

James: Okay, so I've got Peep Laja here from [ConversionXL.com](#), and I recently bought a conversion report from Peep to have a look over my website. And I've got to be honest, Peep, when the report came back, I was a little bit disappointed. Well, I was disappointed in myself, for not picking up some of the things that seemed obvious when someone else tells it to me, and I think that would be a great topic for this podcast. I know that a lot of my listeners pay close attention to what's happening on SuperFastBusiness.com, and that was the site where we applied quite a few changes, based on some of the training that I've been doing, some of the research that I've done, and then I combined that with the report that you sent back. And I've got to say that the results have been spectacular since I've been applying all of these things. And it's really important to me now since the site's doubled in traffic, in just the last month or so. So let's see if we can tackle some of the most common mistakes that you see when somebody asks you to cast your eye, your expert conversion eye, over their website. How do you want to attack this?

Peep: Sure, yeah. Glad to be here, and I'm happy to share some of my insights. So I guess we can just start covering mistakes one by one, see how far we go. The list of possible mistakes or problems you can do is endless.

James: Let's think about the 80-20 rule. There must be ones that you can almost guarantee you'll see when you look at a website for the first time, like the ones that come up the most often.

Peep: Yes. The one that is quite, or the most common, is missing or poor value proposition. It's by far the most common problem. People don't care about you, or maybe they haven't even heard about you, and their attention span is extremely short. So if they can't get answers in their mind, right away, they will leave, so your value proposition needs to provide answers to questions like "What is this site about?", "What can I do here?", "How is it all useful to me?" You know your customers, your visitors are A, they're not idiots. They know that there are other people out there. And B, they do comparison shop. When you say "easy project management software", it's not like they think that "Woah, this must be the easiest project management software in the world". The hell, no. There's ten other guys that say the exact same. So having a value proposition that explains what it is, what the site is, what it is that you're selling, and how is it useful, and of course it needs to be unique. If you're selling Samsung televisions, so does everybody else. Why should they buy from you? So, the end result is that once they read your value proposition, they understand that if I'm your ideal customer, why I should buy from you and not from the competition. That's number one, and your value proposition should be the number one thing that they see when they land on your home page or landing page, but also on every other key page where people come in from. When you look at Google analytics and you see your top landing pages where people come in, they might be blog posts. So you have to make sure that on the sidebar or somewhere there's a key sum up of your value proposition. So that's number one.

James: Great, okay. So it should be the first thing they see, and on every page where people come in. And you're right, when I look at analytics, I can see that not everyone's coming in on the home page. That's quite an assumption that people make. Quite often if you're doing decent SEO, they're coming in on all sorts of inner pages, especially if some of the really good articles or posts that you do have been shared out there in forums or whatever, that page is going to show up. And there's a function in analytics that you can actually have of

a page value assigned to it. If you put your goals and a value for goals you can see which page is bringing you the most money. I guess you'd target that one.

Peep: Exactly right, yeah. And if you have any blog posts that have gone viral, it might very well be that some of your blog posts get way more traffic than your home page. Then that blog post needs to display the value proposition.

Okay, that leads me to mistake number two that I see over and over again. Please excuse my language, vague bullshit. Way too many sites are overly vague about what they do and what they offer. Like people try to be clever with their words, they try to sound fancy shmancy and think that if you communicate anything in jargon that you sound smarter or more important somehow. The best worst example that I have, and this is an exact actual quote from a website, is "Our point-of-sale systems integrate hardware, software and Internet social media marketing into one giant revenue super system". Now nobody reading that will understand what the hell that means. Second example: a guy I know recently said on his website that "I am a digital storyteller. Do you, James, know what a digital storyteller is or does?"

James: Not really.

Peep: Yeah. So he actually changed it to "I design websites and write copy". That's clear. So another worst example – it can also be something like "Improve your dating skills". Oh, that seems clear enough. However, what's a dating skill? If I improve this skill, what will I be able to do, get more dates? Convert more dates into something else? Be a better companion on a date? So on and so forth. What you should do instead is be specific. You need to be specific about what you do. My favorite example is company quote SquareUp.com, where they say, "Start accepting credit cards today", and there's the whole value proposition that goes with it, and a visual. It is extremely simple to understand what they do, and that's what you should do as well. Always strive for clarity. Don't try to sound smart. What ends up happening is actually you sound stupid.

James: Well, you pulled me up on this on my site, especially my products page. had banners which were ambiguous for someone who didn't know my product range or whatever and I was probably assuming too much prior knowledge. And you talked about this notion of pogo-sticking. I'd love it if you could cover that.

Peep: Well, it's another common conversion mistake companies do. Let's say you sell ten different products and they're on your products page. However you don't say anything about the products. You have only names of the products, so Product 1, Product 2, Product 3 and so on, and they're each linked to a more specific product page. So now, your user reading these product names usually does not understand what this product is, does, and how it is useful and is it the right fit and so on and so forth. So in order to find the right product for them, or to even evaluate if any of them is good or the right fit for them, they would have to click through each of these ten pages. So they click on Product Number 1, read it, click back. Click on Product Number 2, read, click back. So that's called pogo sticking, and people hate it. They won't pogo stick for more than one, two, maybe three products, then that's it. If they don't find what they need or want within that amount of clicks, they're just going to leave. So in your site design, you have to avoid pogo sticking, and you have to give enough information about a link or a product or whatever the call to action is, before clicking, so they would know,

before clicking, whether that's something they actually want to click to, whether it's something they might be interested in. On ecommerce sites and category pages, you want to include some product copy. You want to show images, you want to show the price, the key information. And if you don't do that, people are going to leave.

James: Would a comparison chart be helpful?

Peep: Yeah, but it doesn't solve the pogo sticking problem. It will help somewhat.

James: I have a site with multiple products, as you described, and we have a [comparison chart link](#) where people can go and compare all the products, in one table, and that seems very popular on my heat map.

Peep: Good! It might be a lot of ecommerce sites have this functionality, where they can compare different products on a matrix but looking at that in ecommerce stores, it's like less than 2% users ever do that. For sure, it depends on the site and how it's implemented. It might or might not help. But it's still not an excuse for having pogo sticks.

James: May I ask you a side question here, Peep? When you take on a web job, how common would it be that a person asking you to help them would ever do any kind of tracking or metrics, or understand who their customer is?

Peep: In most cases, my customers have a very good idea of who their customers are, and do a whole bunch of tracking. I would say that less than 10% are clueless. And also, of course, my target customer – my services are not the cheapest – a business has to grow to a certain level before they're able to use me, so hence in order to grow to that level they have to be smart enough to measure stuff.

James: Got you. And would that be your advice to everyone, to just start getting their analytics in place before they need it?

Peep: Well, I mean, you need it Day One, so sure, of course. Analytics in place is also too vague. Measuring how many visitors you get is nice and dandy, but it does not tell you where the people are coming from that are actually going to give you money. You need to track conversions, that's what actually matters. Where are people coming from that sign up to your list, or buy your stuff/ In the end, it's all about conversions, not visits. You can get a hundred thousand visits from StumbleUpon a month, but I can promise you that none of them will buy anything. You're lucky to get one of them to sign up to your email list. So traffic in the end does not translate to sales directly.

James: I agree with you. I've been obsessed with conversions lately, even down to tracking each individual opt-in to know which one is performing better for each of the opt-in choices on the site so that next time I come and see you I'm going to be armed with some very detailed information.

Peep: Perfect, perfect. Well that leads me to another common mistake, which is people are not testing. Most of the websites look exactly the way they looked the day the designer was done. The designer, who is usually not very knowledgeable about conversions, just throws

something together and that's it. Many keep their websites exactly the same for years. So let's say you're making a hundred thousand dollars a year from your website. In three years' time, that's three hundred thousand dollars. But let's say that you had split testing, something that, let's say that, your value proposition was kind of vague or poor, and let's say that instead of keeping it the same all three years you would have run a split test and increased the results by 20%. So in three years, that makes a sixty thousand dollar difference. So that's huge, and it's not rare to improve your results way more than just 20%. You could be making double what you're doing now, if you only test it. You should split test every email capture offer that you make, you should capture everything about your product base – the copy, the price, you know, what not, the list goes on and on. If you don't test, you won't know which – well basically you're blind when you don't have to be, so you have to test it.

James: That makes sense. I'm always running [A/B split tests](#) on my opt-in page, and at the moment, my winning variation is plus 50% on my control so if I hadn't have tested that, I'd be missing out on an enormous amount of opt-ins of over a period of a period of a year. The compound effect would be dramatic if you average out the average sale value.

Peep: Exactly, well of course not every test will give you a 50% lift and statistically speaking, only one test out of eight will give you a significant lift but those seven other tests that don't give you a lift will give you learning because the way to run the A/B test is not that you just test random stuff. Today let us test green versus blue, no, you always have to have a hypothesis. Just like why aren't my customers buying more stuff? Maybe they don't believe that the stuff works. So my hypothesis is that if I would provide more proof that they would buy more so I created a different variation where I just overloaded it with proof. You know, case studies, testimonials, university research, backing my claims, what not, and run that version against the control, the original version. If it loses, doesn't provide boost, then I have learning, ok. It's not about people believing the value of the product, it's something else. Maybe they don't understand what I'm selling. So I create another version where the hypothesis is that if I improve clarity, they will buy more of my stuff, and I create another version, you just reword everything, make it super clear with instructional videos and check and what not and see how that goes. So if a test fails, at least you'll learn something about your audience and what they value.

James: One of the interesting results I'm having is something that I sort of got a clue from you about is I've actually removed some elements. I've got less things and I've found out that it has lifted conversions. Does this fall into a mistake overloading our site with too many choices?

Peep: Well, it all depends on the exact execution, so too much choice can be a very bad thing if done badly but if people are just browsing around looking for that one right thing, it might work. So I have a customer, [onlinebootstore.com](#), they have a sidebar menu and kind of ugly and it had way too many things around it and I think it had like 200 menu items. Well that shows that once you reduce it to significantly less the conversions go down or we can look at [fab.com](#), you know the super successful startup. Fab.com is all about showing you a huge amount of products all the time. They sell through photos so they sell you product photos and you can see hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. Their whole model is based on something will finally catch your eye and you'll buy it. If you're shopping for, let's say, health insurance

and they give you 200 customizable options, then it's better to give just a simplified plan. It depends.

James: Ok, so the main point is it depends and you should test it.

Peep: Sure, I would recommend erring on the less choice side and of course the more choices you provide, the more filters, you need to provide. So Garry Vaynerchuk social media wine guy, so he runs a wine store called winelibrary.com, he has a million bottles of wine and you know for anyone who has tried to shop for wine in the supermarket, you know how the choice can be overwhelming, you know, which bottle are you going to buy. So, he had done a super good job in providing filters. You see these million bottles of wine and then you started narrowing down. Well show me only those that have been rated 90 points or above or show me only reds show me only cabernet sauvignon and merlot, well actually show me only those wines from Argentina and so on and so forth until in the end I there are 5 bottles and now I read product descriptions and then I decide which bottle is coming home with me.

James: Nice, I like that, that's a good example. So tell me what's another common mistake that you see, Peep?

Peep: Another common mistake is lead capturing emails on a site. "Way too many sites have joined our free newsletter", excuse me, I'd like to see paid newsletter please. Or "Receive tips and updates", nobody wants to receive tips and updates. Our inbox is already cluttered. Everybody has lead capture forms on their website, so if you want to get my email, it'd better be something interesting, something that actually catches my eye. Something like, "Oh, that's good stuff, I want it", so the best way to get good interesting lead idea, you should brainstorm by yourself and come up with 10 ideas that you might think would be interesting. "This is a free training about X", "Be first to know when I release new products." "Sign up for \$20 coupon off the first purchase" and you create a multiple choice survey. You send it on to either your news letter or some sort of list that you have where the people on that list are qualified and that they're interested in what you're selling or offering and have them pick. If you could pick one of these ten things, which one would you like the most? Would you like the coupon, would you like the free report and you'll start seeing trends very quickly And then you take the top two or three ideas and then you develop the actual content for those lead magnet offers or even coupons that are 5 minutes to set up and then you put them on your website so there is no excuse for having joined our free newsletter on your site.

James: Excellent advice. Was there any lead magnet that stands out for you that you were shocked at the results? Like good or bad?

Peep: Not shocked really. I'm convinced that anybody who puts effort into a good lead will see excellent results, so here's an example. A customer of mine, Bryan Moran from Get 10,000 Fans. So we've built this landing page for him, on the site TheTimelineBlueprint.com, and it's basically...well, Bryan of course creates the content, but well, basically the text says, "This new landing page design increased sales by 53.1 %." And then there's a video explaining this, another line of text and "Just enter your email, and get immediate access to the template and a training video." So that page, depending on the traffic source, converts between 20 and 30%, which is really, really good, but at the same time I expected it to perform well.

James: Cool. I'll be happy with my 37 and a half percent, then.

Peep: Yeah, 37 and a half. I think anything above 30% is phenomenally good.

James: Okay, so we've covered so far, just a quick recap, we've talked about the value proposition, the first thing that people see on their site. We've talked about vague bullshit, making sure that we're specific, and we have clarity. We've talked about pogo sticking, and product names. And we've talked about testing, when we put up a site we've got to continually test. And we've talked about lead magnets. Let's see if we can round down our mistakes with a big finishing item. What do you think you'd like to emblazon on our listeners' minds, that they should really pay attention to as a result of listening to this episode?

Peep: Start with the user in mind. Really be skeptical about what they are interested in. Don't assume that they'll want your stuff. You have to communicate clearly, make them want it, and really put effort into wording stuff in a way that is user-centric as opposed to your product-centric approach. So if you put the user first, then the copy, the offer, the testing and so on, I think, is a natural next step.

James: Makes perfect sense, and it's one of the suggestions you made for me, and I know that's helped a lot. Alright, well, Peep, I really appreciate your coming on and talking about some of these mistakes. As I said, I found you through other people telling me that your blog was a good place to learn about conversions, and I did purchase a report, and the report was very useful for my business, so that's why I wanted to get you on and see if you could help out a few other listeners as well.

So I invite listener comments on this episode, and Peep, I'll be sending you another report request soon for one of my other sites because it was great value.

Peep: Perfect. I'm happy to help out anybody. Guys, ConversionXL is my blog and there are links to the review service and other stuff I can do for you in terms of improving conversions, and I'll be watching the comments on this podcast and any questions you have, I'll be happy to answer.

James: There you go, folks, that's Peep Laja from [ConversionXL.com](#). Thanks, Peep.

Peep: Thank you.

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