



AWA

8 Questions You Must Ask to Find, Hire and Get Great Results From CRO Professionals

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Introduction

Choosing a Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO) agency is one of the most important decisions you can make. Getting the right team is the difference between a healthy sales chart shooting up and an ailing sales chart with a dismal downward curve.

Research from the Standish Group's Chaos Report indicates that 91 percent of agency projects fail to deliver the value they promise, and only one third of projects are successful at all.

- So how do you find the agency that will deliver and make you look good?
- How do you guarantee a healthy ROI from the budget you plan to invest?

We're about to tell you.

Here's a list of the most important questions every e-commerce manager should ask before engaging a CRO agency.

Key takeaway

Ask these straightforward questions, and understand the principles behind them, and you'll find that your projects are more enjoyable and infinitely more fruitful.

These are all questions that we're happy to answer honestly and openly, so if you're looking for a CRO agency, please give us a call.



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Question 1: Who are the agency's clients and what results have they got for them?

Take a look at the agency's website. A good CRO agency has a roster of clients for which they've achieved solid results. CRO is not like brand advertising where it's all about pretty pictures. It's about winning sales.

Ask them to take you through some success stories and show you exactly how they achieved those sales uplifts for their clients.

Ask them what went wrong too – or how they would do it even better next time. CRO is all about testing and continual improvements, so you would expect some failures along the way. What's important is the lessons learned from those failures.

Ask for the phone numbers of one or two of their clients, ring them up and find out what they think. (Phoning is always best for this, as people are likely to be more frank.)

Key takeaway

Good, competent CRO agencies want to show you what they can do, so don't be afraid to ask.

Question 2: How does the agency decide what changes to split test?

There are two approaches CRO agencies generally take.

The first is the ‘throw enough mud at the wall and some will stick’ approach.

You’ll be able to tell these guys because they rely heavily on analytics data in isolation, and tend to recommend so-called ‘best practice’ changes – in other words a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. It might work sometimes, but it won’t deliver the amazing ROI you’re looking for.

The other approach is to use qualitative and quantitative data to thoroughly understand the issues, and then systematically prioritise them. In all likelihood there will be hundreds of things you could do to improve your website. The real skill is in deciding which ones are worth focusing on.

It’s a good sign if your agency talks about analytics as only part of the picture together with qualitative data gathering to find out why those visitors are dropping out.

You can tell if your agency relies too heavily on quantitative data because they’ll gloss over powerful deep-diving techniques and tools like these:

Pop-under exit survey

A kind of exit survey that determines visitor intent and the task completion rate of your website.

These surveys are great for measuring the effectiveness of the website for various segments of traffic and identifying common usability problems.

Qualaroo or any other adhoc onsite survey

Great for targeting surveys to pages you've already identified as holding an opportunity. For example, you discover there's a huge drop-off from your basket page. Target a Qualaroo exit survey to the basket that says something like this...

'Hi, quick question before you go. If you didn't complete your order, what stopped you? Thanks!'

For a site with good traffic levels, almost immediately the answers will show you what the problem is that you need to fix.

Crazy Egg or ClickTale

Incredibly useful for seeing what users are clicking on a page (these are probably the most useful / persuasive page elements), and what users are not clicking (things that could be eliminated to reduce clutter, or repositioned).

Sending out surveys to past customers

Nobody is more qualified to tell you what to improve about your business than your customers. They truly hold the keys to the kingdom.

Ask them why they 'nearly didn't become your customer' and you'll find out exactly what you need to change.

For every customer that took a risk and bought despite having an unanswered objection, there will be 10 that went elsewhere because they weren't open to taking a risk.

Recruiting usability testers from your website

Most conversion agencies will recommend user testing, but do they recommend recruiting the panel from your own web visitors?

This marks the difference between a true professional and the also-rans. Tools like Ethnio allow you to invite actual web visitors (and prospects) to walk with you through your website and tell you all the things that would stop them from making a purchase.

The quality of the feedback is much more profitable. The profit-making power of this feedback is greater because they are your actual visitors – versus the generic pool of people that sign up to UserTesting.com out of curiosity and a need for extra pocket money.

Read live chat transcripts, and talk to your customer service & sales staff

If any of your staff have actual verbal / written contact with your customers, get talking to them.

Find out the most common reasons people give for not buying. And find out how they reply.

Your best salesmen will almost certainly have developed effective counter-objections that could be adapted for the website.

Key takeaway

Make sure your agency has a customer centric methodology for generating test ideas.

Question 3: Can the agency set up and validate a conversion funnel?

Conversion funnels allow you to identify, and focus on, the key drop-off points in your sales funnel.

If you don't already have a funnel set up (and validated) in your analytics tool, does the agency have the necessary analytics expertise to:

- 1 Set it up for you, and
- 2 Confirm the data it generates is rock solid

Successful conversion agencies usually start by mapping out your sales funnel from start to finish. (Starting at your initial ad impression in Google, right through to your thank you page.)

If they miss this fundamental step and rush straight in with recommendations, there's a good chance they'll focus on the wrong part of your sales funnel. That means missed opportunities, lost revenue and a diminished chance of hitting your targets.

This is such an important element of the whole conversion process that if the agency you're talking to doesn't do this, then look for one that does.

Key takeaway

It's no good shooting at a target if your barrel isn't straight. Your agency should have the expertise to set up and validate a conversion funnel in your analytics application to identify the key drop-off points.

Question 4: Can the agency handle the project without being a drain on your own resources?

Many CRO projects don't progress as smoothly as they should because the client doesn't have the time and resource in place to implement the changes the agency recommends.

This is particularly true if your internal development resources are already overstretched.

Alternatively if you use an external website development agency, they need to be aware that the project is imminent, so that they can respond to requests speedily and prioritise development.

Alerting your web development agency in advance so that they are on standby helps prevent bottlenecks in testing, and avoid downtime on the project that is filled with more split tests, and more revenue gains.

However, you may not need to involve your in-house team or your external web development agency at all. Full service CRO agencies can deliver web page designs and code themselves, or carry out split tests using a platform that serves up the new pages without any development or coding.

Key takeaway

Make sure your website development team are on board and have capacity for the project, or that your agency can deliver the work required.

Question 5: Can the agency help to upskill your own in-house team?

If the agency you're considering makes much of their experience and magic conversion guru-ness, but doesn't have a scientific, repeatable process to follow, it's impossible for them to teach it to anyone in-house.

That means that the wins stop as soon as the agency stops, and the value of the project is limited to the size of the gains they were personally responsible for.

On the other hand, if the firm you work with is executing a teachable methodology, you stand to make more money up front and more money in the long term.

- You make more money up front because methodologies are more reliable at generating winning test ideas than gurus working from best practice and experience, and...
- You make more money in the long term because your team will be able to learn the methodology, and take up the baton at the end of the project.

This might sound obvious, but it makes the difference between an agency project that's worth £10 million to your business, and one that's worth £100 million plus.

Key takeaway

Maximise the value you get from the project by ensuring the agency is working to a process that's teachable and transferrable.

Question 6: Can the agency show you how to optimise your optimisation?

There's a huge amount of revenue on the table for any business that optimises their optimisation programme.

Put simply, this is about focusing on three key metrics that have considerable leverage when it comes to the revenues you generate through CRO.

A company that's just 30% better than average in these 3 areas can make more than twice as much through their CRO activities.

Those key metrics are:

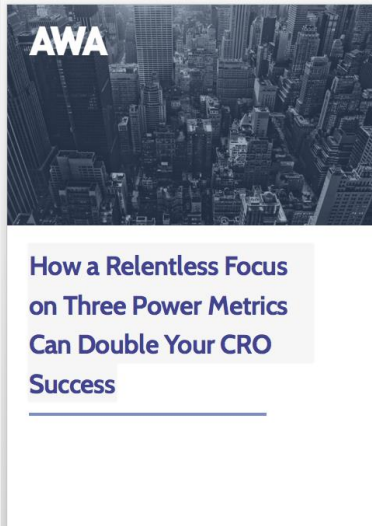
- 1 Win rate (w) - the ratio of winning tests to losing tests
- 2 Test frequency (f) - the number of tests you run in a year
- 3 Average win value (v) - how much money you get when you win

Each of these metrics is powerful even when taken in isolation. But their true explosive power is released when they work together.

Win rate (w) x Test frequency (f) x Average win value (v) = Annual revenue through CRO.

A marginal increase in each of the three areas will quickly double the profitability of your conversion programme.

Download the free guide



We go in to depth on this topic in another paper called 'How a Relentless Focus on Three Power Metrics Can Double `Your CRO Success`'.

[Download this ebook](#)

As you can imagine, Amazon, John Lewis, and the best conversion agencies in the world optimise to those key metrics. You should too. Get your agency to show you how.

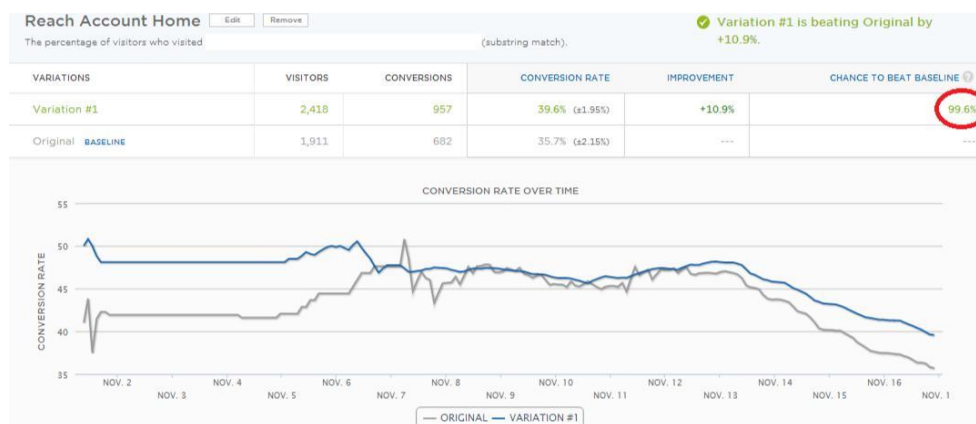
Key takeaway

Your agency should equip you to optimise the number and quality of tests you run. If they do, you'll generate more new money than you ever thought possible.

Question 7: How does the agency know for sure that your tests are statistically valid?

The whole point of split testing is knowing for sure the changes you implement on a website are positive for the business.

Statistical significance is the measure of whether the results you see in a split test mean anything. The threshold you need to cross before you uncork the champagne is 95%. Below this, the results could just be down to random chance.



In this example, the test has reached 99.6% significance

Not waiting for a test to reach statistical significance before you implement a change for all traffic is as bad as not testing at all, because you could make a change that damages the business long term.

However, this does depend on having a sufficiently large volume of traffic. The more traffic you have, and the bolder the test, the quicker you're likely

to reach statistical significance. Low traffic = long waits = expensive agencies twiddling their thumbs while the meter ticks.

If you have low traffic and you need to engage outside help, make sure you get a thorough explanation of how they intend to qualify their recommendations despite your traffic situation. Alternatively, make sure you build time in to your contract so you're not paying for dead time while you're waiting for tests to reach significance.

Use a traffic calculator to determine how long it will take a split test on your website to reach statistical significance.

Key takeaway

Make sure your agency adheres to strict standards of statistical significance. If you have low traffic levels on key conversion pages, make sure that waiting time for statistical significance is built in to the contract.

Question 8: Does the agency guarantee results?

If the agency you're considering has answered yes to all of the above questions, it's more than likely you're on to a good one.

The only thing left is to test their mettle and see if they'll back their claims with a guarantee.

Look for at least a 10% guaranteed uplift, preferably 20%.

With a robust methodology applied to a website with decent traffic and a development team or agency with the ability to get stuff done, this should be easily achievable.

If they won't, see if you can find out why not, and consider looking for an agency that does.

Key takeaway

Look for an agency with a robust methodology AND a guarantee (not just a guarantee, and not just a methodology).

About the author



World leading optimization expert and boardroom advisor, Dan delivers stirring talks on using CRO to build and grow any business, with first hand success stories from blue-chip companies from around the globe.

Drawing on his experience as CEO of the global website optimization agency AWA digital, Dan's engaging performances combine up-to-date knowledge and wisdom, with valuable insights and actionable takeaways that will have your delegates nodding and note making.

Dan is also co-author of the Amazon best seller 'E-Commerce Website Optimization: Why 95% of your website visitors don't buy – and what you can do about it', published by Kogan Page. Dan holds a MBA from Bath University and was made of Fellow of the Institute of Direct Marketing in 2004.

If you need any further help or advice, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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Next steps

Are you serious about implementing website improvements that deliver massive sales increases to the bottom line?

At AWA we're here to help companies like yours master all aspects of web optimisation. That's why we're offering a free consultation with one of our Lead Optimisers – to show you how to get up to speed with CRO.

Your free, no-obligation consultation is tailored to your business, to give you some of the most useful and practical advice you'll find anywhere. Delivered at a time to suit you, there's no limit on the number of people who can attend, so your whole team can benefit.

Lasting 30 minutes, you'll learn

- Exactly how to get an effective CRO programme running in your business (OR how to optimise your efforts, if you already have an in-house CRO programme)
- The top conversion mistakes most multichannel businesses make, and how to avoid them
- 5 personalised recommendations to implement now for fast results

Book your free no-obligation 30 minute CRO consultation now. Just follow the link on the next page and fill out the form so we can get it all set up for you.

Free no-obligation 30 minute CRO consultation

Note: this is not a sales presentation. We aim to give you the best advice we can in 30 minutes to help you do CRO yourself.

[Get a free consultation](#)



AWA digital is one of the UK's leading conversion rate optimisation consultancies, helping multi-channel and online retailers increase sales, repeat business and visitor satisfaction.

Our experienced team of web analysts and ecommerce specialists use a range of tools – from in-depth website data analysis to usability testing – to show you how you can quickly boost conversion rates, repeat business and visitor satisfaction. Our pinpoint analysis of your online campaigns will show exactly what's working, what's not and what you need to change to get results that you are bound to make you smile.

We offer our services to both multi-channel and ecommerce retailers, as well as agencies who wish to extend their range of services to include conversion rate optimisation.

Our direct clients include Dunelm, Richer Sounds, Barbour, Interflora, Cotton Traders, Ironmongery Direct, Dune, Bettys and Taylors of Harrogate as well as a number of large and small B2B businesses.

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