Plan your first test

It can be tempting to think that you know where your website works, and where it doesn't. But there's a problem: you've used your website before. You know where the problems are and you intuitively avoid them. You know why design decisions were made and the constraints that influenced them.

User testing gives you an objective insight into your retail site, based on the experience of real shoppers. Follow these steps in order to run your first user test.

Our recommendations

Based on your response to the ordering activity, our recommendations are ranked below

1 **Recruit your test group**   Top recommendation

User testing does not need to be a large-scale, complicated activity. In fact, it's better to keep it simple. User experience experts the Nielsen Norman Group recommend recruiting just five people for each test. This number is small enough to be cost effective, but large enough to identify any major problems that could be costing you sales.

2 **Make it challenging**

If you ask users what they think of your site, they will give you an opinion. A better approach is to give them an authentic challenge. For example, ask your users to purchase a product using a new feature, like Google Pay. By watching what they do, you will be able to see what works well - and where they have difficulty.

3 **Test across devices**

Your mobile site cannot be an afterthought. Test across desktop, tablet and mobile to gain crucial insight into how your shoppers are interacting with your website. You can then use these insights to identify problem areas and make improvements to functionality.

4 **Test little and often**

As you start to see the value of user testing, it can be tempting to recruit more than five users. These extra users tend to add little value, but dramatically increase associated costs. Instead of adding extra users, use additional budget to run multiple tests on different site features. For example: How easy is it to create an account? Do shoppers notice your newsletter sign-up feature? Testing these features is not just a business activity, it's a mindset. If you don't know what's wrong, you can't fix it.

Your next steps

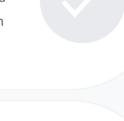Now that you have some insight into how to recruit and structure a user test, take the following steps to get started.

Mark as complete

1. Find your users

Websites like usertesting.com let you recruit users based on attributes like age, location and gender. You will be sent videos of their interactions with your website so that you can watch their behaviour and gain insights.

2. Set your challenge

Top tip: Set authentic challenges based on what you think your customers are looking for when they come to your site. For example, if you sell cycling gear, watch how they search your site for helmets.

3. Test across devices

Top tip: Set up the same test across devices to gain insights into the different actions your shoppers are taking. For example: How many pages do they look at on desktop vs mobile? If this is different, why do you think that is?

4. Find new users for subsequent tests

Top tip: Try to avoid using the same users for multiple tests. As they get used to your site, they tend to stop behaving like actual shoppers. Instead, they 'work around' any quirks in your site's design. Seek out new testers for more accurate insights.

Helpful links and resources

How many test users in a usability study?   ↗

Guidance on designing the best user experience   ↗

Where can I go from here?

Once you're comfortable in this area, why not look for more inspiration to help you improve your retail site?

Go to Learn page →