UserTesting.com

Why Your Customers Are Abandoning Their Carts

And What You Can Do About It

CONTENTS

OUR METHODOLOGY

At UserTesting.com, we're committed to helping you give your customers the best possible online shopping experience. Over the last few years, we've watched thousands of videos documenting the frustration customers go through while navigating e-commerce stores. This study is the culmination of our findings when researching shopping cart abandonment.

Through our research, we've found that there are four main reasons customers abandon their carts. We've also found a number of ways to counteract these reasons, which will help you ease your customers through the checkout process and most importantly, to make you even more money.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

You know you've done it at least once - peeked at your live cart just to see how many customers you have rolling around your e-commerce store. You've watched a customer put item after item in the cart, enter their information, then… nothing.

Watching a customer abandon a cart is a heartbreaking experience for e-commerce store owners, and the bad news is that it happens *every day*.

You might be comforted to know that you're not alone in your predicament to reduce shopping cart abandonment. Baymard Institute cites 19 studies from 2006 to 2013 in determining that 67.35% is the average documented online shopping cart abandonment rate. That means the average store owner has better odds of correctly guessing a coin flip than converting a customer.

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The good thing is that while it might be impossible to convert 100% of your customers, it's certainly possible to improve your chances. But before we dig into the meat and potatoes of how you can convert more customers, there's one more thing we have to address.

IT MIGHT BE TOO EARLY IN THE RELATIONSHIP

Nobody wants to be on the wrong end of an "it's not you, it's me" conversation, but within the context of your relationship with your customers, it's just something you have to accept.

One of the best things about shopping online is being able to hop from store to store without leaving your seat, and without having to fight that psychological commitment to buy each time you walk into a store. Customers no longer have to drive or call around to find the best price; they simply have to type in a URL and go.

Surveys have shown that 37% of online shoppers comparison shop, which explains why comparison shopping engines like NexTag, Google Shopping and even Amazon have continued to grow. These channels make it even easier for customers to compare prices, and "easy" is exactly what customers want out of a shopping experience.

While the ease with which shoppers can compare prices online might be great for consumers, online store owners like you probably don't feel the warm fuzzies when you think of potential customers leaving your site. Since comparison shopping isn't going away any time soon, the best way to keep customers on your site is to engage them through customer-centric features, which is what we'll cover in the pages that follow.

The way to build trust and rapport with your customers is by giving them a great experience on your site. For new visitors, the first time they browse your site is like a first date. If they like what they see, you can be sure that they'll be back when they're ready.

# Difficulty With The Checkout Process

$12.99
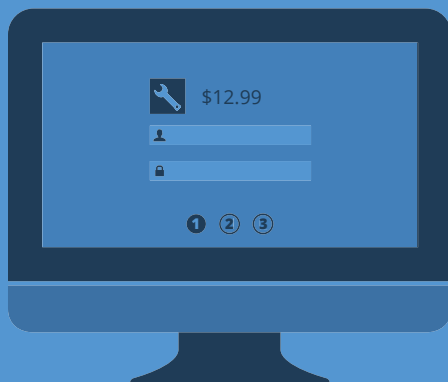
Whether it's the lack of a guest checkout feature, or even the inability for a customer to use their preferred payment method, there are a number of potential pitfalls that can cause a customer to abandon ship as they're checking out.

Amazon may have secured one-click ordering as their intellectual property, but there's more than one way to make an omelet, and there's certainly more than one way to ease customers through the checkout process:

SOLUTION #1: DON'T REQUIRE REGISTRATION

If you're making customers register, you're giving them the opportunity to walk away from the sale.

Take a look at the test in Example 1. The participant was asked to go as far in the checkout process as possible without entering payment information. As soon as she got to the checkout page, the first thing she mentioned was the lack of a guest checkout option.
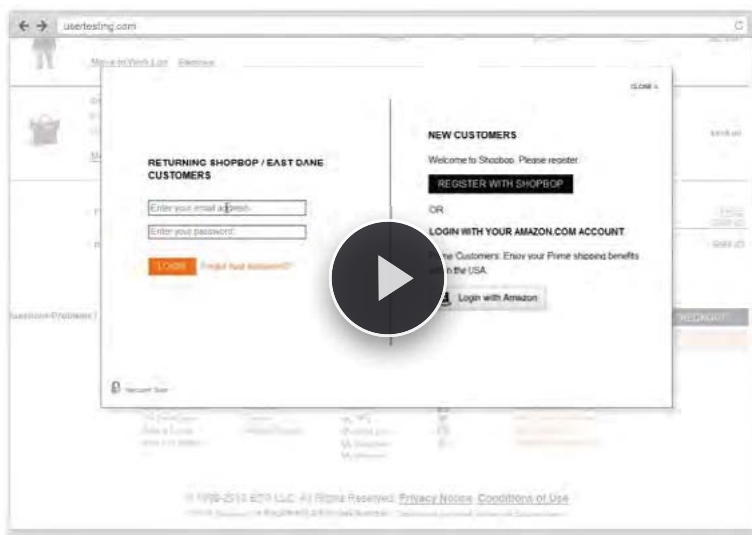

Example 1: "I was kind of hoping I could (check out) as a guest."

When customers are finally done comparison shopping and have picked you as the best option, make it easy for them to check out. Like the tester in Example 2, the general impression of customers is that guest checkout will allow them to complete the process faster. Allow customers to check out as guests so they can breeze through the checkout process by entering only their shipping and billing address.

Example 2:
"I would choose to check out as a guest because I think it's going to be faster."
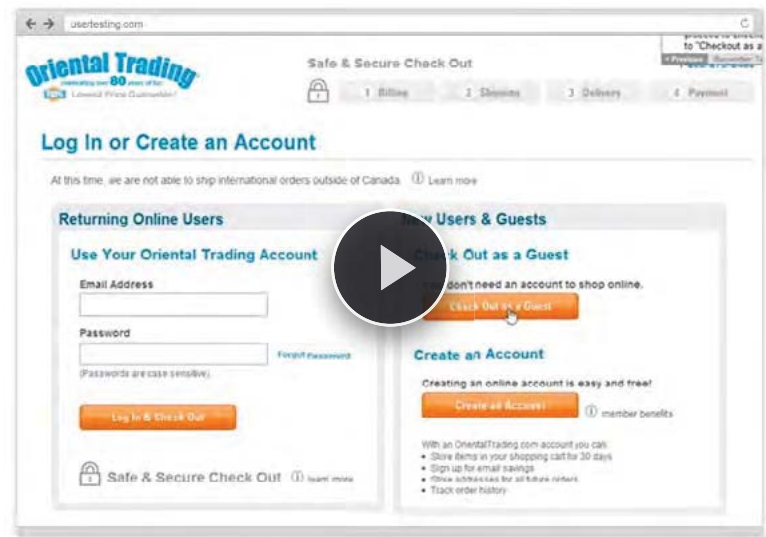

If you absolutely have to make your visitors register, consider giving them the option to register using their social media accounts. There's a good chance they're already signed in to their Twitter or Facebook accounts, so take advantage of it.

SOLUTION #2: MAKE IT EASY TO ENTER PROMO CODES

Customers love discounts and instant gratification, so why not give it to them? Let customers see how their promo codes will affect their orders early in the checkout process. They'll see a better price, which reinforces that they're making the right decision by buying from you, and you'll help them avoid any surprises at the end of the checkout process.

In the example below, the tester points out that she expects to be able to use her promo code earlier in the checkout process. Not all customers have the patience to comb through each page to read the fine print of where a coupon code entry form will be in the checkout process. Make it easy for your customers, and save them the frustration of not finding the field at first glance.
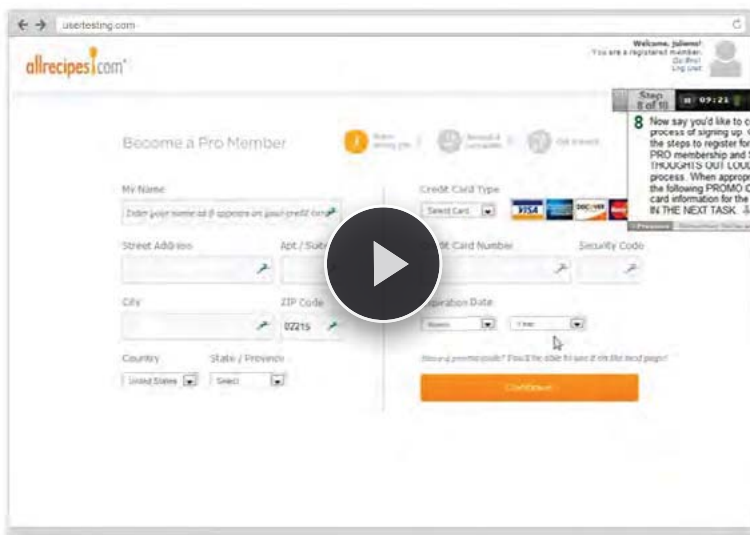
Example 3: "This is where the promo code should be showing up."

SOLUTION #3: INCLUDE ALL POPULAR PAYMENT METHODS

We're not just talking about popular credit card types, but also popular online payment methods. Are you already using PayPal or Google Wallet? If not, these payment methods and other similar services might be worth exploring.

Not only do they give your customers more payment options, they also make it that much easier to check out. Rather than having to fill out credit card information, your customer is given a prompt to log into their virtual wallet and confirm the purchase. It may not be one-click ordering, but it's pretty darn close, and it's so common these days that most customers, like the one in Example 4, expect it to be an option.

Example 4: Crocs was able to make adjustments to their checkout process thanks to feedback from customers about available payment methods.
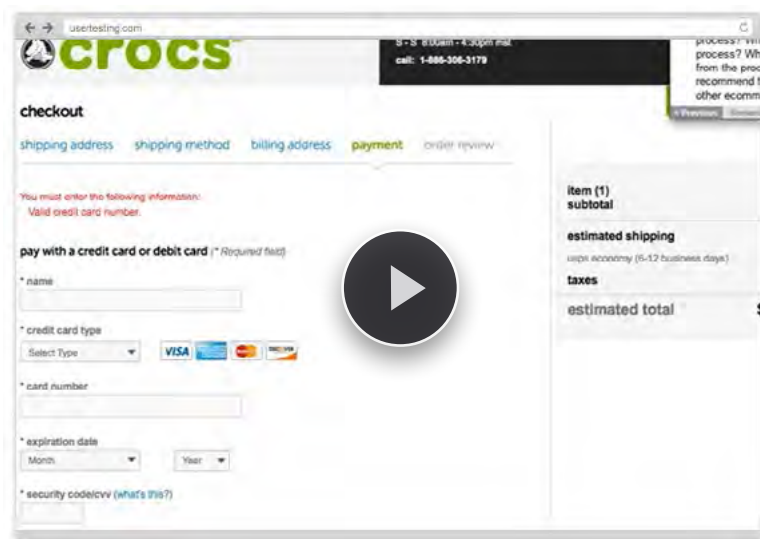
An additional benefit to using virtual wallet services is alleviating customer concerns about privacy. If you're not one of the behemoths in your industry, new customers might feel hesitant to enter their credit card information. Allowing payments through virtual wallet services lets customers pay for your services with the comfort of knowing that their payment information is secure.
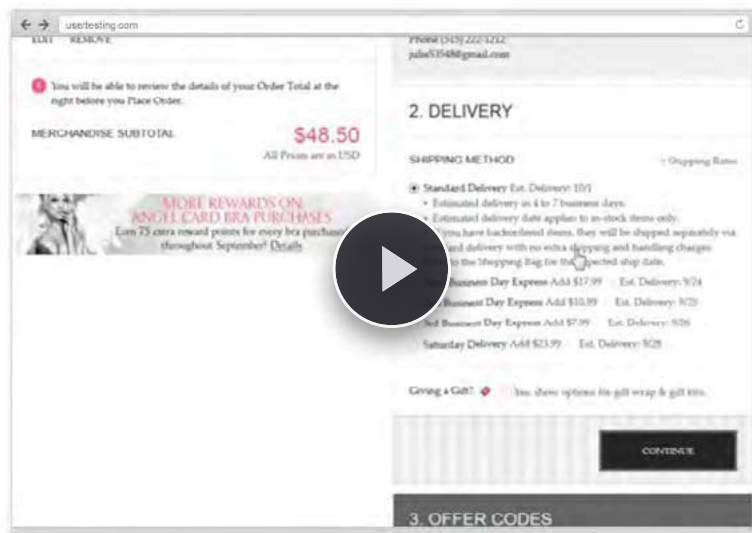
Shipping Surprises
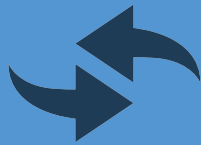
Have you ever gone through a site's checkout process only to find out that shipping effectively doubles the total purchase cost? On top of that, the delivery would take 5 days to get to your doorstep. Oh yeah, and don't forget the tax.

Unless you're the world's most patient billionaire, odds are that you quickly abandoned your cart.

*Example 5:
This tester wanted shipping costs that were easier to find.*

Through our studies, we've found that high shipping costs and prolonged delivery times are two of the most common reasons shoppers abandon their carts.

We realize that distribution center locations dictate the cost of shipping and time of delivery, but there are still things you can control to make your shipping options more appealing to potential customers. At the very least, these tips will also help you qualify your customers before they even place an item in their carts, and save you both from mutual heartbreak.

SOLUTION #1: MAKE SHIPPING COSTS PREDICTABLE

Customers don't want to go through the checkout process only to find out that shipping will cost a fortune. Give them the easiest possible way to estimate shipping costs based on their zip codes, and spare them any surprises prior to checking out.

Example 6:
"I want to know exactly how much money I'm paying before I put in a payment method."
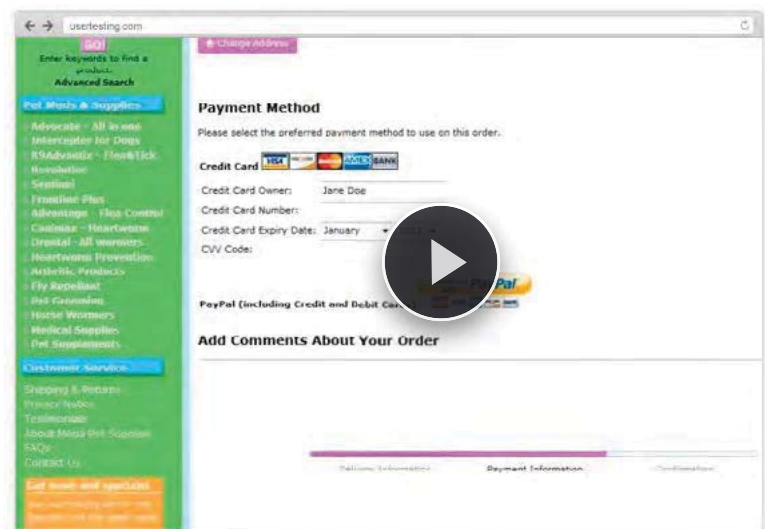
If your budget allows for it, implement free or flat-rate shipping and make it obvious. If you go this route, don't just stick it on the homepage and hope that your customer will see it. Place it in your header or even on product pages of qualified products. Customers want to be able to accurately predict the dollar amount of their order and this gives them one less cost that they'll have to guess.
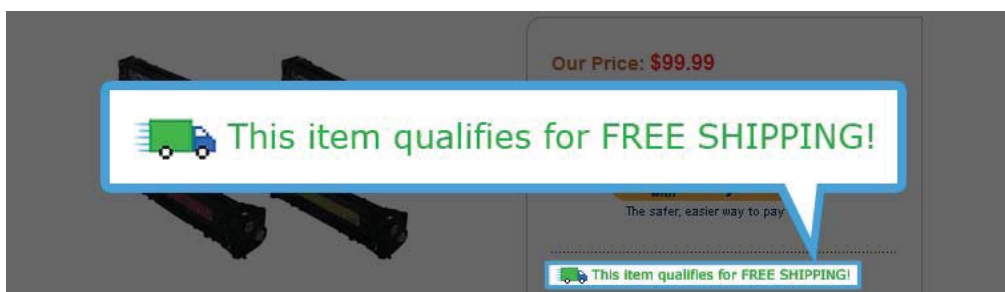

No surprise costs with shipping here.

SOLUTION #2: IMPLEMENT A PERPETUAL CART

While customers are shopping, they like seeing a running total of their order. It assures them that if their total doesn't look right when they've added a new item to the cart, they'll be able to fix it immediately, just like the customer in Example 7.
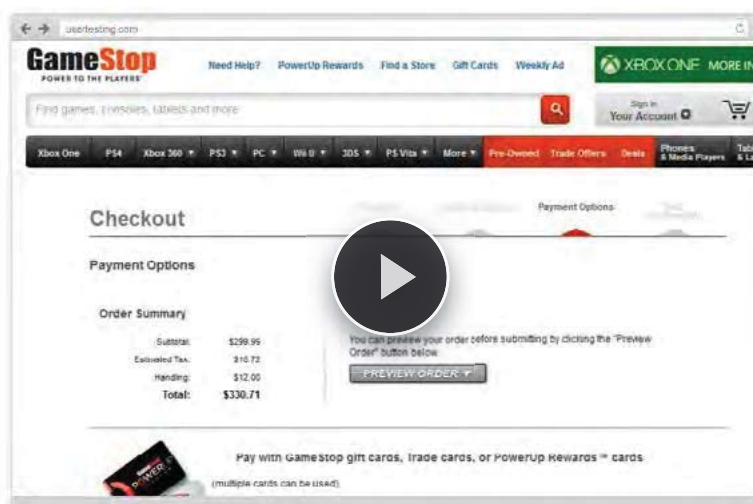
Example 7:
"Seeing the products in a perpetual cart… just makes me feel better about it."
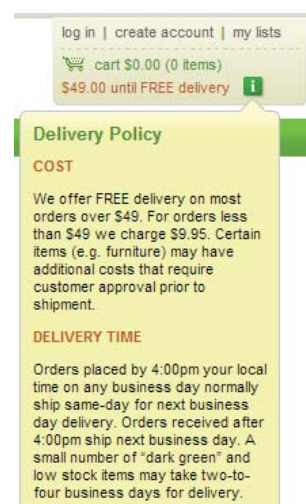
A perpetual cart with running totals, free shipping policy, and delivery times.

If you have a promotion triggered by price, such as free shipping, it also gives you an opportunity to give your customer a sense of instant gratification once they meet the minimum price. Take a look at the feature-packed perpetual cart above. It features not only a running total of the shopping cart, it also has a running countdown of how much more you would need to spend to get free shipping.

SOLUTION #3: DELIVER ON DELIVERY

The last thing a customer wants to see after completing their order is that delivery will take longer than they would like. Give customers a realistic estimated time of delivery early in the checkout process. As you can see with Example 8, it's something they expect every checkout page to have.

Example 8:
"I'm looking for something that tells me when my order will arrive and I don't see anything."

Tracking codes are also a great way to build customer trust, so be sure to shoot them over as soon as they're available. Amazon requires its vendors to have the tracking code within one business day, and it's a good rule of thumb to follow.

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Lack Of Trust

Part of the challenge of running an e-commerce store is adequately easing customer fears. Customers already have a sense of detachment because they can't physically touch the product they're buying, and if you don't have in-store pickup, they still have to wait at least a day before they receive their order. There's also the worry that sensitive payment and personal information can be compromised.

While these challenges are unavoidable for e-commerce stores without a brick-and-mortar presence, there are still a few things you can do to build customer trust. Through our studies we've found a few ways to ease any fears customers might have from handing you their payment information.

SOLUTION #1: USE SECURITY ICONS AND TRUST SYMBOLS

Customers look for ways to assure themselves that it's safe to hand over their payment information, and this is especially true for smaller e-commerce sites. Don't be afraid to show off your trust icons or trust marks; these little icons go a long way toward building customer trust.

A few examples of well known trust marks.
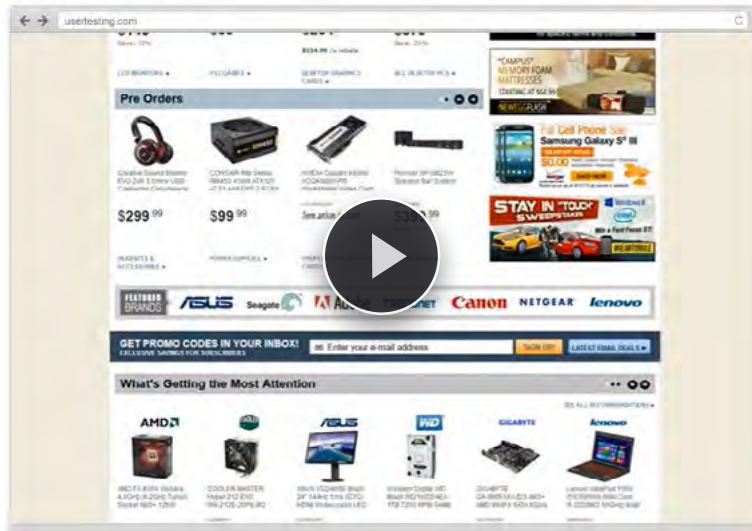
Example 9: "That (BBB logo) really boosts my confidence here."

Be sure to also test your placement to make sure potential customers can see your trust icons. Not all customers have the patience to snoop around your site to find these symbols, so take the work out of their hands and use your test results to find the best placement. Leave no doubt in your customer's mind that their payment and personal information are in good hands. The tester in the video above explains that seeing the BBB symbol holds the store accountable.

SOLUTION #2: EASILY ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Not all customers will have questions, but for those who do, it's a good idea for your customer service options to be easily accessible. Otherwise, you're increasing the likelihood that they'll look somewhere else for help, and that's never a good thing.

If your resources allow for it, implement live chat to make it easy for customers to get help. Customers like the one in Example 10 want to resolve problems immediately, and having access to live chat allows them to reach a customer support representative in real time.

It also never hurts to test the placement of your contact information to make sure it's handy when your customers need it most.
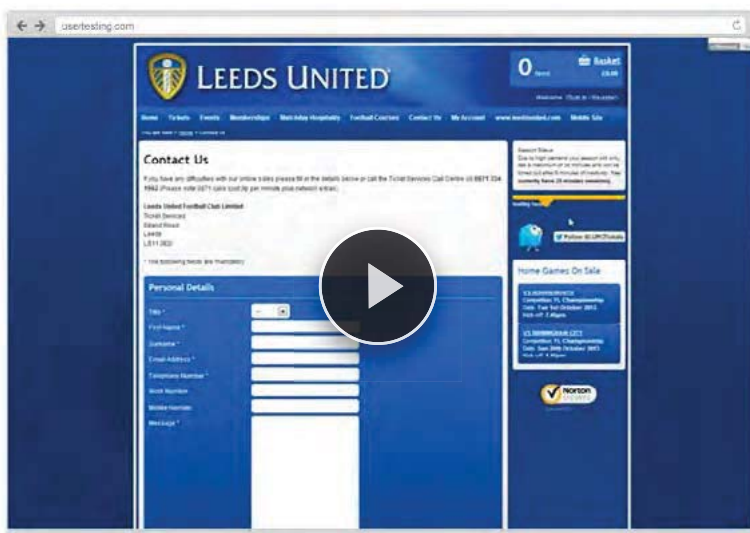
Example 10: Tester suggests adding a live chat option.

Verizon features an easily accessible live chat and available times.

SOLUTION #3: INCLUDE PRODUCT REVIEWS

Praise the quality of your products all you want, but at the end of the day, most customers will look to their peers to make their final decision. Our studies have shown that while some customers look to third party sites for product reviews, most customers would like to see reviews on a site's product pages.

Most customers will actively seek reviews to gauge the quality of an item because they can't evaluate a physical product. This includes the way an article of clothing fits or the build quality of an electronic gadget.

Example 11:
Tester would like to see reviews on this product page.

The User Becomes Distracted

While customers are shopping on your site, there's always a chance that their experience will be interrupted by something beyond your control. E-commerce sites don't have the luxury of brick-and-mortar retailers who already have the customer within the confines of their store, so what do you do?

Rather than worrying about external stimuli that could potentially distract customers, start looking at your own site and find out how your customers are being distracted. Not sure where to start? Here are a few things you can focus on to minimize distractions during the checkout process.

SOLUTION #1: TEST THE RELEVANCE AND PLACEMENT OF RELATED PRODUCTS

End caps and impulse sections like the one on the right might work well in brick-and-mortar stores, but this doesn't necessarily translate to e-commerce stores. Not all customers like to be upsold or reminded of what they haven't purchased yet before checkout, so be sure to test the placement of your related products section throughout your site to see what works best.

An impulse end cap reminding shoppers to pick up a pineapple on the way out.

Credit: The Curious Shopper

If possible, test your placement in the early stages of your design process by using prototypes or mockups. The last thing you'd want is for customers to react like the tester in Example 12 after your site has already gone live.
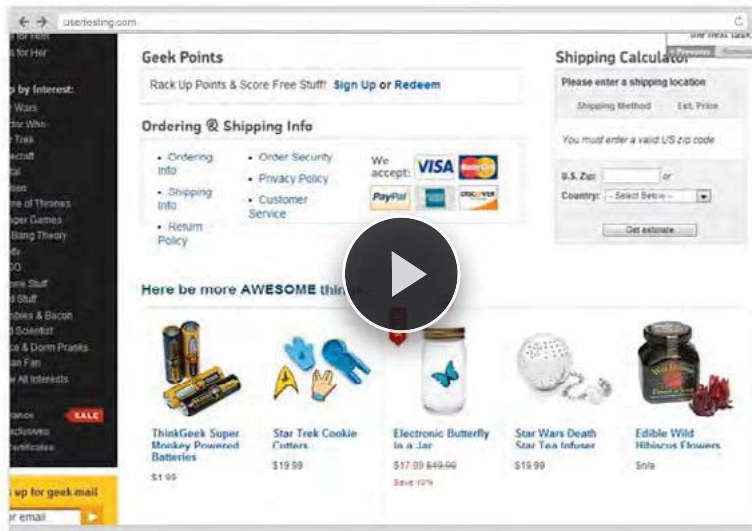
Example 12:
"It kind of seems like it's... more products shoved down my throat."

The lesson to be learned here is that the sooner you test your placement, the happier you'll be. If you didn't get a chance to test prior to launching your site, it's not the end of the world. Regular testing will help you refine your existing cart and find the sweet spot that gives you the most bang for your buck.

If possible, test your placement in the early stages of your design process by using prototypes or mockups.

SOLUTION #2: TEST THE PLACEMENT AND TIMING OF YOUR POPUPS

When was the last time you heard anyone speak favorably of popups? If you're like most people, the answer is likely "never." All you have to do is look at a list of the most popular extensions for your favorite browser, and it's a given that at least one ad-blocking utility is somewhere near the top. That's how much people dislike popups.

But don't let that discourage you, because not all popups are "bad." Studies have shown that popups can be very effective in collecting feedback and email addresses, but you have to be careful how you use them. As you can see in Example 13, a mistimed or misplaced popup can adversely affect your customers' experiences.

Example 13:
"This popup came up and got me distracted from what I was genuinely interested in."

This is why it's absolutely imperative that you test its placement and timing, and you should try as many different combinations as possible for the best results.

Whether it's in a corner as your customer has completed checking out, or dead center as soon as they land on a specific page, there is no secret formula. Only rigorous testing will help you find the combination that's right for your customers, so test regularly and test often.

...it's imperative that you test the placement and timing of your popups.

Closing Thoughts

Optimizing your shopping cart is no easy task, and there really is no magic formula, because every online store caters to a different demographic. What may work for your competitors, no matter how similar their service and products are to yours, might not necessarily work for you.

> *The only way to find out what works for you is to observe your customers' behaviors through regular testing.*

The only way to find out what works for you is to observe your customers' behaviors through regular testing, and the four areas we covered in this report are great places to start:

- **Simplify your checkout process** by giving customers the option to check out without having to register, allowing them to enter promo codes as soon as possible, and including all of the popular payment methods.

- **Take all of the guesswork out of shipping** by allowing customers to estimate shipping costs and delivery times early in the checkout process.

- **Build customer trust** by prominently displaying trust symbols, customer support options and product reviews.

- **Minimize distractions** in your checkout process by testing the relevance and placement of related products, as well as the placement and timing of your popups.

TEST SMARTER, TEST FASTER

Rather than trying to predict your customers' buying habits and tendencies while shopping on your site, why not test them? By using UserTesting.com, you can have a test up and running within minutes and have access to actionable insights in less than an hour.

With UserTesting.com, you're guaranteed to find actionable insights from your tests or you'll get your money back. There's really nothing to lose, and conversions to gain.

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