

DRIVING CONVERSIONS

WITH USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN





A QUICK INTRODUCTION

It seems to be an obvious truth: shopping online means shopping conveniently. Your customers shop at their own time and leisure, without crowds of fellow shoppers or annoying salespeople. Shopping online makes shopping easier.

But when developing your online store, that truism can easily become a crutch. The way you structure your store will be the depending factor on whether shopping online is a better experience than schlepping to a physical location. Don't let the convenience of eCommerce be an excuse for thoughtless UI/UX.

Being haphazard with UI/UX can lead to sloppy design thinking. Poor UI/UX is a far worse experience for the online consumer than physically going to a store would be. The best online shopping experiences should deliver much more than just the ability to shop in your pajamas. Delivering a superior user experience/user interface is the fundamental key to turning your online site into a conversion machine.

Continue reading to learn some ways to begin thinking about how to deliver that optimal online shopping experience.

1. BE FRICTIONLESS

A good UI/UX designer will focus on the 'friction points' of the user experience. Friction points are the sticky areas of online shopping, like: requiring a customer to go through 5 steps when only 1 would do, asking a customer to dig and search for where they need to go next, or making a customer wait an eternity before what they want finally loads on the page.

Identifying friction points means empathizing with the user and, more than anything, being an independent thinker. For example, thousands of stores have a standard shopping flow:

1. A user clicks on a category of products in the top navigation
2. A category page shows them a grid of available products, and they click on one

3. The customer is taken to a product details page, where they learn more about the product, see different views, read reviews, and eventually (hopefully) click a button to add the product to their cart.

How could this process be simplified? The all-too-obvious answer is to have an 'Add to Cart' button available under each product listed on a category page (instead of just on the Product Details page).

But even stopping there can be lazy; it's often not enough for the user to simply be able to add to their cart from the category page, because they do need to know more about a product before they make the decision to purchase it.

WHAT WE DID

For a recent project, the design team at EYEMAGINE smoothed this friction point by adding a 'View Details' button when hovering over a product image. When the user mouses over the button a tooltip appears, providing a brief shorthand description of the product's features, as well as an 'Add to Cart' button. Suddenly a friction point has been eased, and a process that may have taken minutes has been reduced to seconds.

A note of caution: friction points can't all be addressed in the same way on every site. In the example, a hover tooltip made sense, because the target audience was B2B customers who would want to glance quickly at something before making a decision. For other brands and businesses, it makes more sense to tackle this friction point in other ways.





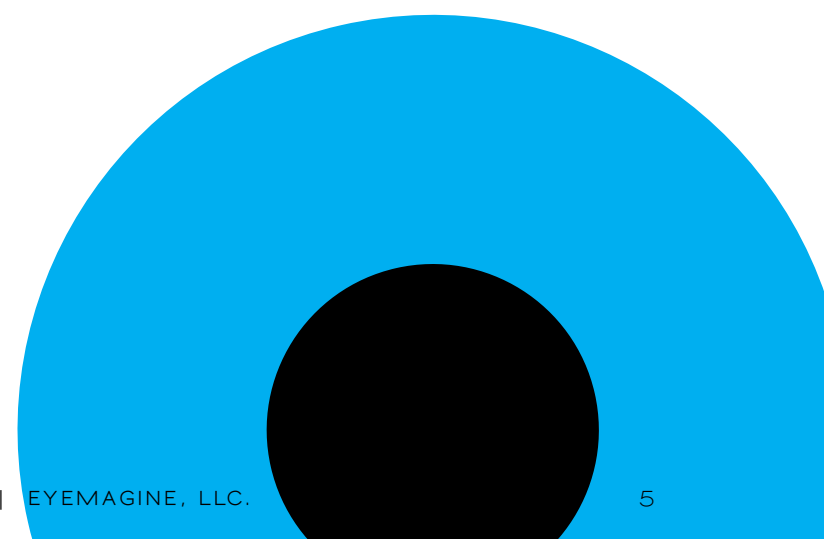
2. BE PERSISTENT

This doesn't mean being persistent in the classical sales sense, but rather utilizing a feature of web layout commonly referred to as persistency.

Persistency, or 'stickiness,' pertains to the elements of a site's layout that don't vanish from the viewport of a browser, no matter how far you scroll up or down a page. Creating persistent elements on a website allows a user

to have what they need at their fingertips at all times, instead of needing to scroll up or down a page to get to what they're looking for.

This can be particularly helpful when it comes to navigation — something you might want the user to have access to at all times.



WHAT WE DID

For an example, take the portable speaker site Braven.com, where the EYEMAGINE design team created an extremely 'tall' product details page — chock-a-block full of information about the product, but requiring an extremely long scroll by the user. In order to ensure that the customer didn't lose their way on the page, we also added a dark gray persistent navigation bar. No matter where the user scrolls within this page, this black bar will follow them and remain 'stuck' to the top of their browser.

The persistent header always informs the user of the section of the product page they are currently scrolled to — in the screenshot above, the words 'FEATURED SPECS' are highlighted, which happens to be the section of the page currently scrolled to. If the user wants to see the Product Reviews, they can simply click on that element of the top navigation bar and be scrolled auto-magically down the page.

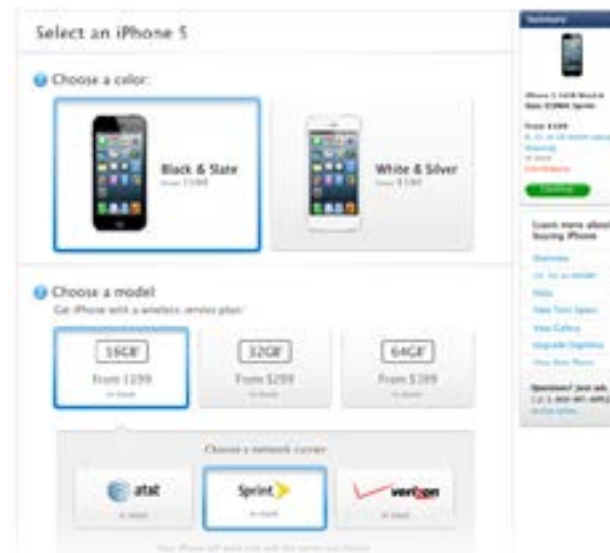


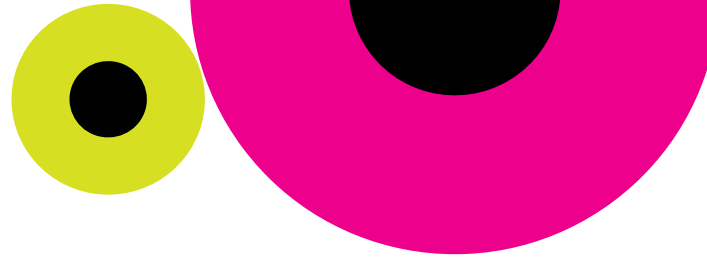
WHAT THEY DID

Persistency can work in all kinds of ways to help keep key page elements at a user's disposal. For instance, on Apple's site, their iPhone product details page functions as a configurator, taking the customer through a series of steps as they scroll down the page. Despite the scrolling, though, the right-hand 'Summary' box remains sticky — always there for the user, should they need to know what they've built in the configurator so far:

And once all the necessary selections have been made within their configurator, a green 'Continue' button appears in the Summary box — allowing the customer to move right into the checkout process without needing to scroll back to the top of the page.

Adding sticky elements isn't always recommended. A sticky 'Add to Cart' button, for instance, can sometimes have the unintended effect of feeling like a used-car salesman (that is, persistent to the point of being intrusive). But when used well, persistency can keep the user aware of their place on your site — and drive them to the checkout process that much faster.





3. BE RESPONSIVE

This doesn't mean being responsive to your customers' concerns — though that's certainly important — but rather embracing the current trend of responsive web design. Responsive design isn't simply a trend; it's here to stay, and for good business reasons.

Responsively-designed sites grew to fill a specific need: with a multiplicity of screen sizes (tablet, phone, laptop, desktop, plus every variety of each) a solution was needed that allowed for an optimal experience on every device.

Sites built responsively don't have any fixed width, so their layout will re-flow to whatever viewport they're displayed in. In other words,

if you're viewing a responsive site with your browser window stretched wide, it might look different than if you resize your browser window to a small width. If you were to view that same responsive site on your tablet device, it might look slightly different again; if you then glanced at it on your cell phone, you might find the site has yet another layout.

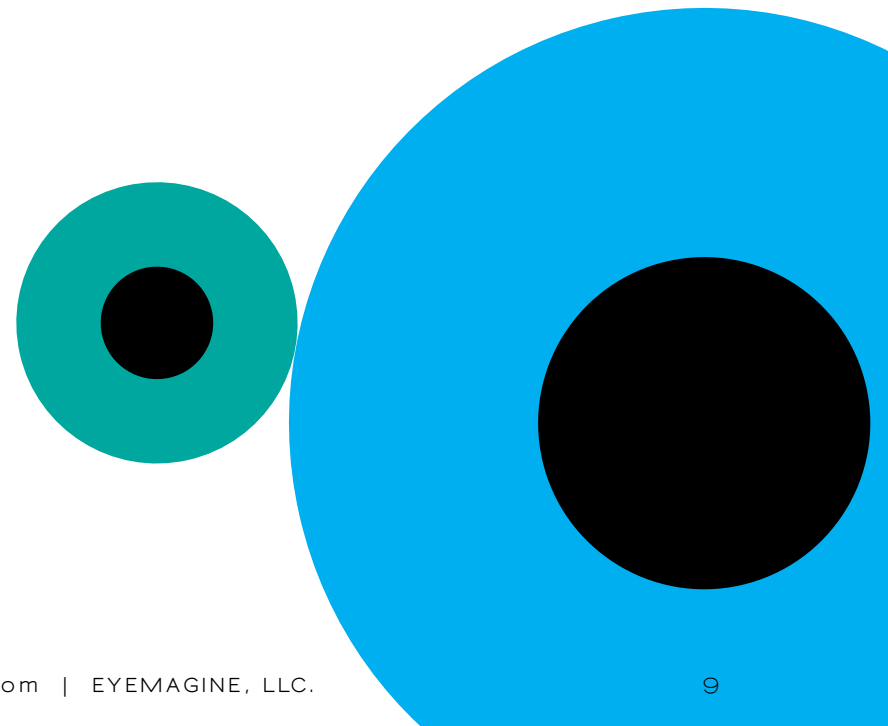
Embracing responsive design in eCommerce allows an online store to be tailored perfectly to the user, no matter how they access the site — meaning that instead of a customer awkwardly squinting, pinching, and zooming when they get to your mobile site, they might be able to navigate on their iPhone using large,

touchable buttons especially tailored to a mobile experience. Think about how much easier checking out on a cell phone could be, for instance, if customers didn't have to hunt for the checkout link and tap on tiny text links to estimate shipping.

A fully responsive site isn't for everyone or for every site; it can be expensive, and depending on your product and your user demographic, sometimes unnecessary. Magento, EYEMAGINE's preferred eCommerce CMS platform, also has the option to serve a specialized mobile version of a Magento site to cell phones — another option for those concerned about selling through mobile.

For those online store merchants who do decide that responsiveness makes sense for them, though, it can be a liberating experience — and a boon to sales.

If you'd like to read more about responsive web design in general, you can view EYEMAGINE's white paper on the topic [here](#).



4. BE CLEAR

'Be clear' is an all-too-obvious, axiomatic directive for any UX designer. Applying it to an individual site, though, takes care and forethought. No two sites are the same — something that is particularly the case for eCommerce sites. Every online store has: an entirely unique current or sought-after demographic; a unique set of products that may require more or less explanation and navigation for the user; and a unique branding strategy that needs to be balanced with the UX directive for clarity.

However, there are some areas of a standard eCommerce site that can nearly and universally be clarified by applying some standard UI elements. For instance, take the everyday progress tracker. Add one in the right way to

a multi-step process like a normal eCommerce checkout page, and you've suddenly given the user an immediate orientation in the process and a sense of constant — yes — progress toward completion. Even the most onerous of multi-page checkout forms can be made a little more tolerable with a well-treated progress tracker.

Progress trackers come in all shapes and sizes, but they usually share some obvious common traits: they orient the user by highlighting the step the user is on with different coloring or shading; their design gives a sense of progression forward, often (though not always) using arrows; and the meaning of each step is immediately clear, whether represented by icons or words.

Here are few examples of fairly standard progress trackers:

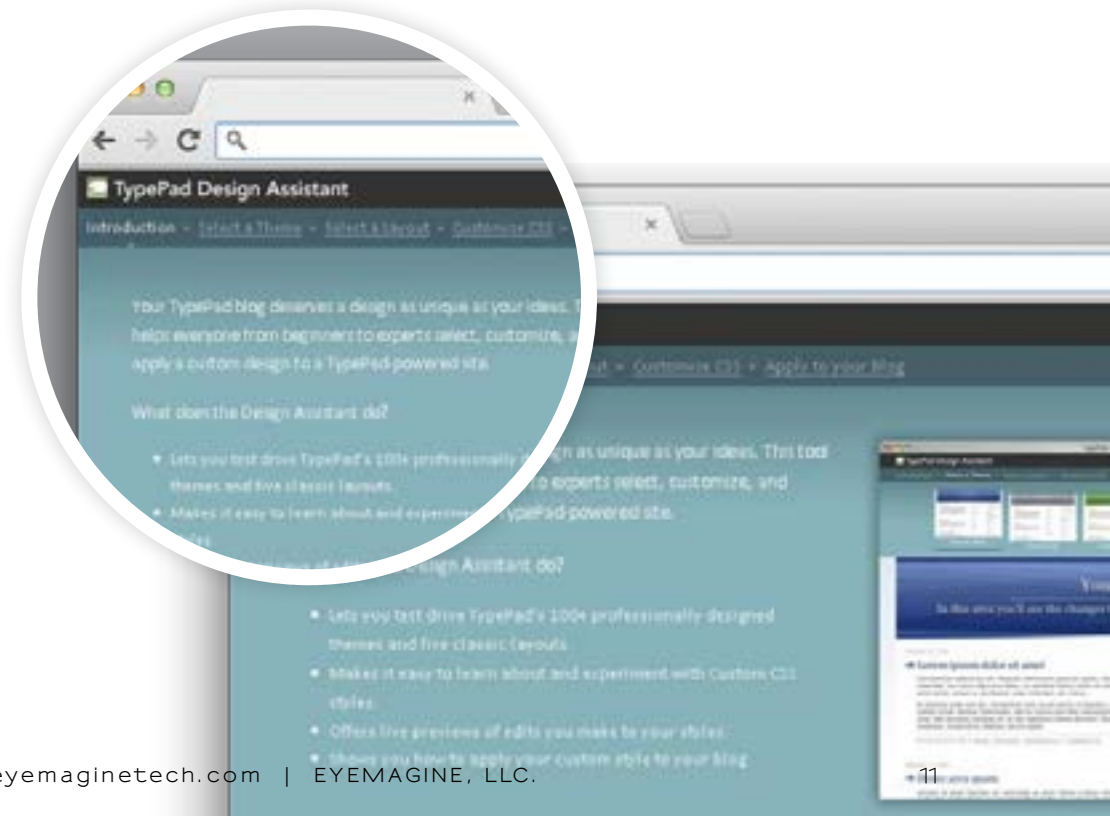


The progress tracker seems fairly simple to do well...until one considers the number of confusing progress trackers out there. Take the progress tracker to the left which manages to look much more like bread-crumbling than a progress indicator.

The progress tracker is just a small example of how clarity needs to be considered and applied across the board on eCommerce sites. It's also worth noting that progress tracking is

an example of a UI feature that may eventually be phased out, when smarter solutions for checkout replace any need for users to manually fill out their information in stages.

Until that time, though, progress trackers and other such commonly-utilized UI solutions can be applied liberally where needed — keeping your site clear, and your sales strong.





5. BE SCIENTIFIC

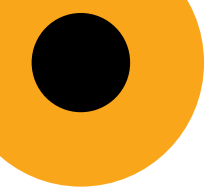
Being ruthlessly scientific is perhaps the most important trait any online storeowner can have, and it isn't an easy one to master. Being scientific means:

- Being willing to constantly discard and refine elements of your site until you arrive at a store model that truly works;
- Forgetting about what your competition is doing, and learning for yourself what makes sense;
- Being able to put your site where it belongs — that is, in your users' hands, instead of in your head.

Websites aren't architected buildings; they aren't static items to be blue-printed, designed, built and then left alone for time immemorial.

The internet is a living, breathing creation, made with changeable code that gives those who build in it a huge advantage: flexibility. A good online storeowner will embrace that flexibility — using it to their advantage in order to slowly, over time, arrive at a model that truly works for their business.

A chief means of doing just that is known as A/B testing. A/B testing is the scientific method applied to online web design; in its simplest version, it means testing a feature of your site by displaying two different versions (A and B) of that feature to two different sets of users. Applied well, A/B testing can take the neurosis and guesswork out of running an online store, by ensuring that you give the users what they really want and need.



As a hypothetical example, perhaps your web designer has decided they wanted to add large videos to your product pages, showing off exactly why your products are awesome. You think it's a great idea, but are concerned about the costs of creating and hosting videos for each of your products, and are worried that the increased load-time the videos add will reduce user retention.

Instead of playing it safe and deciding against the videos outright, with A/B testing you can be scientific about your decision. Using A/B testing tools, your web developer would set it up with one product page to start: 50% of visitors arriving to that product's page would see the video, while the other 50% wouldn't. Over time — and accounting for other variables — you could start to get an accurate sense of whether the videos were worth the money and extra load-time. They might be or they might


not be; but whatever the case, you'd know the answer without needing to gamble your business on it.

There's another upside to being scientific: it's a mindset that's the best medicine for counter-productive perfectionism. Instead of dithering about whether a home page feature is perfect or a button design is 100% right, you can A/B test it and let the market make the decision for you. Though your users never know they've had a part in your process, they will in fact be responsible for an enhanced shopping experience that they actually helped create. And over the long-term, by removing your own personal prejudices from the equation and letting your users decide, you'll be turning your online store into a well-oiled conversion machine.

EYEMAGINE

EYEMAGINE is an eCommerce innovator and has been a leading force in the industry since 2003. Over the years, EYEMAGINE has engaged on many eCommerce fronts and proven capabilities in design, development, integration, mobile, optimization, and more. Our clients include Disney, HP, TOYOTA, Cisco, Metallica, and more.

To find out more about conversion and eCommerce, contact us today.

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