CATALYST.

CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION GUIDE

How to improve your conversion rate at every stage of the customer journey.

Introduction

Have you thought much about your customers lately? Chances are you have - customers make your business happen after all. But have you thought about **how** you're talking to customers and bringing new sales into the business?

New, old, or repeat. Ensuring that customers remember who you are and keep returning is key to business. People like to stick with what they know, and when you show you're the best for their needs, customers are likely to return.

Websites and social media now mean potential customers can take a closer look at who you are before engaging with you. Your online presence needs to be working as hard as you are, ensuring that people are able to find what they need, and when they need it to convert into a customer.

This is what we call Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO). CRO typically refers to optimising your website to improve the conversion rate i.e. the ability of your website to convert visitors into enquiries or sales.

But CRO isn't just about websites. It's time we look at the big picture. We're talking about the whole customer journey - all the touchpoints, all the interactions, and how you can ensure that no opportunity is missed.

This guide explains how to review and optimise the customer journey and improve your CRO. We'll be looking beyond just websites and focusing on all the opportunities you have to improve conversion rates, win new customers, and increase retention. And it's not all digital - there are plenty of traditional methods that still have a lot of purpose today, as well as their online cousins.

It's time to show your customers some love and make their journey to working with you seamless and connected.

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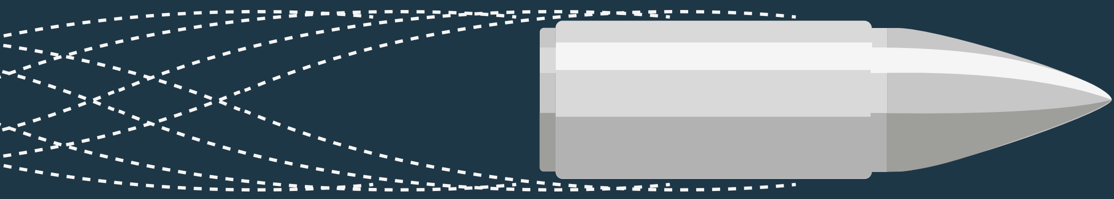
Section 1:
Assess, Review, Prepare



Before you start...

Whilst we are big believers in optimising the customer journey, there is no silver bullet (we know, sometimes we wish there was too).

Your customer journey and conversion rate needs to be part of an ongoing process of reviewing your data and refining your processes. Only then can you start to see patterns and ways of working that help channel customers in the right direction.

Do it once, and maybe you'll see some short term benefit in conversions and customer sales. But do it regularly, and you should see consistent improvements in your ability to generate new business as well as retain and grow existing customers.

Sounds ideal, right?

Get your team together

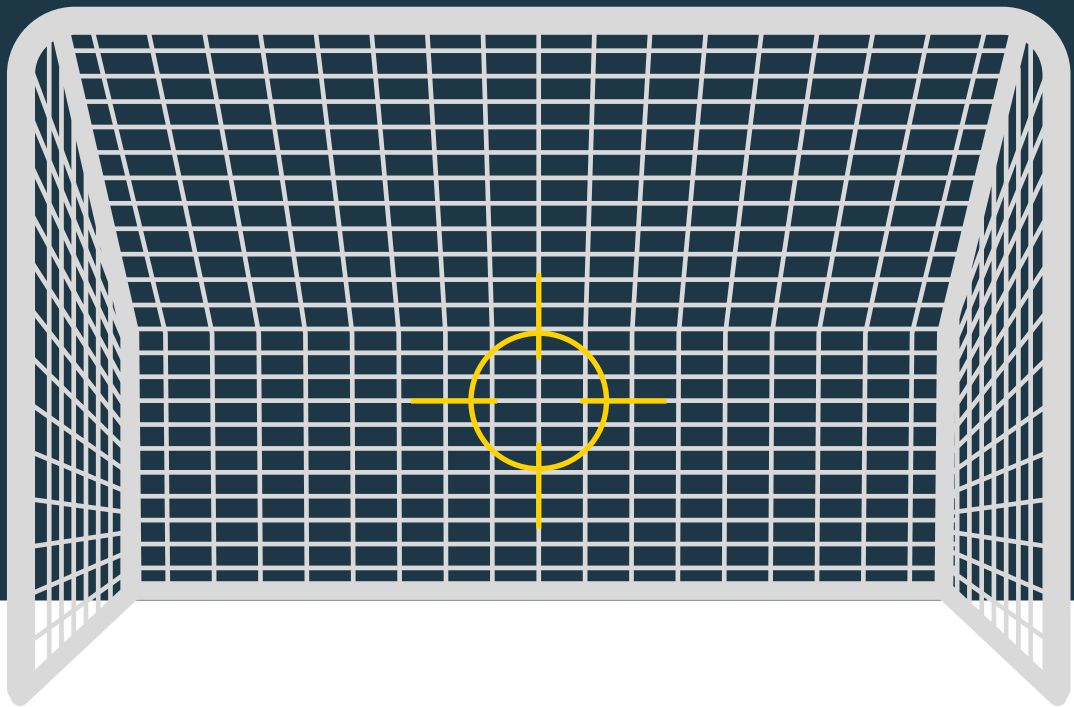
There's no need to summon a DEFCON squad, but it is a good idea to get everyone around the table who can provide input and insight for marketing, sales, delivery, and customer relationships. Bring in all the stakeholders and get the ideas flowing.

Some key questions to ask:

- What are we doing to communicate with existing customers?
- How are we approaching new customers or business - what's our pitch?
- What is our key message, and are we getting this out effectively?

This is the time to really lay out everything, get all the opinions and ideas collected, no matter how big or small. Ideas can spring from the tiniest bits of data, so take notes and encourage people to contribute.

Remember that this is the team you'll be working with to get these ideas into motion, so involving them at this stage helps everyone feel part of the process and committed to improvement.



Prepare a long term strategy with key goals and aims

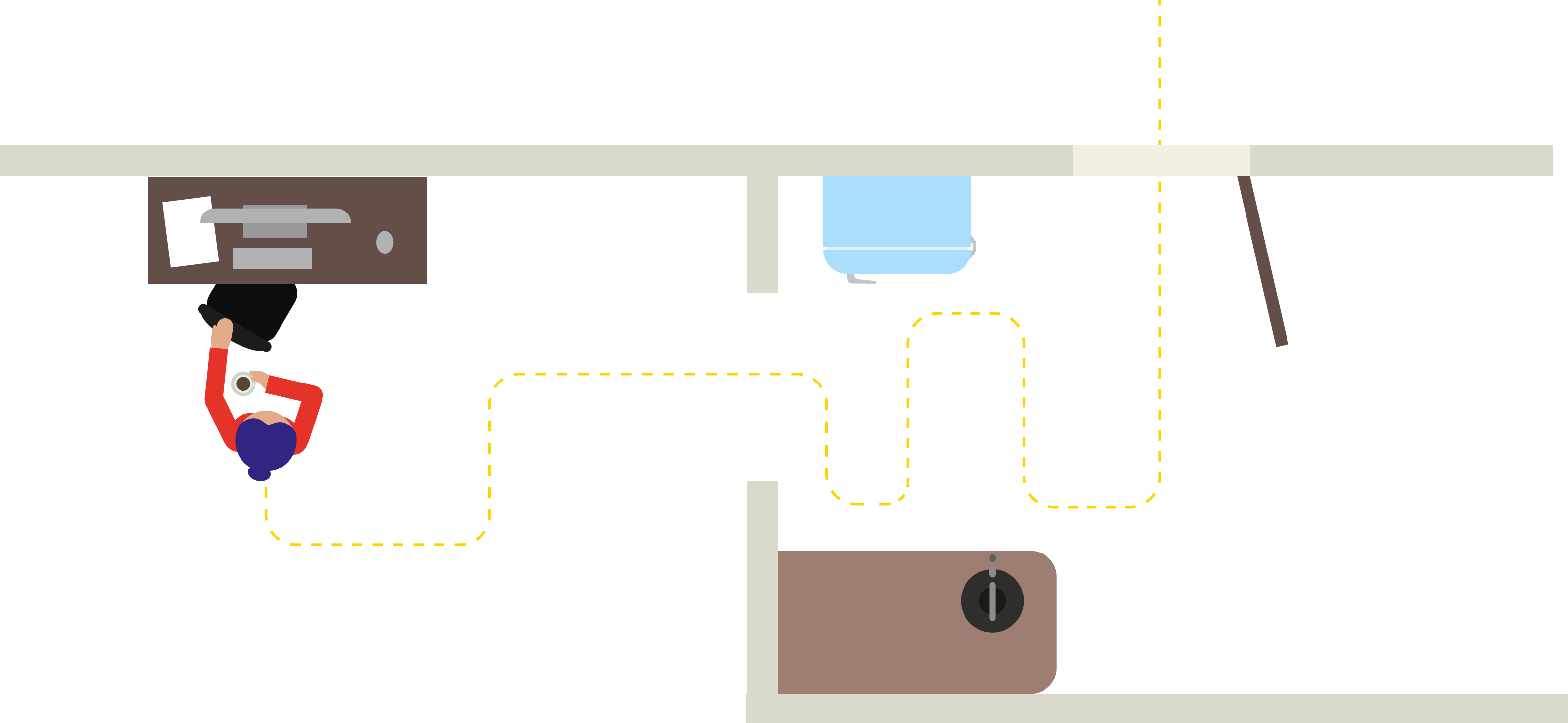
You've got your ideas, your team, and know where you need to improve - how do you turn that into action with measurable results?

This is where utilising the skills of a third party specialist agency like Catalyst can be particularly beneficial. Our team can help devise a strategy that aligns all of your sales channels, and sets out specific, targeted achievements, as well as combining our digital expertise and client-focused approach to deliverables.

Strategy needs to be thought about in the long term. We know this can often be the hardest (and most frustrating) part when you want to see results and have a vision to achieve it. But have patience - set out your strategy in stages (we suggest quarterly or half-yearly), with the option to revise what's not working and try new tactics.

Working with an external partner means they can be the ones doing the monitoring and implementation of strategy, and work with you to refine and revise the tactics for that magic CRO. You get better conversions, and you get to focus on doing what you do best, which is your business.

Section 2:
Who is the customer and what's their journey?



Understanding your customer journey is essential to knowing how to optimise your conversion rate.

Customers go through a number of stages and touchpoints throughout their journey, and knowing where they might be getting stuck or need further support is key to keeping the cycle moving. Start right at the beginning. We recommend you ask yourself the following:

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1. How do prospects find you?

Online search (Google)

- Are you using PPC (pay per click), SEO (search engine optimisation) or both? What kind of results are these generating?
- Which keywords drive the most traffic? When were these last reviewed?
- Which keywords convert the most traffic? What content type is driving enquiries?

Email marketing

- Are you getting good open rates, or high bounces? Does your list need cleaning?
- What kind of subject lines get the best open rates?
- Is there a time of day that gets better open rates? What timezone is your audience in?
- What kind of content gets the best click through rates?

Events

- Which events are you attending? What would encourage new customers to approach you at this event?
- Are you offering exclusive offers or access at trade events?
- Are you running your own events or online webinars? Is this something you could do?

Networks

- Are you part of any professional networks that link to your customer base? Do you find these deliver value?
- Could you consider joining a network for greater reach or setting up your own?

Referrals

- Do you have a referral scheme for existing customers? Are there tiers that offer benefits to referees?

Social Media

- What channels are you using? Are they the right channels for you?
- Which channels are getting the best engagement (likes, comments, shares), or driving the most traffic to the website? Are they regularly updated with content that's interesting to the audience?
- What type of content gets the best engagement or drives the most traffic to the website? Is there a certain format that gains more attention (video, image, GIF, livestream)?

Adverts / PR

- Which publications or websites are you advertising through? Do you notice an increase in traffic and enquiries when adverts are running?
- Are your adverts offering something unique to the customer (offers, discounts, exclusive access, downloads)? What would make someone click on it?
- What kind of PR coverage are you getting? Is it delivering value to your business plan?

And breathe!

We know that was a lot of questions to run through and you might be feeling a bit overwhelmed after reading all of those. Remember that these are all steps designed to help you achieve the best conversion rate possible for your customers, so every question has your business interests behind it.

We've covered how people might be finding you - let's talk about what they might be seeing or reading once they've found you.

2. What information do they see initially? This could include:

- Company website or product specific landing pages
- Content (such as blogs, guides, press releases)
- Collateral (such as marketing materials, physical print brochures)

Does the content they see help to push them down the decision making journey? The content customers interact with should persuade and inform them to help them make the choice to carry on and enquire.

For example:

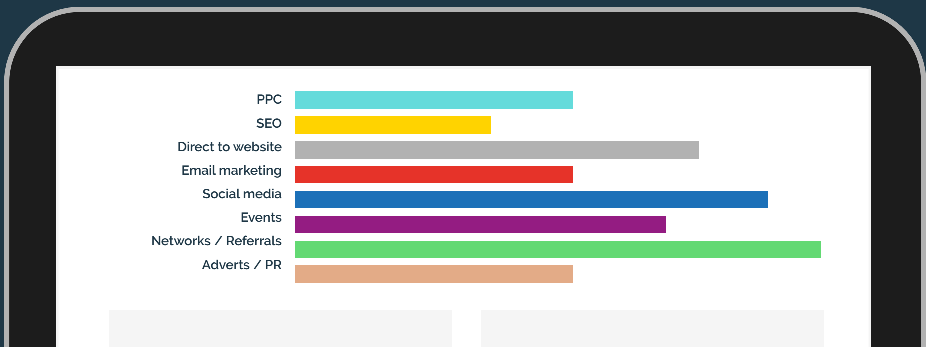
- Is it clear you have an understanding of their challenge or goal? How do you help them achieve this? This should be clear and obvious to the reader - it shows you can offer the right solutions
- Do you provide them with the right information to get a better understanding of your offering?
- Do you provide proof in the form of case studies, reviews and testimonials? This type of customer feedback is invaluable and often plays a crucial role in helping potential customers take the next step
- Is it clear what the desired next steps are - such as getting in touch, booking a callback, or downloading a piece of content?

What about your website?

Your company website is your shop front. Think about it - when you want to find out more about a business, the first thing you do is find their website. Websites that don't work well on mobile, haven't been updated in a while, or are just awkward to use are immediately off-putting - and that means people click away (Hello bounce-rate).

Your website experience for a potential customer can make or break their journey, so you need to ensure that it's working to help answer customer questions and draw them in, rather than pushing them away. Consider some of the following when it comes to your website:

- Where are the strengths and weaknesses of your site? Maybe it has great design but is hard to navigate, or it's mobile-responsive but not so hot on the desktop version
- What is the conversion rate? If you have a high bounce rate, is there something that's driving people away? If your conversion rate is good, what's drawing people in?
- Conduct an analysis of your website. Look at how key pages are performing - where are the views high, and where is your content being seen?
- Do you have eye-tracking software, such as Hotjar? Using this means you can go beyond the data and look at how people actually use the site, where the mouse hovers, how far they scroll down a page, etc. This data can help identify where customers might be leaving the page or how they're reaching the CTA



3. What is the original source of your leads?

This is key - where are people coming from to find you? While you might automatically think of a search engine or just the vast magic of the Internet, there are so many different avenues people can follow to find you, including:

- PPC
- SEO
- Direct to website
- Email marketing
- Social media
- Events
- Networks / Referrals
- Adverts / PR

Aside from just looking at the numbers, evaluate which sources drive quick wins and which ones are slow-burners for your business. Your CRM software should be able to help with this. For example, HubSpot has built-in dashboards and reports to help make this process easier for you. It is important to have a mix of both as one without the other will result in peaks and troughs in the sales cycle - and both are equally as valuable.

It's important to not be led by the volume of leads. Sure, having lots of people looking at your website is great, but this can quickly fall into 'vanity metrics' - which is data for the sake of it looking good on a report. We've heard the old saying 'turnover is vanity, profit is sanity', and it's no different when it comes to website metrics. Look at the quality of your leads instead of the quantity - would you rather have 100 visitors and only 1 lead, or 20 visitors and 5 leads?

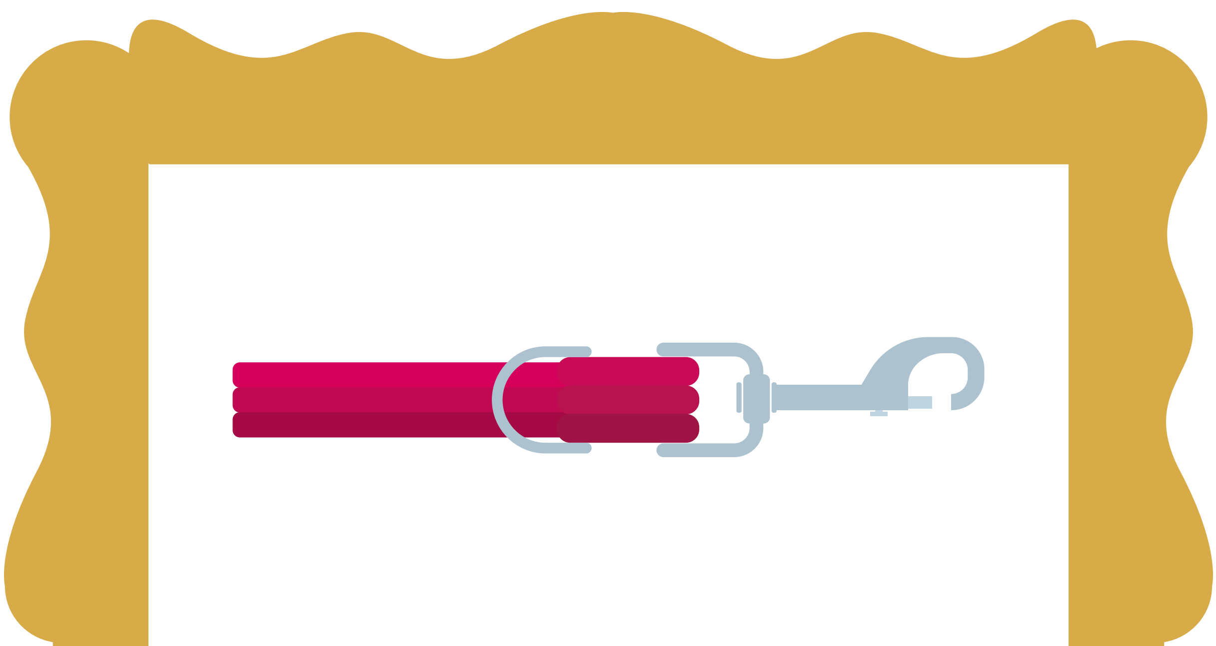
4. What happens when you initially get a lead?

You've got a lead! Get in! Now the real work begins. Your lead needs to be nurtured and turned into business - how do you make that happen?

- Do you have a follow up call, or a 'call back at X time' function on your website?
- Do you set up an introductory meeting to chat about their challenges and further explain how you can help?
- Do you send them anything - a product/services brochure, an exclusive piece of content, or just a quick email to say hello?

Whether you use all of these or something unique to you, the most important thing is that there is a process in place that is followed. It might be that a lead who enquires gets an automatic email to confirm receipt, which is followed up with a video call with an account manager or similar for a personal connection, followed by materials which are sent later.

You can always tweak this process as you go along if you find one item isn't working, or something else has worked better - it's all about finding out what method works best for you.



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5. What are the different lead stages?

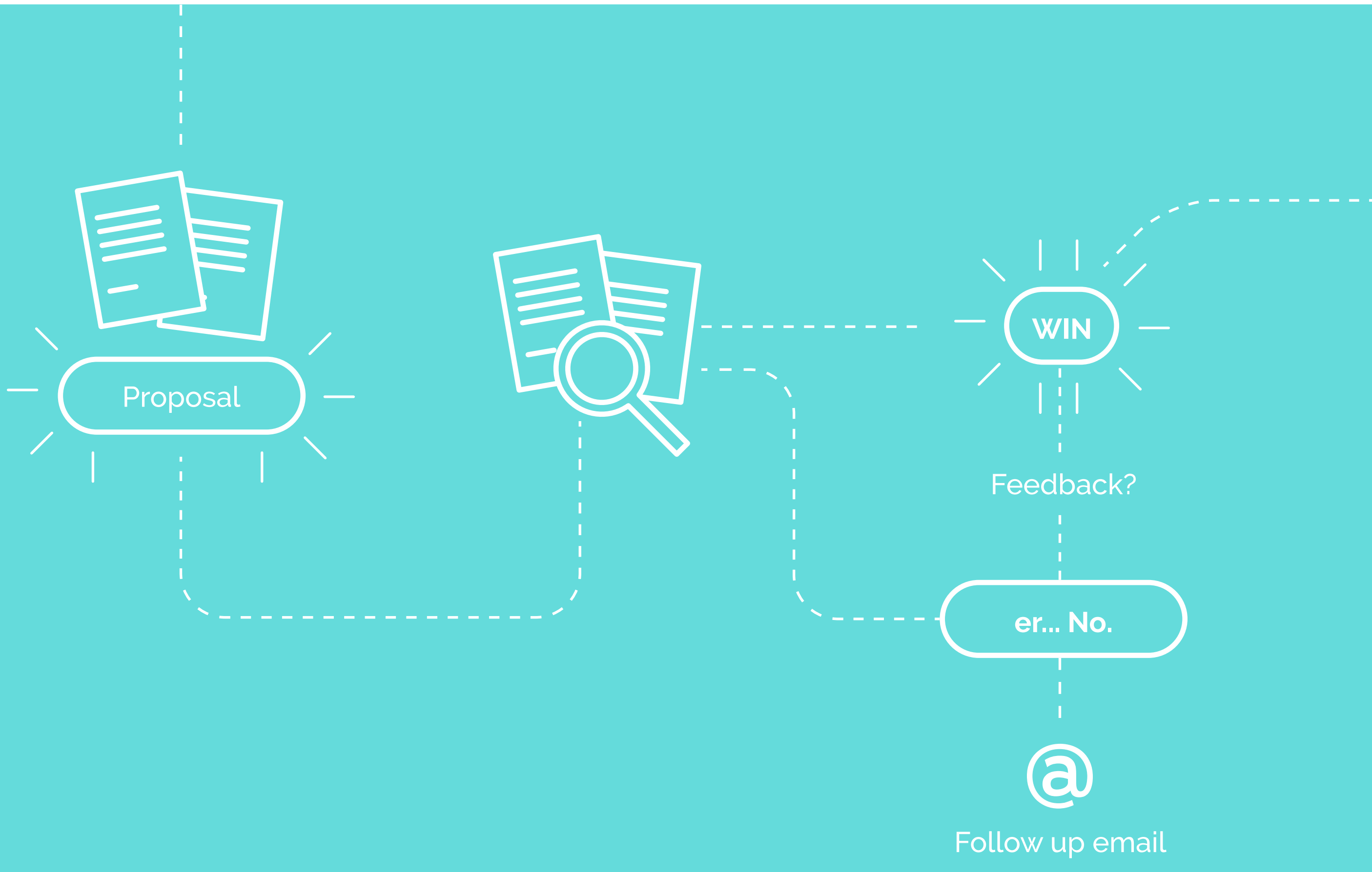
Your lead is warm, you've had initial contact with them; it's time to work on turning that lead into business. Your process here needs to be carefully managed, a bit like dating. Come on too strong and bombard them with messages and they're likely to back off. But play it too cool and they'll lose interest and look elsewhere. Strike a balance between sharing insights and items of value with them while giving them space to consider and make a decision.

What stages does your lead conversion process follow? An example could be:

- Proposal of business is sent to the lead following initial communication
- Prospect initiates negotiation of proposal - at this stage, the business is won or lost
- It's a win!
    - Why did you win? Look at the process you followed from lead conversion to customer, your interactions throughout this journey, and interview them for feedback. What made you stand out as the best choice for them? Was there anything additional they would have liked to have had earlier/ later in the journey? What touchpoints or communications stood out to them?
- Sorry, it's a no.
    - Why did you lose? What could you improve? What was the main factor in the customer deciding to go elsewhere? Were there any points in the journey that just didn't work for them?
- Do you send them anything?
    - It's good form to send a follow up email or communication to leave things on a good note for future consideration if it was a no, or to initiate the next stage of working together if it was a win
    - If it's a win, you could send a pack of information and collateral to welcome them into your partnership. Keep the personal connections warm - remember, you're all excited to start working together at this point!
    - If you lost, bow out gracefully. Hopefully, they are able to provide you with valuable feedback to improve upon in future, so part ways on good terms and who knows, they might come back in a few years

Knowing how your conversion rates work in the buying cycle is essential to getting the stages of lead conversion and nurturing to work. If you get lots of leads and initial contact, but your proposals are falling flat, you can immediately see that it's an area you need to look at and revise.

Feedback is absolutely key to improving your process of lead conversion. You can always get your own staff to run simulations - being on the other side can often provide valuable insight, helping to identify areas of improvement or where prospects get stuck in the journey.



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6. What happens to lost prospects?

While in an ideal world every prospective customer would convert, there will always be people who decide you're just not right. Dealing with leads that go cold or make the decision not to continue can be handled in such a way that they might return in future if things change.

It's worth keeping in touch, but don't have your sales team keep calling them and trying to persuade them back - this is a surefire way to completely put them off ever working with you.

We recommend that you don't let all your hard work of nurturing that lead go to waste, and instead change their data set in your system. Switch them from a prospect to a newsletter subscriber - that way, they'll receive regular, unobtrusive updates about your business, and you keep front of mind.

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7. What happens to new customers?

Getting a new customer is the ultimate achievement for the lead conversion process. You've shown that you've got what they need.

Your hard work doesn't stop here though. Get the team or person who'll be looking after their account briefed and ready to take the reins for onboarding. This needs to be done with confidence - show them they've made the right decision in choosing you.

A great handover between the team nurturing leads and the team carrying out the work is essential. Your new customer wants to feel valued and understood by every person they interact with. Having an onboarding process that works to build that relationship further sets the scene for a good working partnership.

An onboarding process could include:

- Introductory meetings, visiting offices or key locations
- Sending a welcome pack of information and exclusive business insights
- Holding a workshop to fully understand how you can help solve their challenges
- Setting up regular status calls or meetings, and developing a way of working with the customer's interests at heart

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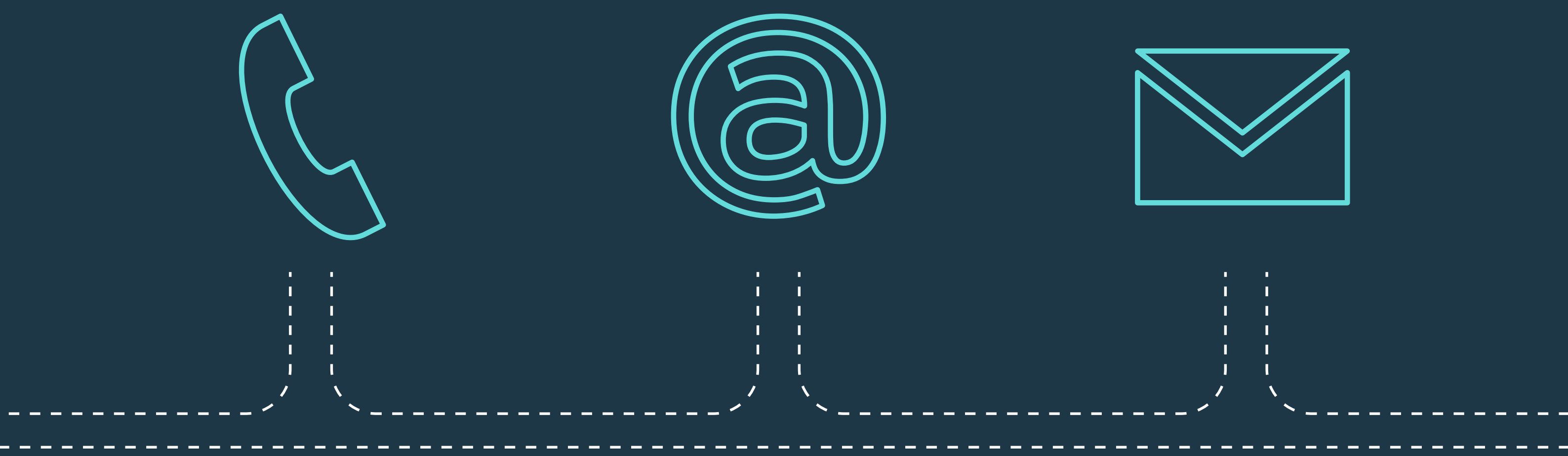
8. How do you communicate with your existing customers?

While getting new customers is always exciting for business, you should never forget about your existing ones. When you're busy onboarding a new client, think about if there's anything in this process that could be used for working with existing clients. Looking at how you handle new clients versus how you're working with existing clients can give you some great insight into how to improve or reignite relationships into better ways of working.

It's likely that each customer will have their own preferred way of communicating, and their account handlers will be the best ones to ask. As a general rule, you should keep in regular contact with them, even if the work is quieter. Regular, no-pressure communication can help improve retention rates for customers, and potentially increase upselling or cross selling opportunities.



Section 3: Testing and Implementation

We hope you've got plenty of ideas about how you can improve your customer journey, retention rates and CRO.

We've covered ways that you can reach out to new customers through various channels and methods, but also how you can tailor your communications, stagger your touchpoints and guide potential customers along a seamless journey to doing business. Remember, this is all about how to improve your conversion rate from visitors to leads to customers, so thinking about that journey and how it is shaped is essential.

You can look at testing lots of different methods too - you never know what you might find works best for you. Don't be afraid to experiment, adapt and evolve to meet the desires of new customers. You'll learn just as much from what doesn't work as what does! Keep a track of your conversion rates throughout so you can benchmark improvements, and collect as much data as you can so you can look at multiple audiences and apply learnings in future.

Ultimately, the processes we've discussed here, all the questions, touchpoints and strategic opportunities highlighted have one aim: to improve conversion rates. It might seem a daunting task to complete the above exercises and ask tough questions - but we have found it to be invaluable not just for our business, but our clients too.

A lot of our clients ask us to lead this process for them, and it's something we love to be part of, to unravel the challenges and find new ways of nurturing leads and adapting the customer journey. Having an external third party agency such as ourselves allows us to be impartial, as well as offering our expertise in strategy and sales to help get your conversion rates improving. We're not afraid to try new tactics and experiment in order to find the best results, and with our help in managing your conversion rate and customer journey, you can focus on what you do best: your business.

Key takeaways (not that kind, sorry)

- The first time you try something new is always going to be the hardest - be prepared for an ongoing process of reviewing, amending, and adapting
- It can take up to 12 touch points to make a sale - so bear this in mind before you write off a marketing tactic as not working. Make each touchpoint and source where potential customers can land equally valuable
- Take a scientific approach. Don't go changing everything at once, or you won't know what was (or wasn't) working in the first place. Change one item at a time and measure the results. Being methodical means you can understand what's helping to improve conversions specifically and you'll have data to back it up
- Don't be afraid of feedback and honesty. You can learn so much from having open conversations with your customers and leads, whether they end up converting or not. Take it on board, see how you can apply it; adapt, evolve, and move forward. This part of the process never stops

The team at We Are Catalyst are on hand to help you get your CRO on track, your leads nurtured into customers and your strategy on point. We love a challenge and there's nothing more satisfying for us than seeing your business grow and gain new clients thanks to our working partnership.

GET IN TOUCH

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