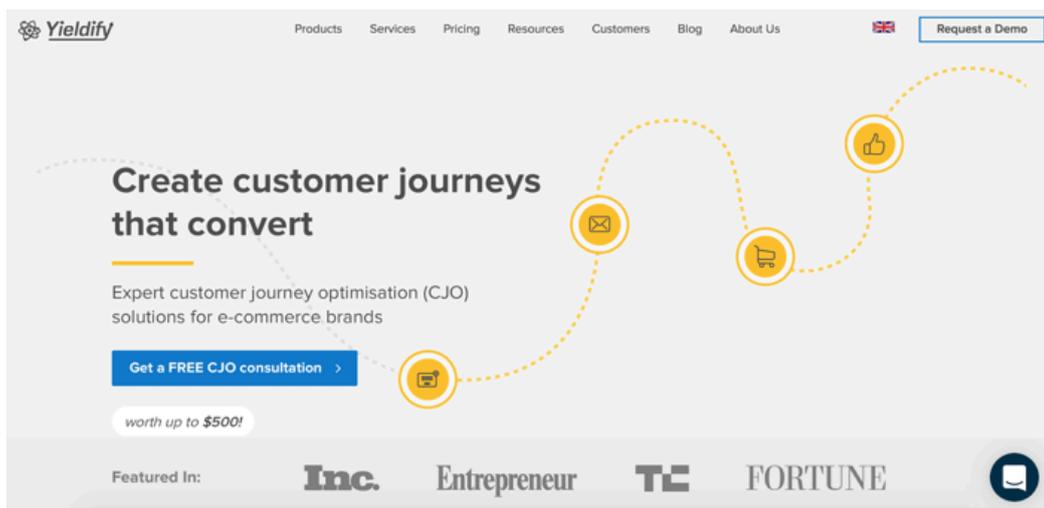
CRO nightmare #3: Compromising your UX and brand

With modern attention spans shorter than ever, the immediate impression your brand makes is important.

Unfortunately, too many brands are willing to sacrifice the brand experience in order to try to bring about a sale. Lashings of copy, misuse of ‘[dark patterns](#)’ and garish CTAs might help get the click, but they won’t help you create a UX that fosters loyalty and emotion.

In other words, the minute someone starts to undercut your prices or offer faster delivery, you’ll quickly find that that’s the only thing that kept customers running the gauntlet of your site.

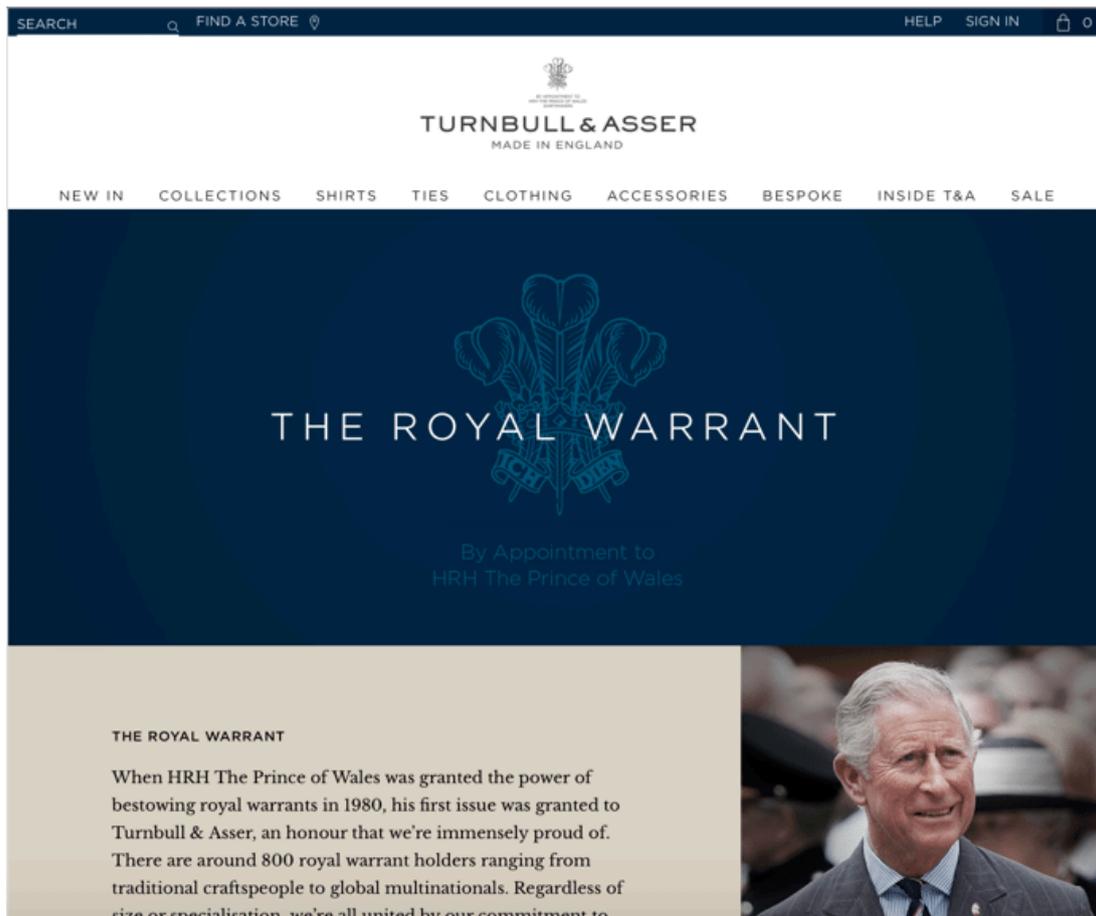
The visual aspect of your business should align with your overall brand messaging and tone. Take our site as an example:



The USP of CJO – taking CRO a step further and looking at the entire customer journey – is clear and reinforced in the image. The cohesive brand design, copy and UX is well-optimised and matches the expectations of a customer who plans to visit the site. Efforts have to be made to make identifying the next step easy whilst including relevant social proof encouraging customers to not miss out on a consultation.

The importance of design can be applied across verticals.

[Turnbull & Asser](#), the UK-based shirtmaker, is built around the image of the well-dressed British gentleman. On entry to the site, you're greeted with the receipt of a Royal Warrant from Prince of Wales. This distinguished example of [social proof](#) works to translate the luxury of the brick-and-mortar store into the design of the website, enriching the customer experience.



To achieve the conversion dream: Safeguard your UX. The customer's experience of your site should match the expectations that have been set by the engagement that enticed them to visit the site. It's the first step in establishing the right image of your brand and sets the user's expectation for the rest of their customer journey.



CRO nightmare #4: Missing the micro-conversion

A lot of CRO advice focuses on the macro, highlighting the importance of revenue increases, budget decreases, new users, and other end goals.

Experts often fail to focus on the journey in its entirety and how the micro-conversion, when working alongside a clear strategy and hypothesis, can lead to the macro-conversion you're after.

For example, an airline that overlooks smaller touch-points that lead to an overall enjoyable experience will lose customers. Providing in-flight entertainment, food, beverages and even sleep socks may not impact the customer getting to their final destination, but will improve the journey and hopefully lead to repeat bookings. Each of these small touches is similar to the micro-conversion.

The end goal is the same but it's the journey that customers remember. It's important to see how the micro-conversion aids your goal of the macro-conversion, as each positive touchpoint builds upon the previous, eventually leading a visitor to becoming a customer.

Take time to understand what stage of awareness the users on a given page are at, and how to engage with them so they progress to the next stage of the funnel. Depending on the stage of the customer journey it may be better to aim for the micro-conversion, as it reflects the shoppers' awareness and doesn't upset their current onsite experience.

What Kind of Copy Should We Write?

Eugene Schwartz's "Five Levels of Awareness"



Source: *Great Leads* by Michael Masterson and John Forde

To achieve the conversion dream: Shoppers favour brands who make the purchase journey easy, enjoyable, and logical. The only way to do that is to optimise each stage of the customer journey, which may mean stopping yourself from constantly pushing the end goal of a macro-conversion for every customer journey.

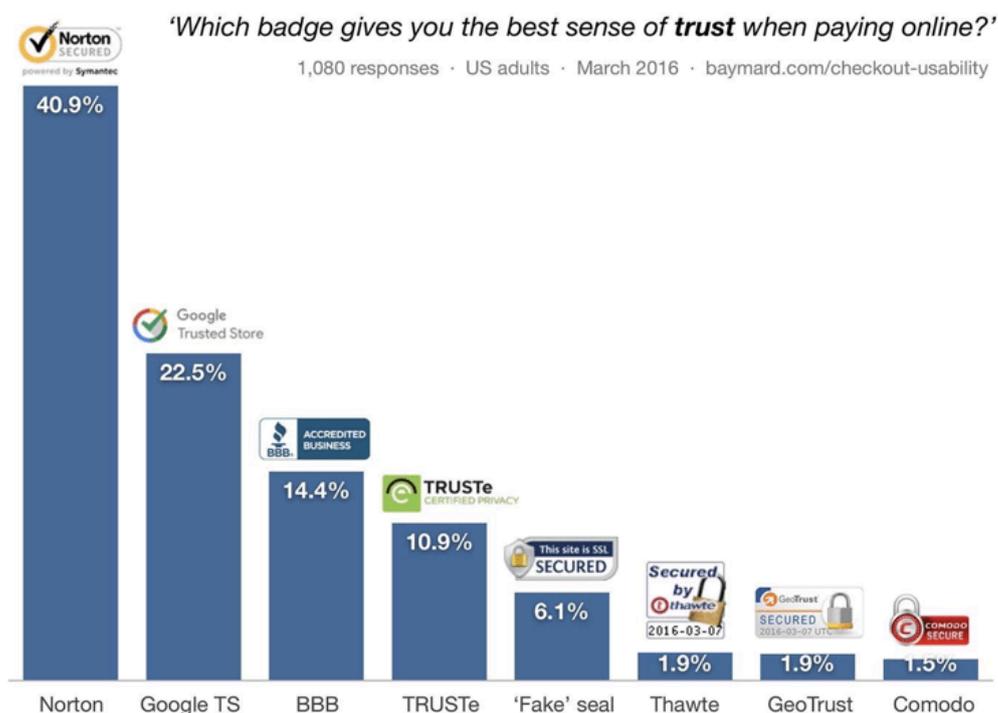
CRO nightmare #5: Failing to build trust

Customers are more likely to trust a referral from a peer than be influenced by marketing. [75% of shoppers, in fact.](#)

An [Amazon and Pymnts](#) study discovered trust was the number one determining factor in user purchase decisions. [One third of shoppers will stop buying](#) from a brand they're loyal to if their trust in that brand falters.

As CRO has developed, so has the important of putting trust at the forefront of the customer experience. The use of [social proof](#) tools like [TrustPilot](#) are now viewed as best practice for building trust with customers.

Third party trust seals from authoritative brands are another staple. These reassure customers that their personal and payment information will be secured by a vetted third party service.



Securing trust means continuing to engage with your customers, even after they've purchased. Emails checking if everything arrived on time, questions to see how you could improve the service, notifications of developments – these are all good methods to build more trust.

To achieve the conversion dream: Ensure your customer feels reassured and share positive feedback and trust seals on your site. Remember that just like the customer journey, trust doesn't stop when a purchase has been made; that first purchase is the beginning of a longer, more in-depth relationship with a user and your follow-on engagement should reflect this.

CRO nightmare #6: Focusing on one device

Modern purchase journeys are complex and convoluted.

Users jump from one device to the next mid-journey – they might research on mobile but purchase on a desktop – making it incredibly difficult to optimise effectively.

The mistakes brands make in combatting these complex journeys are twofold:

The first is optimising for a single device. You may have an incredible desktop experience, but find that buttons aren't showing or that text is cropped peculiarly on mobile. You have to optimise for each device individually. If one out of the three main device types has a poor UX, it's going to ruin the validity of your tests and drastically lower conversions.

The second big issue is not understanding the customer journey across devices. Often, users have to repeat the same steps on different devices because their journey isn't being properly tracked.

To achieve the conversion dream: The customer journey has become more complex. You need to optimise for each device and understand the varying stages of your customer's journey and how they are interacting with their devices to ensure you achieve repeat conversions.

Currently stuck in a nightmare? Request your free [CJO](#) consultation today.

Book a Demo

About Yieldify

Yieldify makes it easy for e-commerce businesses to deliver customer journeys that convert, through a combination of smart and simple multichannel technology and expert strategy.

Trusted by over 500 brands on more than 1,000 websites globally, Yieldify helps some of the world's innovative companies drive incremental revenue, including Marks and Spencer, French Connection, Steiner Sports, Omni Hotels and Anthropologie.

Some of our clients

GOLDSMITHS
SINCE 1778

The Fragrance Shop

M&S

EST. 1884

Kiehl's

SINCE 1851

FRENCH CONNECTION

WATCHSHOP