



3 Proven Strategies to Drive Ecommerce Growth

Improve your Speed, Convenience and Conversion
for Success in 2015 and Beyond

Staying Competitive in the Ecommerce Boom

Online shopping has transformed the way consumers research, compare and purchase everything from crackers to computers and flat-screen TVs. As online transactions hit their 20-year milestone, Bigcommerce predicts worldwide B2C ecommerce revenues will reach \$2 trillion in 2015.

But with the added volume and increasingly savvy buyers comes increased competition — achieving online success isn't as easy today as in years past. To continuously grow sales, retailers need to constantly optimize their online stores. Many merchants have invested millions of dollars in website redesign, but even after multi-platform efforts to revamp and revitalize their online stores, they still struggle to stay at the front of the pack.

What can online businesses do to help ensure they stay competitive in 2015?

Following are three strategies that will increase your site performance, grow your audience and ultimately drive results to your bottom line.

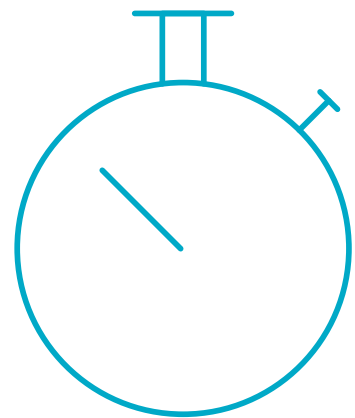
Prioritize Platform Speed

Despite continued innovation, online retail sites have become heavier and slower since 2012. According to [a study from Radware Ltd.](#), the median ecommerce page takes 10 seconds to load, compared with 6.8 seconds in 2012 — a 47% slowdown.

This increasingly sluggish performance comes at a time in which consumer patience is waning. In recent [surveys by Akamai and Gomez.com](#), nearly half of web users expect a site to load in two seconds or less, and they tend to abandon a site that isn't loaded within three seconds. And 79% of shoppers who have trouble with a site's performance say they won't return again.

Even when users choose to wait, delays still translate into losses in conversion, page views and satisfaction. [The Aberdeen Group reports](#) that, on average, a 1-second delay in page load time causes a 7% loss in conversion, 11% fewer page views and a 16% decrease in customer satisfaction. Viewed in financial terms, a site earning \$100,000 a day could lose \$2.5M in sales per year.

With its importance to both user experience and the bottom line, improving site performance is an excellent opportunity to drive meaningful change in your business. Hosting has the single greatest impact on speed, and a high-performing platform should have less than a 500MS response time. For many merchants, that requires using a SaaS-based ecommerce solution that handles performance, security and availability for them.



There are, however, additional opportunities to introduce smaller improvements like image optimization. Improving product photos can help any site, no matter how fast, trim a few seconds of load time:



Right Size from the Start: Don't rely on an ecommerce platform's code to resize images. Just because a user sees a smaller version of an image doesn't mean it's taking up any less room on the server — the browser still has to load the entire file.



Make Sure It's Your Type: Once images are sized to the appropriate dimensions, ensure that they're the right file type. By using the "Save for Web" option in many editing programs, including free web-based tools, merchants can further reduce the size of files.



Put the Pieces Together: Consider combining multiple images into one large image, reducing requests from the browser to the server and saving valuable load time.

Embrace the Growing Mobile Audience

Improving site performance across the board remains a core objective for many merchants, but is especially important in the evolving world of mobile commerce. Page load speeds can have a significant impact on mobile user experience and conversion. Google guidelines [suggest mobile page load times of one second or less](#) to keep users engaged.

In 2012, ComScore forecasted that [mobile website traffic would exceed desktop in 2014](#), which has now come to pass. New [data from IBM](#) puts Black Friday mobile traffic at nearly 50% of all online traffic, a 25% increase over 2013.

The surge in mobile traffic may not surprise many retailers. According to Shop.org's [2014 Pre-Holiday Retailer and Consumer Study](#), shoppers use multiple devices in the buying journey, specifically using smartphones and tablets to:

1. Research products (42% smartphone, 53% tablet)
2. Look up store information (one-third of those surveyed)

But mobile users extend beyond the top of the funnel — they're also converting at a growing rate. IBM also reports that Black Friday mobile sales accounted for



27.9% of total online sales — up 28.2% versus last year and more than four times December 2011 levels.

With mobile traffic playing an increasingly vital role in driving sales for ecommerce stores, merchants who ignore the mobile experience do so at their own risk. To capture this growing audience of qualified buyers, merchants should turn to a familiar marketing tool: SEO. Creating and executing a successful mobile SEO strategy in 2015 can provide organizations with a competitive advantage. A recent [Mobile Path to Purchase Study](#) performed by Nielsen on behalf of Google found that 74% of mobile users utilize a search engine during their purchase process, with 83% intending to make a purchase within a day.

To get started optimizing your mobile experience:



Implement a Responsive Design: Responsive site designs such as those offered by Bigcommerce ensure that content displays correctly regardless of the size of the customer's screen. It's ideal for SEO because all of the link authority for a page of content flows to a single URL rather than splitting authority between a mobile and desktop version. Poor mobile optimization can also lead to a spike in bounce rates, which negatively impacts SEO results.



Optimize Your Redirects: Responsive design also protects merchant sites from faulty redirects. For example, a user clicking through to read details about a promotion from the mobile homepage will be frustrated if they are redirected to terms and conditions formatted for a desktop site — small print, buttons not easily clicked, etc. Google has taken a strong stand here, [announcing](#) demotions for sites not configured for the mobile user.

Commit to Improving Conversion

Having a stable, high-performance site and growing traffic mean very little if merchants are unable to turn digital window shoppers into buyers.

But regardless of its importance, conversion optimization remains a neglected opportunity for many retailers. Average US conversion rates have improved **a meager 0.21% in the last two years**, despite dramatic advances in technology. Improving conversion in a consumer landscape where shoppers are easily distracted, convenience-oriented, increasingly sophisticated in comparison shopping and inundated with options poses multiple challenges.

To optimize conversion:



Leverage Great Copy: Prioritize product descriptions and give buyers enough information to convince themselves this is the right product for them. Clarity trumps persuasion.



Create Urgency: Introduce limited-time offers like “Free Shipping for the Next 3 Days” on product pages or use **automated abandoned cart tools** to send compelling offers to bring shoppers back.



Deliver Relevant Results — Fast: The impact of an optimized internal site search shouldn't be underestimated. According to eConsultancy, **up to 30% of visitors to ecommerce sites will use internal site search**, with some converting at up to 5-6x revenue and making up as much as 13.8% of a retailer's total revenue. As mentioned above, performance is important across all areas

of an ecommerce store, including on-site search. Bigcommerce recently introduced [Elasticsearch](#), a highly scalable search service that dramatically improves the quality of results by allowing for partial word matches. Speed is also improved 4x over comparable technologies.



Offer a Way to Refine Search: Econsultancy also reports [20% of shoppers who used search went on to refine their searches](#), but 21% exited the website from the search results. Keep users engaged with faceted search tools such as the [one offered by Bigcommerce](#), which dynamically adjust results based on attributes selected.

In all, speed and convenience are the two key metrics by which customer loyalty will be won. High conversion rates for brands will depend entirely on how well the optimize their sites for omnichannel use. Increase your site speed and ensure that your mobile and desktop experiences are both engaging and, ultimately, easy. Doing so will produce the 2015 ROI your business needs.