

The Definitive Guide to Shopping Cart Abandonment

JEREMY SMITH



Contents

Introduction to a Killer: Straight Talk about Shopping Cart Abandonment.....	4
Reason 1: Your Website Lacks Trust Factors.....	10
Reason 2: Your Website Has Usability Problems.....	16
Reason 3: Your Checkout Process Is Long and Complicated.....	21
Reason 4: Your System Requires Account Creation Prior to Checkout.....	26
Reason 5: Your Shipping Charges Take Shoppers by Surprise.....	31
Reason 6: You Don't Have a Return Policy.....	34
Reason 7: Your Payment Options Are Limited.....	38
Reason 8: Your Security Measures Are Either Too Strict or Too Lax.....	43
Reason 9: Your Shopping Cart Is Hard to Find.....	50
Reason 10: Your Coupon Codes Don't Work.....	59
Reason 11: Your Provide No Help During in the Checkout Process.....	66
Reason 12: You Add Unexpected Costs.....	74
Reason 13: Your Checkout Process Is Bland or Unfriendly.....	79
Reason 14: Conclusion.....	88

Introduction

What is the biggest drain on your profit potential?

If you sell online, it could easily be shopping cart abandonment.

It doesn't matter whether you sell one product or thousands, you've probably experienced it: people exiting your site after clicking the Buy button but before the sale is complete. And if your numbers are high or your margin small, it can really hurt your profits.

So how do you protect yourself? This no-BS guide shares a few of the cold, hard facts — plus the top 13 reasons people abandon your cart and exactly how to fix these issues.

Ready for some straight talk about shopping cart abandonment? Let's begin...

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT SHOPPING CART ABANDONMENT

Shopping cart abandonment is your fiercest enemy in the e-commerce battle. It's a phantom-like killer that is as elusive as the Gray Man, as annoying as ["Call Me Maybe."](#) and as unshakeable as a bad case of caffeine craving. Shopping cart abandonment is the nemesis of anyone who makes their living as a peddler on the e-commerce highway.

Yes, it's that bad. According to some research, shopping cart abandonment rates [hover around 67%](#).

But that's one of the more conservative numbers:

- A Listrak study puts it at 72%

- A [Forrester study](#) found that 89% of consumers had abandoned a shopping cart at least once.
- For today's number, check out Listrak's [Shopping Cart Abandonment Index](#). As I write this sentence, it's 71%

If you do e-commerce on any level, shopping cart abandonment is draining your profits. Simply by eliminating abandonment, you could actually boost income so much you could [buy your own private island](#) (or at least buy a nicer chair for your office).

As an e-commerce professional, I spend a lot of time and resources getting into the minds of shoppers. What makes them tick? What makes them buy? What makes them rave over products in one moment, then cuss a blue streak on the product reviews? What makes them tell their friends "it's awesome" or "it sucks?" What do they look at on the screen? Why?

What is my overarching motivation in such eye-straining, brain-stretching study? Quite simply, more conversions.

That said, one of the things that is most aggravating in e-commerce is the customer who almost-but-doesn't buy. It's worse than the proverbial fish that got away. It's shopping cart abandonment.

A FEW BRUTAL FACTS ABOUT SHOPPING CART ABANDONMENT

First, let's just get the bad news out of the way. (It usually works better when I drop a few disappointers, then cheer you up with the good stuff.)

1. It's going to happen.

Shopping cart abandonment is a fact of life, just like taxes, tsunamis, and flossing your teeth. Bad things do happen to good e-commerce sites. Shopping cart abandonment is one of them. Even if you're selling free money, some people are going to abandon the cart. It's just the way life is. Accept it, get therapy, and move on.

Now here's some good news: You can reduce the abandonment.

If you shore up all the issues addressed in this guide, you'll probably get your abandonment rate way down. You just need to keep in mind a critical fact of shopping cart abandonment that you won't have much control over — the customer buying cycle.

In simplified form, here's what it looks like:

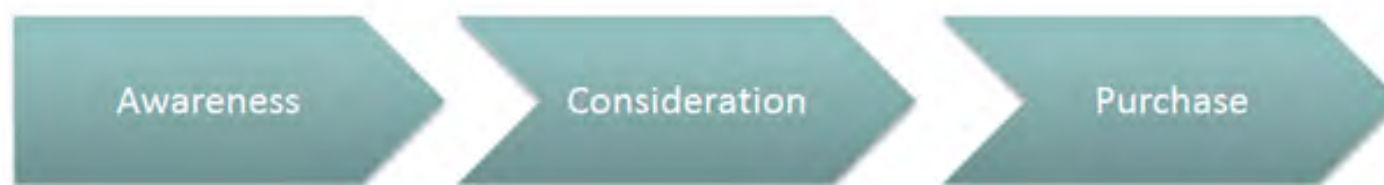


Image from Forentrepreneurs.

[According to Statista.com](https://www.statista.com), the second leading cause of abandonment is that the buyer simply isn't ready to purchase yet.

Customers who are in any phase of the cycle may enter your shopping cart. And most will leave. This doesn't mean your shopping cart has problems. It simply means the customer wasn't ready to buy.

Don't be upset with them. And don't beat yourself up. Buying cycle is a critical part of purchase psychology. Rather than rail against it, accept it and deal with it.

If a shopper is browsing, thinking, comparing, or just researching, he or she may wander into a shopping cart, only to abandon it without a second thought. Heck, I abandoned dozens of shopping carts while researching this guide!

Okay, second bit of ill tidings, then you can put away the box of tissues.

2. You'll never figure out the exact reason for every abandonment.

I'm an inveterate tester. I've been known even to tell my wife to conduct A/B testing on the most effective way to peel a potato. (Just kidding about the potato. It was actually an apple.)

I'm driven by some mysterious force (other than the Dark One), to figure out exactly why shoppers do whatever the heck they do when they're on an e-commerce site. I want to understand the psychology. I'm

nerdy. I've even used the word "focalism" as part of my everyday conversation.

Despite my obsession with e-commerce omniscience, there are just some mysteries of the shopping cart that we'll never understand. As much as I like to think I have all the answers — and, I'll admit, I have most of them — I can't tell you why every freaking customer abandoned.

So, let's just chalk some things up to bad karma, do what we can to prevent more abandonment, and get on to the good stuff — making sure that all the people without psychoses won't abandon our carts.

Ok, that's the bad stuff. (You're welcome.)

Now, let's dive into the research. We're going to deliver up some gleaming pearls of wisdom that will make your e-commerce site a better place — with fewer crimes of abandonment, safer shopping carts, and better products for one and all.

WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO GET FROM THIS GUIDE

This guide is going to tell you exactly what you need to know about shopping cart abandonment — the good, the bad, and the ugly. To understand the fix, we need to understand the problem. The solutions, then, will be fairly obvious.

That's why we break down shopping cart abandonment into its most basic, addressing one problem in each chapter.

By the time you finish reading, you'll know precisely how to improve your conversions and reduce your abandonments.

Think of this as a bar of gold, gleaming on your computer screen as you read it.

It's money. And it's yours.

All you have to do is follow our recommendations to claim it.

Reason#1

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

YOUR WEBSITE LACKS TRUST FACTORS

People won't buy from a site that they can't trust. Plain and simple. When a website is devoid of accepted trust elements, you will have fewer converting customers.

To put that into ordinary language — if your site sucks... if it looks like crap... it doesn't matter how much your product rocks. Nobody wants to buy from a site that doesn't inspire their trust.

- Web 1.0 doesn't inspire trust.
- Rotten UX doesn't inspire trust.
- Blurry graphics don't inspire trust.
- Broken links and 404s don't inspire trust.
- Unresponsive design doesn't inspire trust.

In a word, there are a variety of things on a website that scream to a user: DON'T TRUST ME.
DON'T SPEND YOUR MONEY HERE!

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST

Users must trust the site from which they purchase. After fiascos like [Target's info breach](#), people are skittish about throwing around their digits. They want assurance that you are a trustworthy seller.

[According to Unbounce.com](#), a paltry 65% of brands show security information on the purchase page during checkout. If there aren't any security logos, guarantees, pictures, rave testimonials,

contact information, or similar comforting signs, people get the eerie feeling that they need to jump out of this scam and go shop at Amazon.

HOW TO INSPIRE TRUST

It's not as hard as it may seem. Here are three simple ways to improve the trust factors on your site.

REVEAL PRODUCT REVIEWS

Transparency inspires trust, and in the e-commerce world, it's all about product reviews. People will obviously trust what other customers say about you more than what you say about yourself. When you provide full disclosure, it cultivates a sense of trust on your entire site.


Amazon knows trust factors. Right next to most products, they place the number of reviews and glittering gold stars that tell the world how much this product is loved. There's something trustworthy about buying a device that thousands of other people think is worthy of a five-star rating.







USE RECOGNIZED VERIFICATION SYMBOLS.

As we'll discuss later in this book, certain symbols are trust markers. The presence of these value-add images on a site give visitors and shoppers the sense of bona fide they need to go through with a purchase.

Trust factors usually look familiar — logos, a lock icon, etc.— and help to inspire a degree of confidence in your site.

 **Secure credit card payment**
This is a secure 128-bit SSL encrypted payment.

* **Credit card number**
The 16 digits on the front of your credit card.
    

* **Expiration date**
The date your credit card expires. Find this on the front of your credit card.
 /

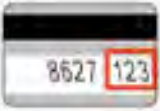
* **Security code** (or "CVC" or "CVV")
The last 3 digits displayed on the back of your credit card.
 

Image from SmashingMagazine.com.

TELL YOUR CUSTOMERS THAT YOU CAN BE TRUSTED.

There's no harm in just telling it how it is. Let people know, in plain language, that you care about being trustworthy. Whether you're endorsed by agency XYZ, or have a membership with TrustNetwork 123, you can simply state the facts about your validity.

Here's Brooks Brothers, who wants their users to know that a secure-sounding bank and other rules and policies are firmly in place. Notice the print at the bottom of the page.



The screenshot shows the Brooks Brothers online credit center interface. At the top, the Brooks Brothers logo is displayed. Below it, a navigation bar includes a link to "Access your Account". The main content area is titled "ACCESS YOUR ACCOUNT & PREFER TO GO PAPERLESS!". On the left, there is an image of two Brooks Brothers credit cards. To the right of the image, a list of services is provided: "View Balance and Pay Your Bills Online", "Update your personal information", "Add an authorized user", and "Log-in to Sign Up for Paperless Statements!". Below this list is a "Cardmember Login" section with a "User ID" input field, a "Remember me" checkbox, and a "Log In" button. Further down, there are links for "Lookup User ID", "Activate My Card", and "Where do I enter my Password". For "First Time Users", there is a "Register Here" link, and a "Frequently Asked Questions" link is also present. At the bottom of the page, a disclaimer states: "The Brooks Brothers Online Credit Center is operated by GE Capital Retail Bank ('GECRB'), the issuer of the Brooks Brothers Credit Cards. The GECRB Internet Privacy Policy, GECRB Privacy Policy and the GECRB Web Usage Agreement govern the rules of the Brooks Brothers Online Credit Center. Please note that this privacy policy and web usage agreement may differ from Brooks Brothers. To see how we keep your personal information safe and secure, please visit GE Fraud Protection."

CONCLUSION

The best place for trust factors is in the most critical phase of your site — the checkout phase. Shopping cart abandonment happens because people get wary, anxious, and jittery.

Basically, they lose trust. If you can gain the trust in the shopping cart, you can score more conversions.

Reason#2

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

YOUR WEBSITE HAS USABILITY PROBLEMS

Another major contributor to abandonment is the usability of your site. If potential customers have problems accessing, navigating, or otherwise using your site, they will become frustrating with your shopping cart. They'll abandon.

[Podcastfaq.com defines site usability](#) as “how easy it is for visitors to use the site, navigate and understand the content. If your site was created in 1985, is not responsive, takes four years to load, or is somehow a piece of junk, don't be surprised that your abandonment rate is 90% or higher.

In order to buy your products, people need to be able to use the site's checkout process. When dealing with the issue of web usability, keep this in mind: The customer doesn't want to think about the process. They simply want to do.

They have enough on their mind. Things like, Can I afford this? Do I need this? Is it the best one? They don't want to add in a fresh layer of concern: “Why isn't the back button working? Where do I enter the CV code? Why do I have to enter my address twice?

Make the process so smooth and seamless that they proceed without even thinking about it. Remember when self-checkout registers first came out? We may never know how many people left piles of merchandise sitting on the hulking shelves of those clunky machines. Shoppers simply walked away because the things didn't work!

Your site may be doing the same thing. Some of the things we discuss below touch on usability, but suffice it to say that your site must have intuitive flow with no rude and aggravating surprises as the shopper proceeds through the checkout process.

Usability has an end goal: conversions. The easier your site is to use, the more conversions you'll score. It's just that simple.

So, let me give you some straightforward usability advice that could prevent some of those pesky abandonments.

TIPS FOR ENHANCING YOUR SITE USABILITY

Make your site completely responsive.

Keep in mind that anywhere from 15–40% of your customers are visiting your site by way of a small screen. These mobile visitors constitute a huge conversion channel. If your site isn't 100% responsive, you're playing fast and loose with thousands of dollars in revenue. These people will be bidding adieu the minute that shopping cart cramps their mobile style.

Keep it simple.

The more links, clutter, words, and junk on your site, the more you will impede your visitors' progress to the checkout counter. Keep your site free of everything that gets in the way. A distracted visitor is a lost conversion.

Make your menu prominent.

A site's navigation is one of the most noticeable features of its usability (or lack thereof). Keep a site's menu options available from everywhere on the site, and make it obvious.

Ensure optimal speed.

It's common knowledge that a slow website will shoot your SEO, your conversions, and your credibility. But let's take this point a little bit further. Sometimes, a site's speed screeches to a crawl in the *checkout phase*.

Why does this happen? Whether it's shoddy payment API or just screwy site design, it needs to stop. You can't afford to lose customers at the most critical moment just because your site decided to compete for the slowest-loading-website-of-all-time award. Make sure your website has top-notch sizzling speed at every phase, especially at the checkout.

Your call to action is critical.

Finally, don't be bashful when it comes to your call to action. This is the most important aspect of your page. It is the gate to the checkout. Show people where it is — big buttons, large fonts, contrasting colors, whatever it takes.

This is your time to shine. Give them a firm nudge in the right direction. You're not being rude. You're being courteous by providing good usability.

CONCLUSION

Lowering abandonment rates is firmly within your reach. But in order to do so, you've got to make sure your website does what it's supposed to do in a way that makes sense.

Make your website usable, and I can guarantee you'll see fewer abandonments

Reason#3

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

YOUR CHECKOUT PROCESS IS LONG AND COMPLICATED

If your checkout procedure has more than six steps, it's too complicated. The average checkout phase has 5.6 pages ([Unbounce.com](https://unbounce.com)). Confusing checkout procedures account for more than 10% of abandonments, [according to SavvyPanda.com](https://savvy.panda.com).

Let me give you two helpful tips for simplifying any long and complicated checkout process.

1. Make your checkout linear.

We're going to talk about linear vs. nonlinear checkouts. Hang on tight while I get mildly technical.

Christian Holst describes an [uncomplicated checkout process](#) as “completely linear.” A linear checkout process flows in a straight line from start to finish. This linear process is intuitive. It's expected. The user knows what's going on at each steps and is confident about what is going to happen next.

A nonlinear checkout process, by contrast, has steps within steps. Instead of proceeding in a straight line, the process might take a rabbit trail so that the user can create an account, register on the site, finagle some stupid shipping arrangement, or perform some other needless checkout calisthenics.

Users don't have the patience for nonlinear checkout process, and will probably bail if it starts to test their patience in the least.

Your goal is to create a checkout process that is as simple as possible. You want your user to get from Point A to Point B with as few pages, steps, and links as possible.

Example of a nonlinear checkout process.

Here's how Wal-Mart racked up crazy abandonment rates.



Image from SmashingMagazine.com.

See my big red arrow? That little jog away from the linear path is confusing for the average non-Mensa member. (By the way, Wal-Mart has learned from its mistake, and is doing better.) Keep things as simple as possible. Call it linear, call it juvenile. Call it crazy. Just don't go all non-linear on your customer!

2. Use as few steps as possible.

According to studies, the average checkout has 5.08 steps.

Survey of the 100 top grossing e-commerce websites.

Here's how Wal-Mart racked up crazy abandonment rates.

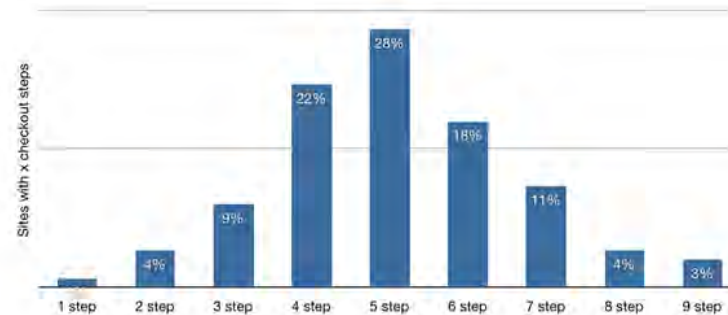
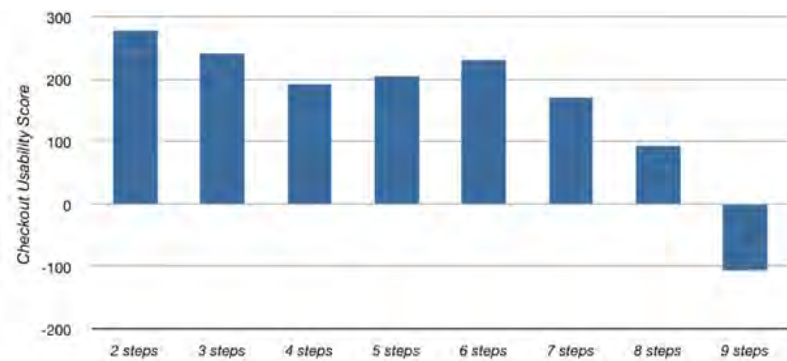


Image from UXDesign.

The chart above shows you that most sites have five steps. But how are those sites doing with conversions?

Here is the usability score, plotted according to the number of checkout steps:



Here are two obvious facts:

1. Once you cross the threshold into nine steps, you're sunk.
2. A two-step process has the highest usability score. But as long as you're keeping it between two and six steps, you should be fine.

If you simplify the checkout process for your customers, you will inevitably improve your conversions. People crave simplicity in every facet of life — e-commerce shopping carts included. Keep things simple, and you'll keep things humming right along.

Reason#4

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

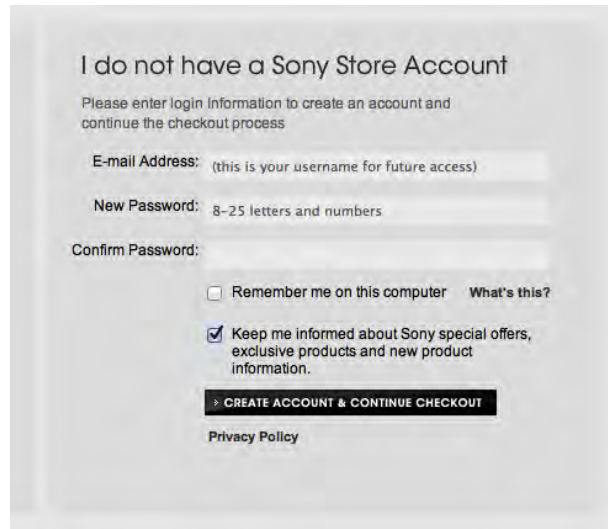
YOUR SYSTEM REQUIRES ACCOUNT CREATION PRIOR TO CHECKOUT

Perhaps one of the biggest barriers to a completed transaction is the account creation requirement. If the customer — mere clicks away from giving you her money — has to create an account, there's a good chance she's going to kick her shopping cart to the edge of the parking lot and screech out in a huff.

Here's what Sephora makes you do.

The screenshot shows the Sephora website's checkout process. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'Sign In or Sign Up for Sephora', 'HOME', 'MY ACCOUNT', 'STORES', 'GIFT REGISTRY', and 'HELP'. Below this is a black header with the Sephora logo and a shopping basket icon. A search bar and a 'BRANDS' dropdown menu are also present. The main content area is titled '1 SHOPPING BASKET' and includes a progress bar with steps: '1 SHOPPING BASKET', '2 SHIPPING ADDRESS', '3 SHIPPING/PACKAGING', '4 PAYMENT INFO', and '5 CONFIRM ORDER'. A red banner states 'Please register below to create your account and continue to CHECKOUT.' The registration form is divided into two columns. The left column contains fields for 'First Name*', 'Last Name*', 'E-mail Address*' (with a pre-filled email 'john.newman@daymond.com'), 'Password*', and 'Confirm Password*'. It also includes a 'Password Retrieval Security Question*' dropdown and an 'Answer*' field. Below these are checkboxes for 'E-mail me to keep me in the know about:' and 'Yes! Send me exclusive offers, beauty trend alerts, and store news via email.' The right column features a 'JOIN beauty insider SEPHORA' graphic, a 'REWARDED PRIVILEGED GIFTED' banner, and a 'JOIN BEAUTY INSIDER—OUR FREE REWARDS PROGRAM!' section. It includes a 'YES! I WANT TO BECOME A BEAUTY INSIDER.' checkbox, a 'Birth Month*' dropdown, a 'Birth Day*' dropdown, and a 'Birth Year or Age Range*' section with 'Select Year' and 'Select Age Range' options. A 'SIGN ME UP' button is at the bottom right. At the very bottom, there's a 'NEED HELP?' section with links for 'By Online Help Section', 'By Phone', and 'By E-mail'.

Here's Sony's non-start:

A screenshot of a web form for creating a Sony Store account. The title is "I do not have a Sony Store Account". Below it, a sub-header says "Please enter login information to create an account and continue the checkout process". The form has three input fields: "E-mail Address:" with a placeholder "(this is your username for future access)", "New Password:" with a placeholder "8-25 letters and numbers", and "Confirm Password:". Below the password fields are two checkboxes: "Remember me on this computer" (unchecked) and "Keep me informed about Sony special offers, exclusive products and new product information." (checked). To the right of the first checkbox is a link "What's this?". Below the checkboxes is a black button with white text that says "> CREATE ACCOUNT & CONTINUE CHECKOUT". At the bottom left of the form is a link for "Privacy Policy".

[Image from SmashingMagazine.com.](http://SmashingMagazine.com)

If you're requiring people to create an account in order to buy your stuff, you're killing your conversion rate and racking up needlessly high abandonment rates. Moral of the story: Don't require accounts.

Here's the hate comments that were plastered all over a fancy underwear site's Facebook page (MeUndies.com). As much as these guys were interested in silk boxers, they weren't about to create their own undies account.



Mike Post

Your landing page is freakin evil: there is no way to cancel the email collection dialog without providing your email address. That's shitty slimy marketing.

December 15 at 9:27 AM · Like ·  8



Brian Santa Maria

Just tried to go to your page the pop up won't go away unless I put in my email. I even tried putting in GetRidOfThisFuckingPopUp@FuckYou.com and it still didn't work. Screw you guys and your fancy underwear.

December 15 at 1:31 PM · Like ·  3

The whole “membership” thing may seem like a good idea. But if it’s producing major abandonment issues, it ceases to be warm or fuzzy and is just cruel — to your users and to you as an entrepreneur in a capitalist economy.

If you want your Facebook page to be smeared with profanity and snark, go ahead and require account creation. Unleash the fury.

BUT DON’T LOTS OF SITE REQUIRE ACCOUNT CREATION?

According to industry research, 24% of the top-grossing e-commerce websites require account registration. For places like Amazon, that works. People are cool with that, because Amazon is gargantuan (and besides, people need Amazon prime for all the streaming TV shows that Netflix doesn’t provide).

But if you’re a li'l ol' e-commerce site without the size or influence of Amazon, then you need to sincerely rethink your forced account creation.

How do you determine if you should require account creation or not? Ask yourself a simple question: Does your site gross above \$1 billion annually, or not? That’s a pretty easy question to answer. You probably don’t need to check with accounting. You know.

The biggest sites require registration because they can. Because they're big. Because they're household names. Smaller sites, however, don't require account registration. They're simply trying to make a sale:



Image from SmashingMagazine.com

As a corollary, when you require account registration, it typically adds more steps to the checkout process, which is a double downer for your conversion rates. Remember the nonlinear thing from the previous chapter? Abandonment looms large when you place such roadblocks in customer's way.

Like it or not, account creation is like a flashing neon sign that says, "Hey, folks, time to abandon the shopping cart! Everybody leave!" So, take it from me and the other really smart people who say the same thing: Don't force account creation, especially in the checkout process.

Reason#5

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

YOUR SHIPPING CHARGES TAKE SHOPPERS BY SURPRISE

For many reasons, I'm not convinced that every online retailer needs to provide free shipping. Free shipping is a carrot on a stick, and it sometimes works. However, it's not economically viable for every e-commerce site. You need to find a strategy that works for you.

Even though free shipping isn't a rule, total openness regarding your shipping policies is important. Every online retail site must totally upfront about shipping charges (or lack thereof).

Research of B2C e-commerce sites has determined that

“unexpected costs” are the biggest cause of shopping cart abandonment. But what other “unexpected costs” could come up but additional shipping charges?

Although shipping need not be free, it ought not to be too expensive. Customers in a 2009 Shopify retail survey responded that excessive shipping and handling charges made them abandon their cart.

Figure 1

Shipping Is A Key Factor Driving Shopping Cart Abandonment

“Thinking of the last time you put items in your shopping cart but did not finish the online purchase, which of the following best describes why you did not complete the transaction?”



Base: 2,921 Web buyers who have abandoned an online shopping cart (multiple responses accepted)

Source: North American Technographics® Retail Online Survey, Q3 2009 (US)

Image from Shopify.com.

Additional research corroborates this issue:

Why do online shoppers leave without paying?



Screenshot taken on February 25, 2014 at Statista.com.

The solution isn't necessarily to eliminate shipping charges, though this is, of course, an option. The solution is to have complete openness regarding the charges, and indicate them early on in the checkout process.

In conjunction with shipping charges, your site must present copious amounts of information regarding the following shipping information:

- Delivery method
- Delivery date
- Tracking information
- Signature/in-person acceptance required?

The customer is really interested in their stuff — getting it on time and in one piece. Provide these assurances as best as possible during the check-out process. Otherwise, they're going to abandon the cart.

Reason#6

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

YOU DON'T HAVE A RETURN POLICY

If there's one thing more annoying than shopping cart abandonment, it's product returns. This is another sad fact of e-commerce life. Counter intuitively, however, an explicit return policy is more likely to encourage purchase and ensure purchase satisfaction rather than invite returns. A prominent return policy doesn't encourage a return; it discourages it!

Shopify author, Mark Hayes, explains. "Having a solid return policy inspires confidence in buyers and shows you're committed to customer service. Even though the customer isn't satisfied with the returned purchase, handling the return professionally will ensure their continued patronage." It's an issue of ethical business and transparency. Psychologically, when a customer purchases an item, they are anticipating "buyer's remorse." In order to counter the negative feelings associated with the purchase, they internally search for anything that makes them feel better, specifically a return policy.

Being up-front about your return policy and putting it in plain sight helps them feel better about the purchase. They then proceed with the check-out process.

Here's what e-commerce clothing founder John Lawson told Entrepreneur about his return policy: "I think it has a psychological effect. The longer I give them to return an item, the fewer returns I get."

Your goal is to get fewer returns — and lower abandonment rates. So what should you do? Beef up your return policy.

The average return rate is only 3%. Compare this to shopping cart abandonment rates of over 60%! If a clear and understandable return policy reduces your abandonment rate, you have nothing to lose.

LESSONS FROM ZAPPOS

Zappos, recognized for their awesome customer service, promotes a style of returns that seems like ecommerce suicide.

The screenshot shows the Zappos website's 'SHIPPING AND RETURNS' page. The page has a blue header with navigation links like 'SHOES', 'CLOTHING', 'BAGS & HANDBAGS', etc. Below the header is an 'ALPHABETICAL BRAND INDEX' and a 'SHIPPING AND RETURNS' section. The 'FREE Shipping:' section states that Zappos offers free shipping on all domestic orders. The 'FREE Returns:' section, highlighted with red arrows, states that if you are not 100% satisfied, you can return your order for a full refund. It also mentions that returns must be unworn, in the original packaging, and that Zappos will provide a pre-paid UPS domestic or USPS domestic label. A video player titled 'How To Complete A Return at Zappos.com' is embedded in the page. On the right side, there are links to 'ZAPPOS FAMILY CULTURE', 'ZAPPOS FAMILY CORE VALUES', 'CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS', 'ENJOY FUN AND A LITTLE WEIRDNESS', 'THE ZAPPOS.COM EXPERIENCE', 'UNIQUE CUSTOMERS', and 'BECOME A PART OF THE ZAPPOS FAMILY CULTURE'. At the bottom right, there is a 'SHOP WITH CONFIDENCE' section with a 'SAFE SHOPPING GUARANTEE' logo.

- They don't care why you're returning it.
- They'll pay your shipping.
- They'll automatically refund your money.

Instead of ruining sales, Zappos has huge conversion rates, wide profitability margins, and a reputation as one of the most reputable places to buy shoes and other gear.

IMPROVE YOUR RETURN POLICY, REDUCE YOUR ABANDONMENTS

The solution is simple. If customers are abandoning your cart, reexamine your return policy. Here are some tips for writing a great return policy:

1. **Say it simply.** Don't use legalese. Use the language of your users — normal, ordinary, down-to-earth.
2. **Provide free shipping.** If you're in a financially viable position, go ahead and offer to give them a free shipping label or send them a pre-labeled box to return the item. One of the most formidable barriers to returning an item is actually having to pay for it. Gah!
3. **Provide plenty of time for returns.** You may not be willing to offer a year of satisfaction for an item that they bought, but make it long enough to show you care.
4. **Brag about it.** When you're proud of your return policy, it inspires trust in your customers. Confidence begets confidence. When you have confidence in the fairness and validity of your policy, your users will have the same sense. Go ahead and feature it prominently on your ecommerce storefront, on the homepage, and in the checkout process.

When you open yourself up to the risk of returns, it actually creates a more trusting, open, and inviting atmosphere for your e-commerce enterprise. As a result, you'll see conversions soar, abandonments drop, and happiness increase.

Reason#7

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

YOUR PAYMENT OPTIONS ARE LIMITED

Policies that limit your customers' ability to pay are policies that generate viral shopping cart abandonment. It's that simple. Your customers are offering their money in exchange for your product. Your goal is to make this as easy as possible.

Most U.S. customers use their credit cards.

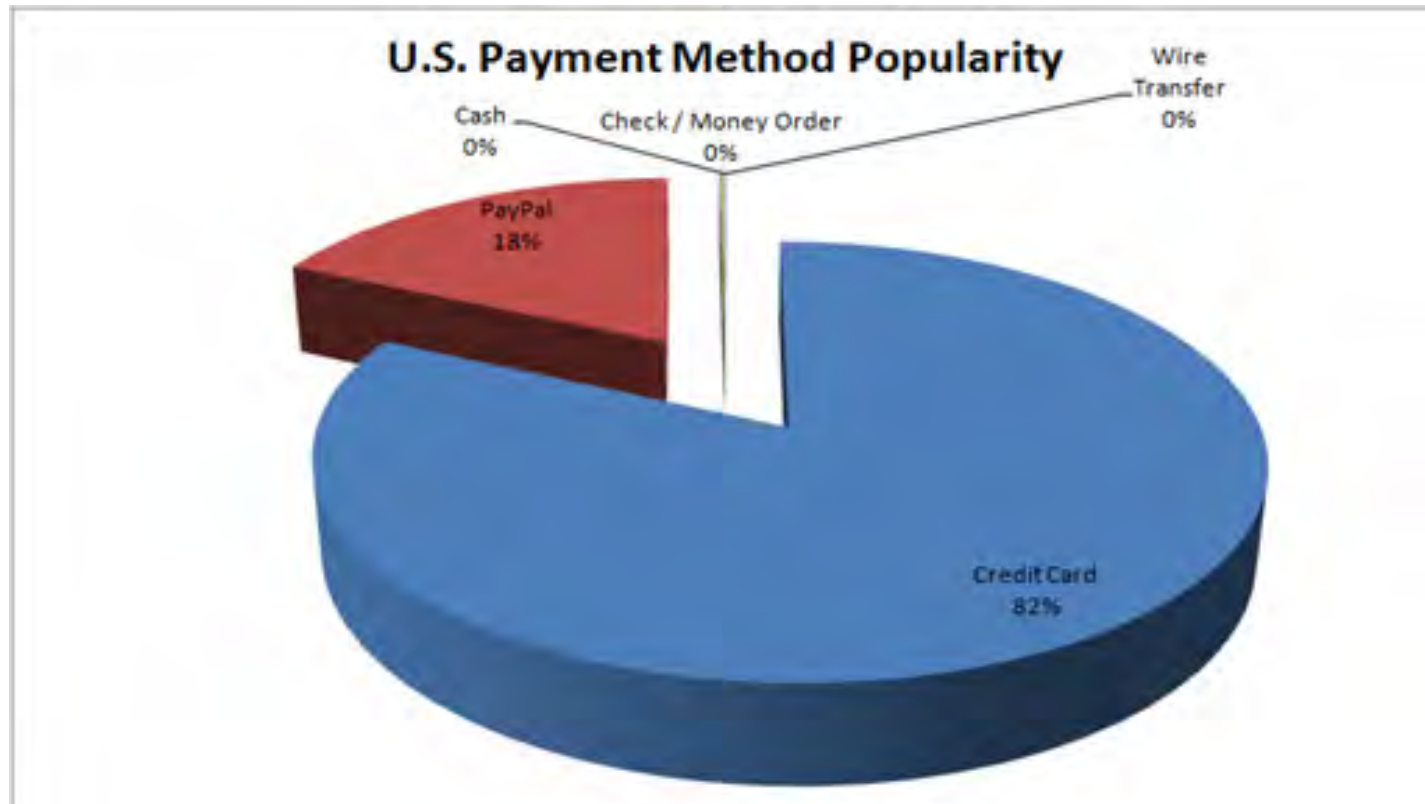


Image from Cleverbridge.

However, there is a growing trend toward more and more payment options. Payment acceptance APIs and business are growing. Plus, with the increase of digital goods and their widespread availability, it may even be financially beneficial for you to accept multiple currencies. Many of the cutting-edge sales platforms now allow multiple currency acceptance. Sellfy, for example, allows payment in U.S. Dollars, Euros, British Pound Sterling, and Japanese Yen.

- **More currencies.** We now support four currencies: US dollars, Euros, British pounds and Japanese yen. Merchants selling products mostly in these regions/countries will be able to choose one of these currencies for each product individually. We will continue to add more currencies depending on the demand from our merchants. **Important:** you need to have PayPal balance in chosen currency to accept payments (you can have multiple balances in your PayPal account).



At one point in the history of e-commerce, it was tough to find a good payment portal. Finding a secure, affordable, and reliable way was a hard prospect for many e-commerce stores, especially ones with small budgets. Today, there are plenty of ways to get money from the customer and into your business account.

MORE OPTIONS, MORE SALES

The more payment options you give your customers, the more customers you'll reach. Some customers pay with Visa. Some swear by PayPal. Some people will only use their AmEx card. Your goal is to accept as wide an array of payment options as possible.

According to Shopify, one e-commerce store (FreshGigs) was able to improve their checkout completion by 15% by just doing one easy fix: Accepting American Express cards.

What kind of increases could you bring in by accepting more payment methods?

THESE AREN'T NEGOTIABLE

At the very least, you should accept the following payment methods to reduce the chance of a customer abandoning the shopping cart:

- Visa
- Mastercard
- American Express
- Paypal

I recommend opening it even wider. I called out Wal-Mart for their bungled shopping cart earlier in this guide. However, I owe them a hat tip for this beautiful payment method acceptance.

Walmart
Save money. Live better.

Secure Checkout Shipping & Pickup Payment Method Review & Ship

Choose Payment Method

☐ Use a Walmart Gift Card [View](#)

Gift Card Number

4-Digit PIN
(What's this?)

[Check Card Balance](#) [Apply Gift Card](#)

Payment Method

Please select
Please select
Visa
Mastercard
American Express
Discover
Walmart Credit Card
Walmart Discover
Cash
Bill Me Later
PayPal

Visa Mastercard American Express Discover Walmart Credit Card Walmart Discover Cash PayPal Bill Me Later

[Back](#) [Continue](#)

Order Summary
Ship

Subtotal (1 item)
Shipping
Tax

Order Total

[Image from CrazyEgg.com](#)

Not only do they accept the standard forms, but they also invite you to pay via Walmart Credit Card, WalMart Discover, cash, and Bill Me Later.

Some commerce platforms allow users to pay via check and bank withdrawal. There are so many ways that customers might want to pay. Therefore, there should be many methods of payment that you accept.

YOU HAVE OPTIONS

No longer is payment acceptance a hard-to-find service. Here are some options. Let the money come rolling in, no matter what form it might take:

- [Google Wallet](#)
- [WePay](#)
- [Stripe](#)
- [Dwolla](#)
- [AmazonPayments](#)
- [Square](#)
- [Paymill](#)
- [Amazon Payments](#)
- [V.me](#)
- [MasterPass](#)
- [clearXchange](#)
- [Intuit PaymentNetwork](#)
- [Bill Me Later \(PayPal service\)](#)
- [Bitcoin](#)

Reason#8

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

YOUR SECURITY MEASURES ARE TOO STRICT OR TOO LAX

I recently came across this gem on a website. It was thousands of words of legal mumbo jumbo that covered their tails in the event of anything legal that could happen involving the use of credit cards on their website:

POLICIES, STANDARDS & PROCEDURES


- Home
- Acceptable Use of Electronic Communications Systems and Services
- Confidentiality of Medical Information
- Information Security Policy
- Preservation and Production of Records
- Accepting Payment (Credit) Card
- Clean Desk and Clear Screen Standard
- Electronic Data Security-Portable Devices and Removable Media
- Electronic Media Sanitization Procedure
- Identity Theft Prevention Program
- Password Standard
- Protecting the Confidentiality of Social Security Numbers
- Records Management Standard
- Security Incident Reporting and Breach Notification Plan
- Third Party Agreements / Confidential Information

Information Security Management and Compliance

Policy for Accepting Payment (Credit) Card and eCommerce Payments

[Printable Version](#)

[Form](#)



Issue Date: February 2009
Revision Date: July 2009
Expiration Date: N/A
Web Links:
[Financial Management](#)
[Information Security Management and Compliance](#)

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish business processes and procedures for accepting payment cards at [redacted] that will minimize risk and provide the greatest value, security of data, and availability of services to each university merchant account within the rules and regulations established by the Payment Card Industry (PCI) and articulated in the PCI Data Security Standards (DSS). Additionally, these processes are intended to ensure that payment card acceptance procedures are appropriately integrated with [redacted] financial and other systems.

II. BACKGROUND

In response to increasing incidents of identity theft, the major payment card companies created the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) to help prevent theft of customer data. PCI DSS applies to all businesses that accept payment cards to procure goods or services. Compliance with this Standard is enforced by the payment card companies and generally, noncompliance is discovered when an organization experiences a security breach that includes cardholder data.

Security breaches can result in serious consequences for [redacted] including release of confidential information, damage to reputation, the assessment of substantial fines, possible legal liability and the potential loss of the ability to accept payment card and eCommerce payments.

Okay fine. Target security breach. I get it.

But, please, don't do this to your poor customers. Don't make it hard for them to pay.

Shopping Cart Abandonment

TOO STRICT, OR TOO LAX?

There are two ways that you can go wrong here. You can either tighten your security measures so much that users can't click one page without being hit by every legal document you've ever produced. Exhibit A above.

Or, on the other hand, you can provide no security reassurance, giving customers the chilling sensation that they are opening themselves up to an awful internet scam.

Here's what you need to remember: Users abandon your shopping cart if they sense you have too few security measures in place.

Most of the thousands of e-commerce stores are smaller ones. These sites inherently lack the trust factor associated with massive brands. There's not much that can be done about that.

Such lack of trust, however, doesn't need to spread to payment security. If you're a smaller brand, you must put into place some strategic measures for inspiring the confidence of users regarding their secure payment. Here are some tips:

ADD SEALS AND LOGOS

Placing the right kind of seals and logos on your site can improve the trustworthiness immensely.

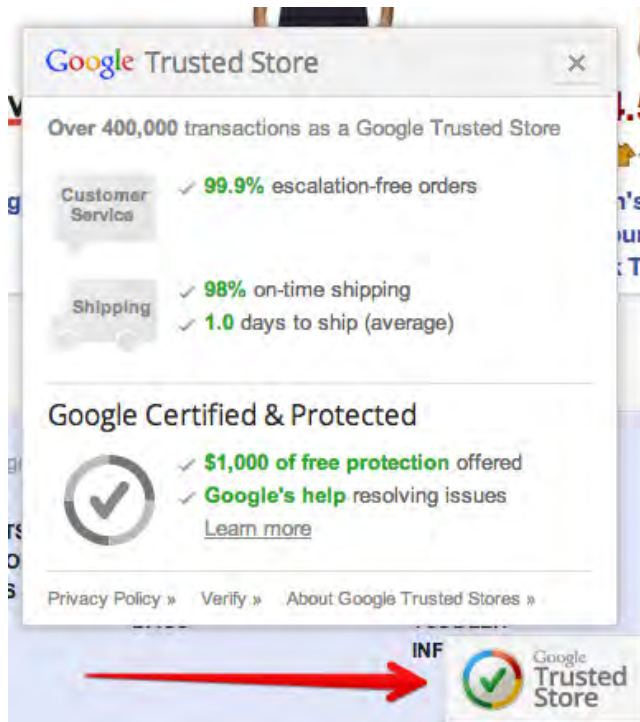
VisualWebsiteOptimizer provides an overview of these symbols. Here are their samples:



There are others, of course. However, the more widely recognized the symbol or seal, the more people will recognize the symbol of trust. Here are some of these trust signs, and a brief discussion.

GOOGLE TRUSTED STORE

Placing the right kind of seals and logos on your site can improve the trustworthiness immensely. VisualWebsiteOptimizer provides an overview of these symbols. Here are their samples:



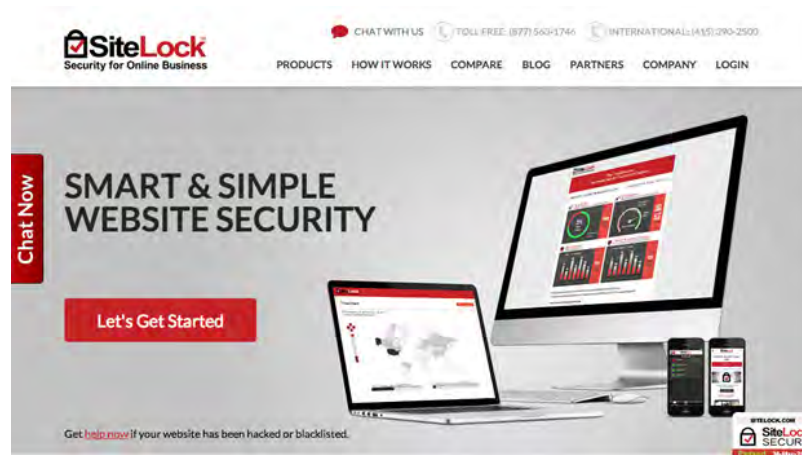
GOOGLE TRUSTED STORE

The TRUSTe seal has become a familiar one. Perhaps the biggest upside of TRUSTe is just having the logo on your site, but they also provide privacy, data management, and business integrity software services.

A promotional banner for TRUSTe. On the left is the TRUSTe logo, which consists of a green square with a white 'e' inside, and the word "TRUSTe" in black above it. To the right of the logo, the text reads "Leverage a Smarter, More Strategic Approach to Privacy". Below this is a section titled "Privacy Seal Best Practices: Proven to Increase Online Interaction and Transaction" in orange. The text below this section describes how TRUSTe privacy products help online businesses. Below that is a section titled "TRUSTe Features:" in orange, which lists three features: "Leverage the Brand", "Affordable and Easy to use privacy programs", and "Full range of privacy, data management, and business integrity software". Below that is a section titled "TRUSTe Advantages:" in orange, which lists two advantages: "A Trusted Advisor to thousands of businesses worldwide" and "The power of hundreds of household brands like Apple, Facebook, Best Buy, eBay, and many more".

SITELOCK

Another business security provider, SiteLock, allows you to add the power of a recognized seal:



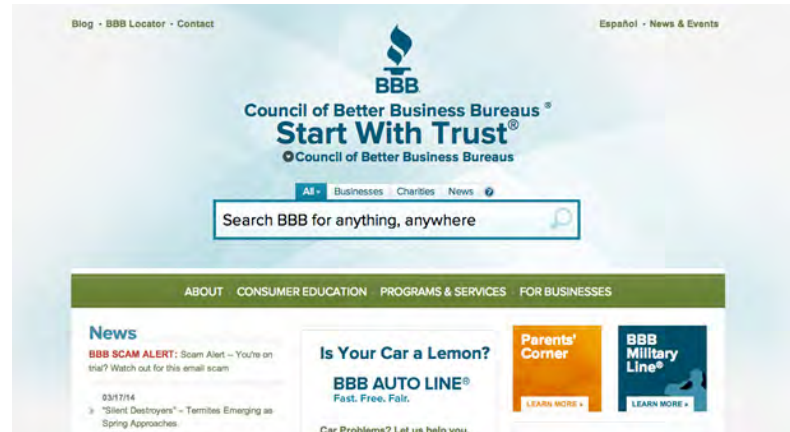
TRUST GUARD

The familiar green shield of TrustGuard gives you another security option to add to your site.



Better Business Bureau

Many sites, especially those with brick-and-mortar shops and a local presence, choose to become BBB registered. Doing so provides for a BBB seal on the website, also inspiring trust.



Bottom Line

Your goal is to give your customers the assurance that they're not getting scammed or robbed, so they don't lose confidence when it's finally time to buy.

Third party verification isn't free. It's part of the cost of doing business. But it's often worth the cost.

Reason#9

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

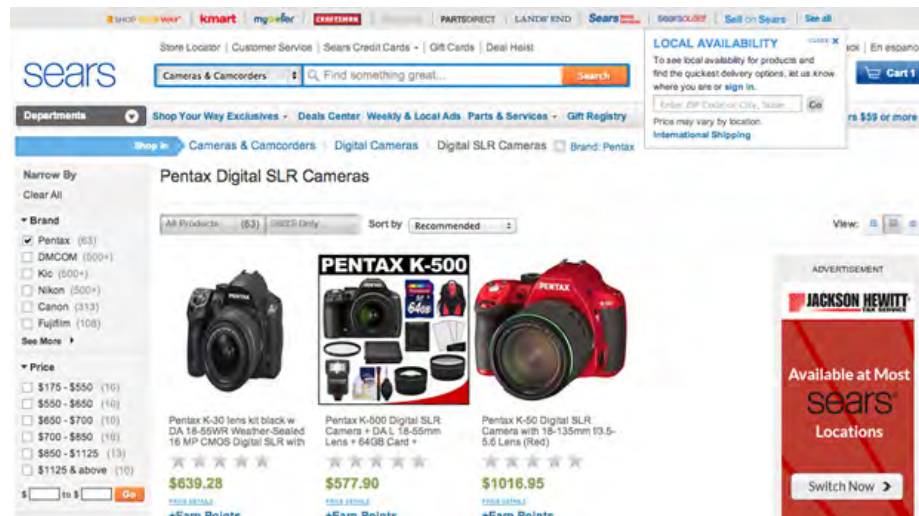
YOUR SHOPPING CART IS HARD TO FIND

What good is a shopping cart if you can't even find it? In a University of Wichita psychological study, shopping cart visibility was listed as one of the reasons why abandonment happens.

According to the article: "This function should be located such that it is always visible and clearly distinct. Plaveb, in a discussion of shopping cart usability, points out, "The design should be simple and easy to view with clear shopping cart icons."

BOTTOM LINE THE NOT-SO-OBVIOUS SHOPPING CART CONUNDRUM

If you have a shopping cart, make it as obvious as you possibly can. The shopping cart is where the money comes in. It doesn't need to be subtle, understated, or hidden in any way. What's more, the customer wants to know exactly how to access the shopping cart.



Sears.com has some problematic issues in their online shopping design. Part of the problem is that there's a lot of visual clutter.

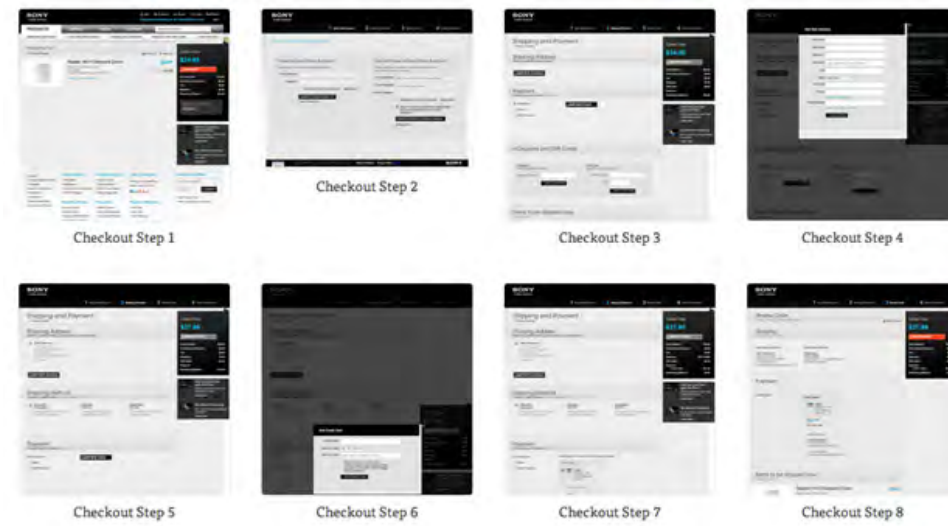
In this screenshot of the shopping process, it takes just a moment to notice the shopping cart because of the huge array of other text, imagery, and zones of information. In addition, the “local availability” popup nearly obscures the shopping cart. To their credit, however, the shopping cart is located in the optimal position (upper right hand corner).

MAKE IT VISIBLE

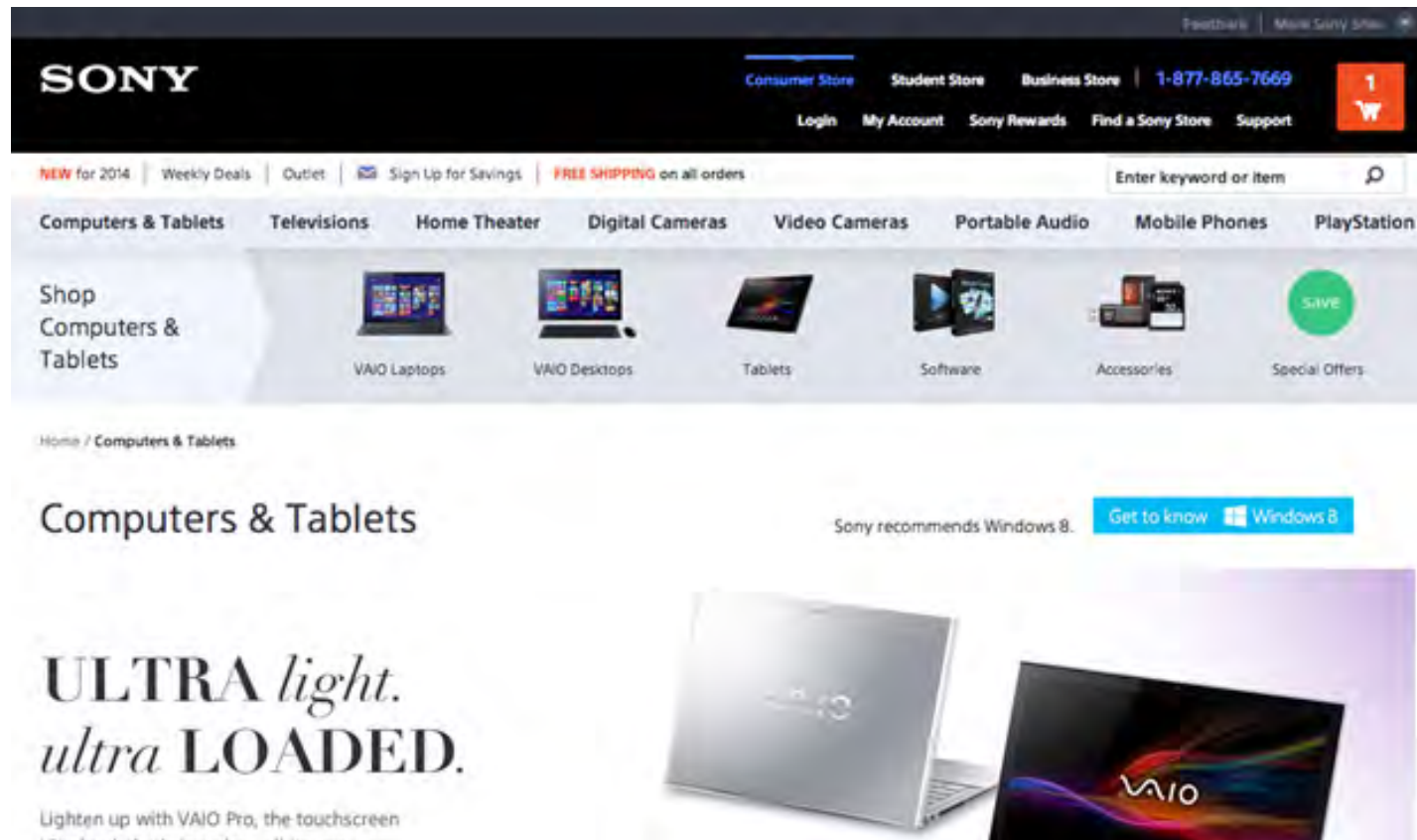
Sony, a big e-commerce player, has had some rough starts in the market. For example, they are known for having one of the longest checkout processes in the industry, with a whopping 8 steps.

Out of 62 usability guidelines, they violated 21 of them, according to a [detailed study by the Baymard Institute](#).

Here is their checkout process:



What Sony may lack in checkout process, however, they make up for in shopping cart awareness. You won't lose your shopping cart.



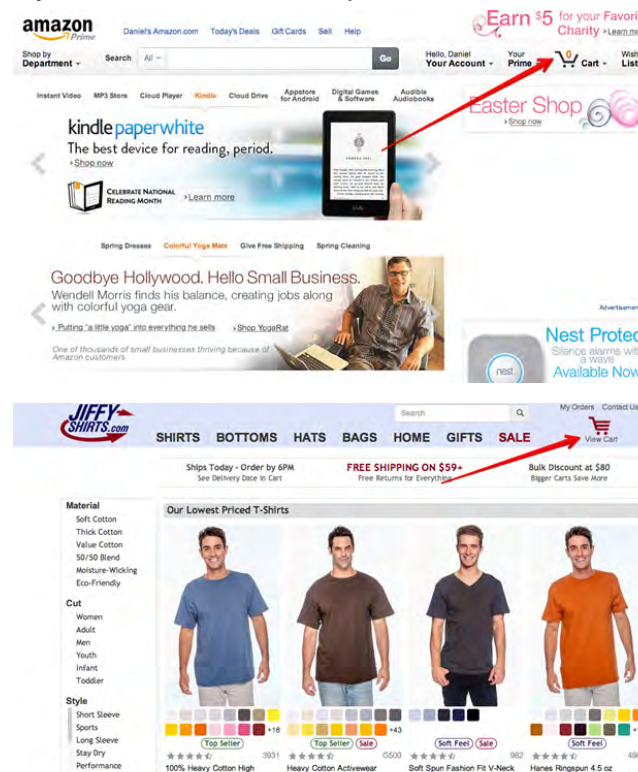
Regardless of where you navigate on the site, you'll always see the vivid orange of the shopping cart icon, informing you exactly how many items you have. So when you're ready to check out, you know exactly where to go.

TIPS FOR AN OBVIOUS SHOPPING CART

Use upper right hand corner placement.

The most common area for a shopping cart is in the upper right hand corner. Customers who are shopping online have become trained to look at this area of the page in order to find their cart.

Everyone from Amazon to JiffyShirts.com uses this placement method.



This is one area in which you don't want to be innovative or avant garde about your shopping cart.

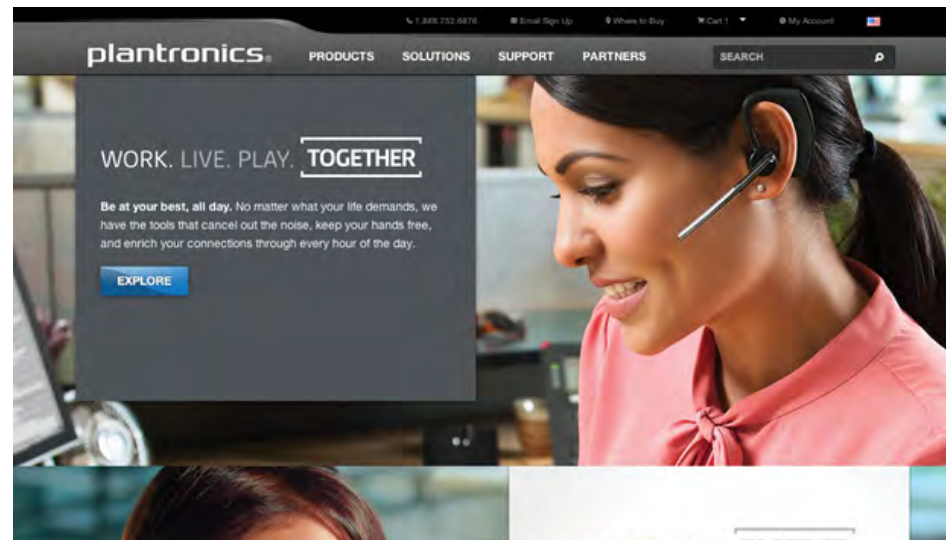
Just put it where it's expected to be.

Shopping Cart Abandonment

Use differentiating design features.

Like Sony's design above, the shopping cart should have some features that make it stand out from the rest of the site. The customary cart icon, discussed below, is an acceptable way to do so. Contrasting colors, a large size, or a text/image combo are all suitable methods of drawing attention to the cart.

To see why this is important, glance at the screenshot below. Can you see Plantronics shopping cart? No, it's hidden in the top navigation. This shouldn't be the case.



Make the shopping cart persistent throughout the site.

Regardless of the size or structure of your site, the shopping cart needs to be present at all times. As your most important e-commerce feature, the shopping cart deserves a spot of primary importance above all other site elements.

If you have, say, a blog, FAQs, shipping information, a homepage, etc., then it's important to keep your shopping cart placed prominently on all pages. If not, it's entirely plausible that users are abandoning your shopping cart simply because they lose it as they explore your site.

Use the words “shopping cart,” “bag,” and/or a shopping cart/bag icon.

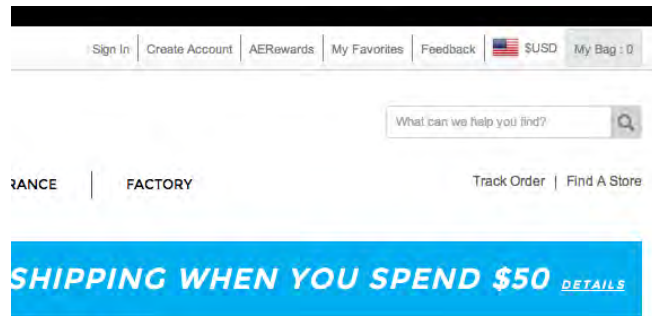
In e-commerce parlance, the terms “cart” and the image of a cart or bag are standard practice. Increasingly, especially among clothing and personal accessories retailers, the “bag” is a common way to display the customer's items. You can go either way on this issue, but “bag” is definitely a safe choice.

Review the examples below. As you do so, pay attention to how easily each shopping cart (or bag) can be found. As you can see, color plays an important role in making your cart stand out. American Airlines uses the term “shopping cart.” Some people use the keyboard stroke, CTRL + F to find items on a page.

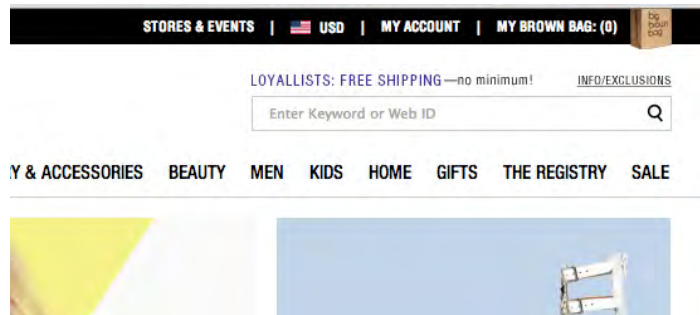
American Airline's method of presenting the cart is searchable in this way.



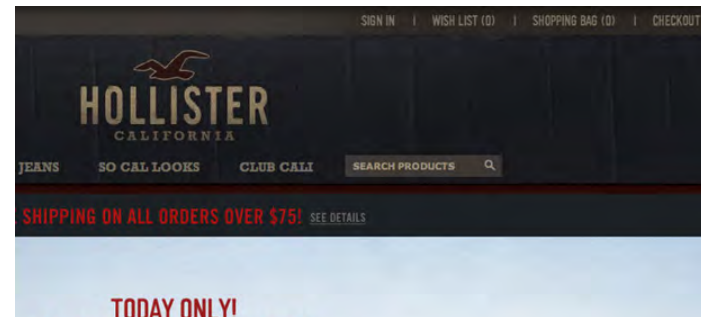
American Eagle uses the “bag” method, since this idea is what a customer would use in the store.



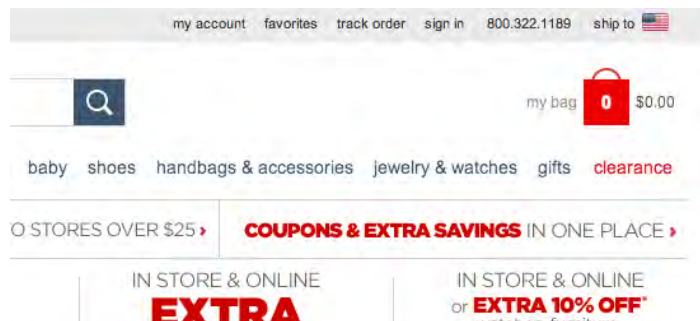
Bloomingdales also uses the bag approach, calling it both “my brown bag” and “big brown



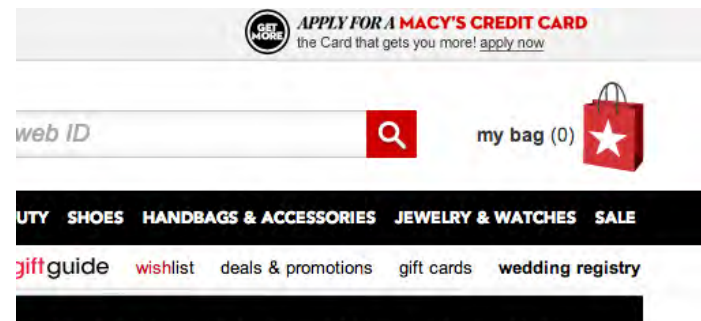
Hollister calls it a bag, too.



Here's the JCPenney method. Bag again.



Here's the JCPenney method. Bag again.



Use a popup that reminds users they have shopping cart items before they navigate away.

Known as an “exit lightbox,” some commerce sites prevent users from leaving the site without informing them of their abandonment. Popups have a reputation for being annoying, so use this technique sparingly and creatively.

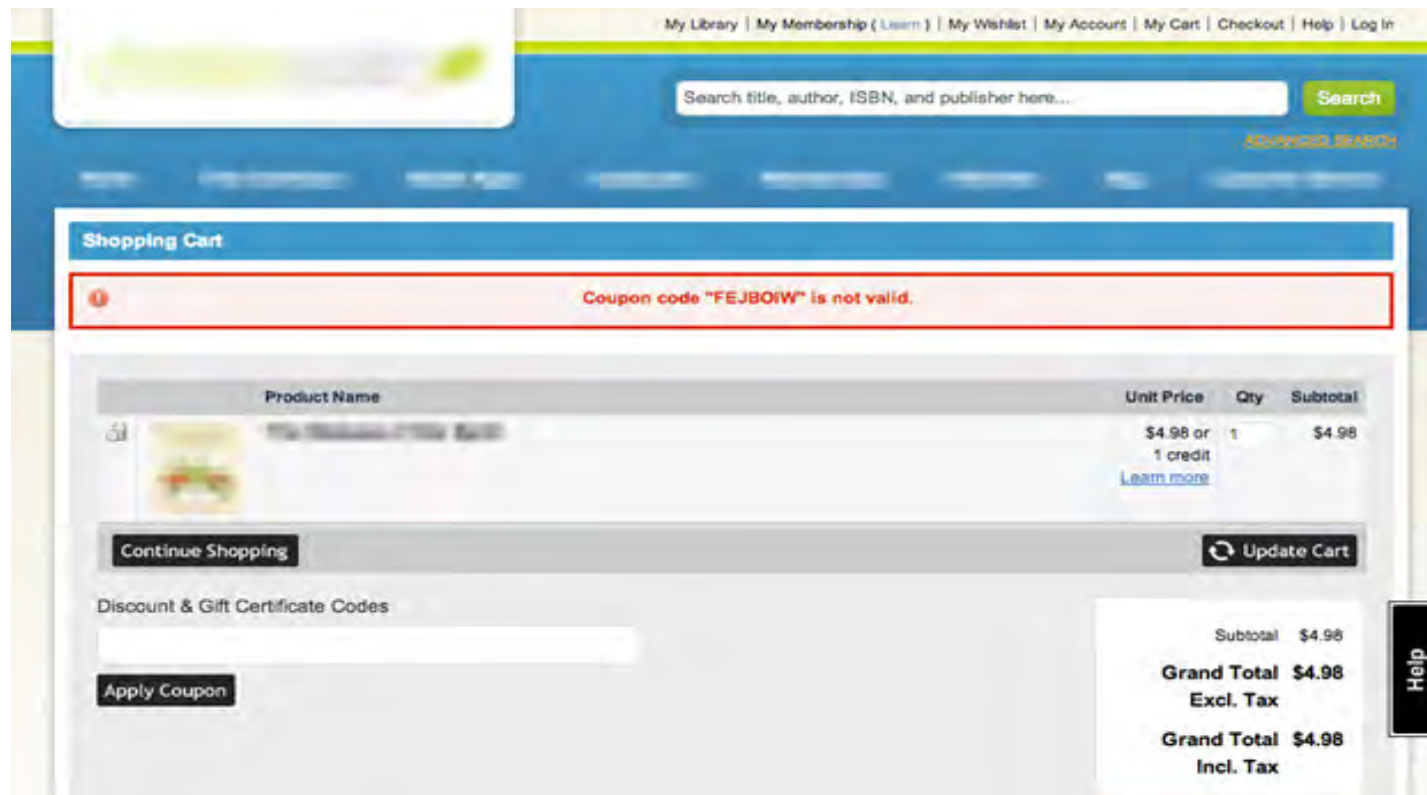
Blaring and obnoxious popups that look like system errors are a definite no go. Friendly and visually attractive popups with a gentle or humorous method work well.

Reason#10

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

YOUR COUPON CODES DON'T WORK

There are few things as frustrating as thinking you're going to get a discount, only to experience the broken discount code problem. As you might guess, this is a cause for shopping cart abandonment.

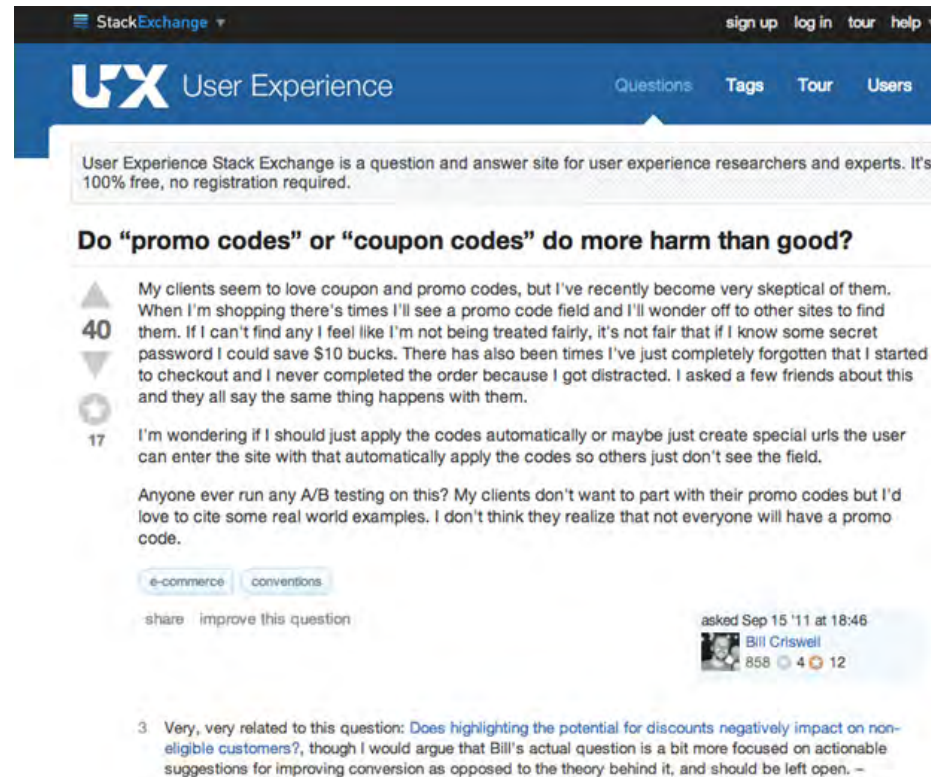


Emarketer's study claims that 27% of abandoners wanted to look for a coupon. Whether or not this exact number is reliable, experience and common sense tells us that coupon codes are a major source of abandonment.

THE BROKEN COUPON CODE PROBLEM

Maybe you've experienced this problem before. Here's generally how it goes:

- You want something at an e-commerce store.
- You Google "[Store name] coupon code."
- You find a coupon on some deal monger freebie site that you think might work.
- You go through the checkout until you get to the coupon spot.
- You insert the coupon code.
- You get an error message.
- You abandon the hopping cart.



Happens all the time. That's why a popular thread on StackExchange poses the question:

"Do 'promo codes' or 'coupon codes' do more harm than good? You think you're pulling some smart marketing move, but really you're just jacking up your abandonment rate and losing sales."

How Coupon Codes Can Hurt

People love a good deal. Just take a look at the site, ShopAtHome.com, which boasts 9,800+ coupon codes. According to their Facebook-like counter, they have 4.7 million fans, including a number of my very own Facebook friends, whom I've blurred out to protect the identity of the guilty.



ShopAtHome is just one of many sites that offers coupons. Google it. You'll find out what I'm talking about. From AnyCodes to Ebates, people are looking for coupons.

Unfortunately, what you'll find is that many coupons are expired, invalid, and extremely frustrating.

In a Time article, one ecommerce retailer commented on coupon codes, saying, “Don’t be surprised if it works sometimes and not other times, or if the offers change. We try to figure out the most profitable thing that motivates you then offer you that [sic].”

In other words, the use of coupons are confined to whether or not it’s profitable for the ecommerce site. Duh. It only follows that sometimes the codes aren’t going to work.

Another problem is abandonment that happens when people realize, while in the middle of checkout, that there could be a coupon code lurking out there. If only they can find it!

Here’s how one individual describes this event:

When I’m shopping there’s times I’ll see a promo code field and I’ll wonder [sic] off to other sites to find them. If I can’t find any I feel like I’m not being treated fairly, it’s not fair that if I know some secret password I could save \$10 bucks. There has also been times I’ve just completely forgotten that I started to checkout and I never completed the order because I got distracted. I asked a few friends about this and they all say the same thing happens with them.

Another conversion analyst writes this:

When a visitor spots your coupon or discount code field in the checkout process, it actually creates doubt for them if they are not shopping with a coupon. Just having the field in the shopping cart can make visitors feel like they’re leaving money on the table. And once they wander off into cyberspace

looking for the discount, odds are they are going to become distracted and not return
The dark side of coupon code is the sheer level of shopping cart abandonment that it may be prompting. Are there ways around this?

SOLVING THE COUPON PROBLEM

1. Eliminate coupons.

The easy answer is to completely ditch coupons. This may be the simplest solution. And it's a good one. Not having coupons doesn't mean that you can't offer other deals.

By eliminating coupons, you're making things simpler for your customer, making things easier for yourself, and reducing a major cause of shopping cart abandonment.

And the best upside? You increase sales. One A/B test of a women's clothing site analyzed coupon code vs. no coupon code. When they removed their coupon code, conversions rose from 3.8% up to 5.1%. In one year, the company made an additional \$1mil in sales. Just get rid of them. Breathe easier.

2. Hide the coupon code.

Perhaps one reason why there's so much bounce due to coupons is because the coupon code field is so obvious. If you see a box that says, "Have a coupon?" You're going to think, "Dang, no, but I'm sure I can find one." Abandon the cart. Google for codes. Get distracted. Don't return.

To solve this kind of bounce, just hide your coupon code offer. Instead of placing a coupon field right on your checkout page, try confining it to a simple text link that expands within the checkout page. Then, just share the coupon with your mailing list and tell them how to use it. This isn't a perfect solution, but it could reduce bounce by a little bit.

3. Provide other perks other than coupons.

You won't lose a ton of sales by ditching coupons. If you do, you only need to provide sales perks another way.

Use site-wide sales. Provide seasonal free shipping. Do \$10 off \$50 purchases. Whatever. You can still unleash killer deals to bring in the deal savvy people. But you don't have to mess up their lives with broken coupons.

CONCLUSION

Coupons are risky. You've got to admit that. They could be a huge reason for abandonment. They way to come to the best decision for your business is to A/B test it and find out.

Reason#11

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

YOU PROVIDE NO HELP DURING CHECKOUT

Lots of e-commerce sites are great about providing help. They feature popups, live chat, and plenty of invitations for a user to get answers to their questions. Some, they're being so helpful, it becomes over-the-top annoying.

I support that kind of help. I think it can be a good thing. Customer service, especially in the online space, is important. And there's no better way to indicate your love for your customers than giving them some help if they need it.

But guess what? So much of that help disappears once you go through the shopping cart gate. After that, you're on your own. Live chat disappears. It becomes a cold and unfriendly place. The customer is left alone.

This happens in a lot of e-commerce settings. This is a tragic mistake, because the shopping cart is the most critical place for providing customer help. At the shopping cart, stress increases, tension rises, fear of abandonment increases. It's the pinch point for all the customers' fears, questions, and concerns.

If you abandon your customer at that point, your customer might just abandon you.

PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS: WHAT YOUR CUSTOMERS WANT TO FEEL DURING THE CHECKOUT PROCESS.

When it's time to pay up, your customer is feeling a jumble of emotions, both positive and negative. What he or she needs is to be coddled a bit during the process.

In the same way you create a welcoming environment on your home page, you need to give them assurance during the checkout process. Here are the underlying psychological need factors that your customer is looking for:

Satisfaction

When a customer arrives at the checkout, they need to feel happy about what they're doing. If they experience a sudden emotional shift as they are preparing to pay, it could derail the process and cause them to leave the shopping cart.

Making a purchase is an intensely emotional experience. Those emotions need to remain positive and stable throughout the entire checkout process.

Resolution

During shopping, there's a psychological tension that can build up in the mind of the buyer. They are considering options, weighing pros and cons, and struggling to make a decision.

When they reach the point of no return, they need to feel that these tensions are all being resolved. When they come to the end of their shopping, they need to feel that it really is the end. This is where it is all resolved.

Confidence

Along with a sense of pleasure and finality, the customer needs to possess the confidence that they're making the right move. If they go into the checkout process with big questions, these questions need to be answered. Their confidence should rise during checkout, not decline.

A way out

Like it or not, your customers want to keep the back door open. They're asking "if" questions. If I'm not satisfied, can I return it? If they screw up my order, can I get my money back? If I find a better deal somewhere, will I be able to send it back and get a refund? This is why you should feature your return policy during the checkout process.

TECHNICAL NEEDS: WHAT YOUR CUSTOMERS NEED TO ACCESS DURING THE CHECKOUT PROCESS.

In order to solve these psychological needs, you should provide the solution with these features:

1. Help if they need it.

Above all, provide assistance if the customer wants it. Keep your live chat active. Maintain your popup with an invitation to talk to a customer service agent. Just keep those features live, and walk your customer through the checkout process.

2. A number to call if they want it.

Somehow, a phone number and a physical address provide a great degree of peace and comfort to someone who is making a transaction. Grounding the cyber transaction in a physical location gives them the feeling of control. They can call a real phone number or go to a real place if they have a problem. Use this to your advantage. List your address or offer your phone number on the checkout page.

3. Big questions answered.

Know what your customers are curious about. If you provide links to your FAQ, or even a list of these questions, you could answer their questions and give them a way to gain the confidence that they need during purchase. For example, this website provides both a phone number, a return policy mention, and some possible issues that a customer might have:

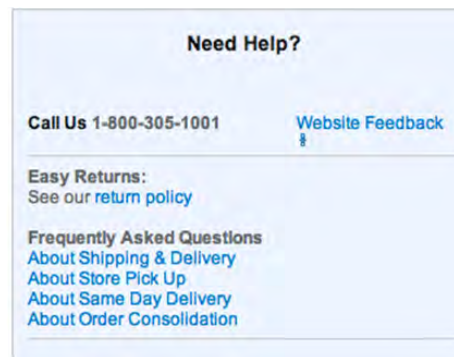


Image from Econsultancy.

4. A way to come back to the cart later if they decide to.

Although shopping carts may get abandoned. The customer may return. If and when they return, they want to be able to access their cart. Leave the cookies active, so if the customer comes back, they will be able to see their cart again and proceed with the purchase.

5. Simplicity.

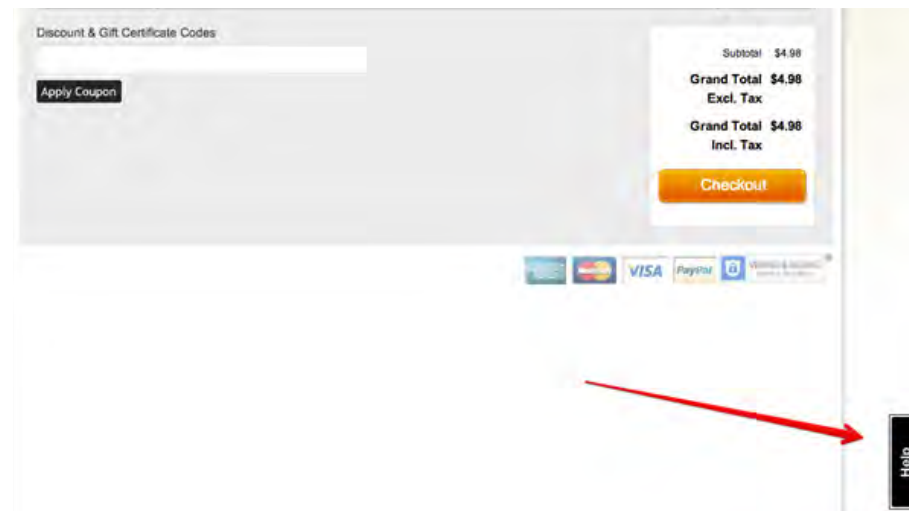
As we've discussed before, customers crave simplicity when it comes to the checkout phase. Simplicity inspires confidence.

They're not looking for long and circuitous checkout paths. They're looking for the quickest path from point A to point B. When you try to add in a lot of help, you may actually complicate the process.

Perhaps one of the best ways to help your customers during the

checkout process is to offer the help as an option, but don't throw in any extra steps, verbiage, or checkboxes. Here's one example of a way to offer help without complicating things.

This site uses a persistent sidebar help tab. That way, at any point anywhere on the site, the user can get the help he or she needs.



MAKE IT SIMPLE: OFFER YOUR HELP

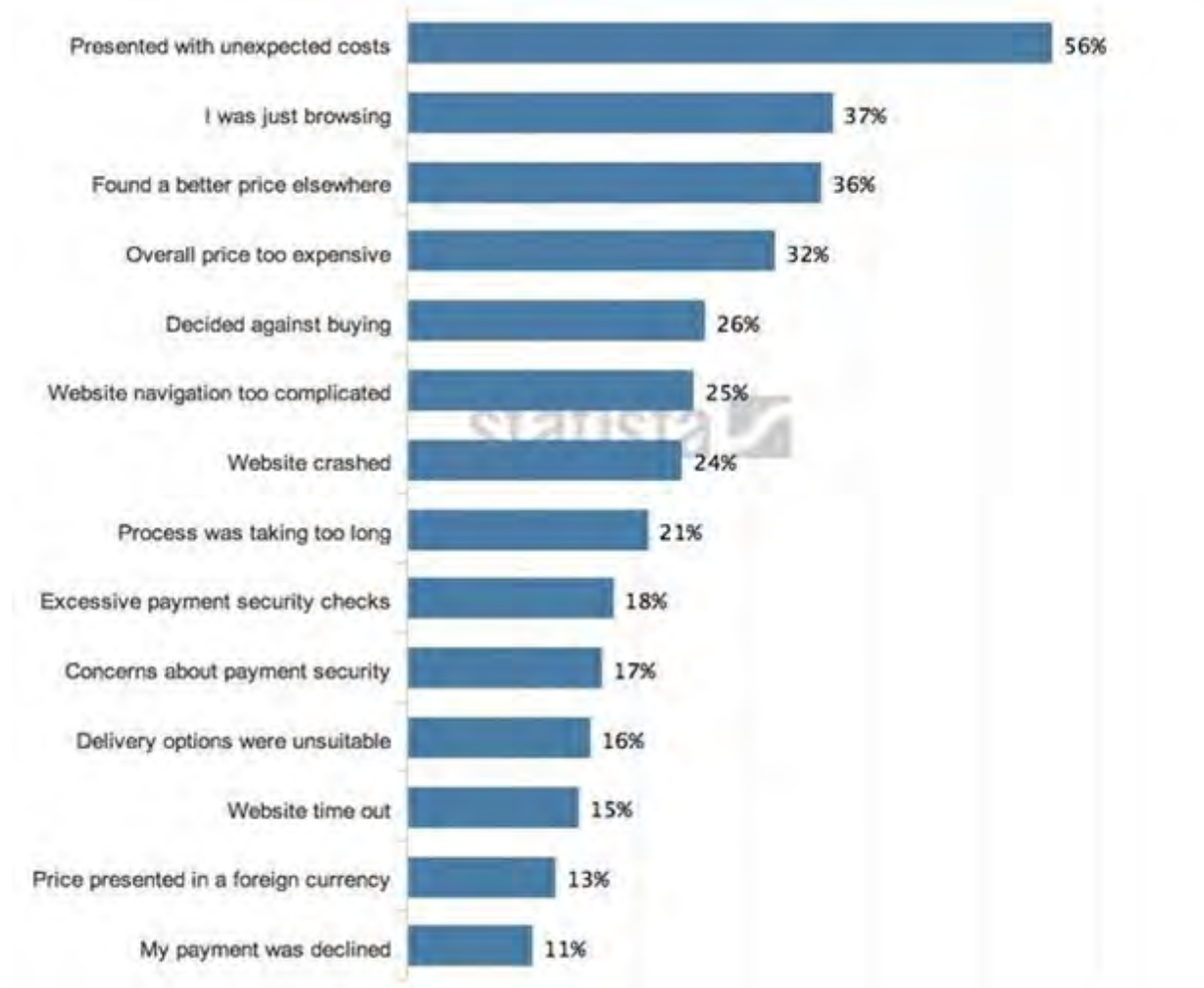
Here's the bottom line: Keep your offer of help open during the entire checkout process. If the customer needs help, give it to them.

Reason#12

**For Shopping Cart
Abandonment**

YOU ADD UNEXPECTED COSTS

According to some studies, unexpected costs is the number one reason that shoppers abandon their carts. The data comes from a comprehensive [SaleCycle study](#). Statista's image below displays a jaw-dropping 56% of abandoners claiming "unexpected costs" as a reason for their departure:



What are these “unexpected costs” which are creating such mass hysterical abandonment?

Two words: Shipping charges.

The shipping issue has already been discussed in a previous chapter. You’ll need to cross this bridge at some point. Are you going to offer free shipping or not?

If you decide against free shipping, you’ll have to enter a new arena of decision-making: How are you going to soften the blow? How are you going to avoid the sticker shock of shipping charges? How are you going to persuade the customer to go ahead and buy your stuff, even though they have to pay an extra \$8.85 for “shipping and handling.”

There are a few options:

BE COMPLETELY UPFRONT ABOUT SHIPPING CHARGES

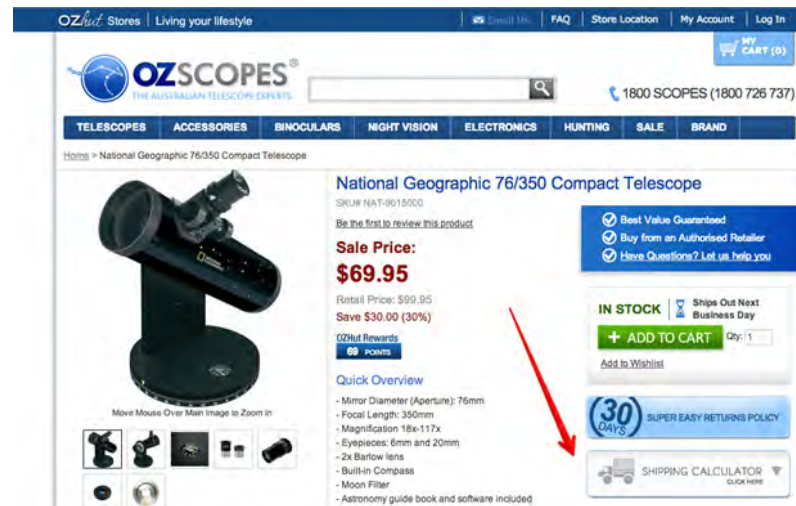
Don’t wait until the shopping cart to let your customers know about this. Tell them on the product page itself. That way, the customer will have no surprises — and no reason for the unexpected cost abandonment — when they’re ready to pay.

In order for this method to be effective, you must display estimated shipping charges directly on every product page.

PROVIDE A SHIPPING CALCULATOR

Savvy customers may expect that shipping might cost extra. Provide them with a way to view the shipping charges. A simple shipping calculator on the page or via a popup is a great way to do this. When a customer does their own discovery, it dramatically reduces their surprise at how much they'll have to pay. They've plugged in the numbers and gotten their answer.

Ozscopes, an Australian telescope retailer, uses this method on their site:



When I enter a zip code, the site generates the exact cost of shipping for the selected product, along with estimated delivery:

The image shows a 'SHIPPING CALCULATOR' popup. It has a 'Postcode' field with the value '3902' and a 'Get Quote' button. Below the button, there is a list of shipping options with their respective costs: 'Pick-Up - Store Location \$0.00', 'eParcel Standard 2 - 5 Business Days \$10.27', and 'StarTrack 1 - 3 Business Days \$10.81'. At the bottom, there is a note: '*More shipping option available during checkout.'

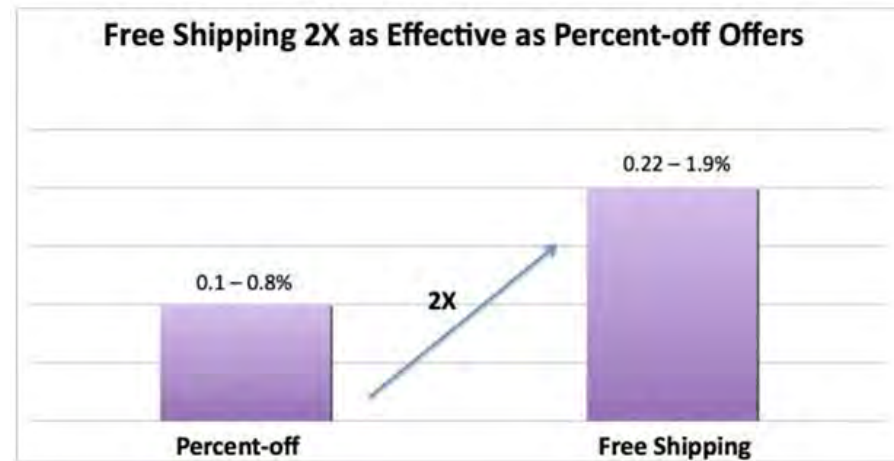
Shipping Option	Cost
Pick-Up - Store Location	\$0.00
eParcel Standard 2 - 5 Business Days	\$10.27
StarTrack 1 - 3 Business Days	\$10.81

OFFER SOME OTHER DISCOUNT

Instead of free shipping, you may want to sweeten the deal with some other purported discount. Displaying a “list price” as opposed to your “sale price,” or informing the customer that they are getting the product for so many dollars off can help motivate them.

This is not quite as effective as free shipping, but it may be the best move for your company:

This [chart from VWO](#) provides a perspective on free shipping vs. percent-off offers.



Remember, if you can't afford free shipping, it's not the end of your career. However, take care that you don't add in any extra unexpected costs. If free shipping is a turn-off for customers, then we can only assume that extra charges are going to be even more disappointing.

If you have to absorb these charges into your list price, then do it. Having a higher-priced product is usually better than throwing in an extra charge during the checkout process.

Reason#13

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

YOUR CHECKOUT PROCESS IS BLAND OR UNFRIENDLY

You know what it's like when you experience a hostile, indifferent, or unfriendly staff at a store? It makes you want to leave — or at least not come back. If the checkout clerk is rude or condescending, it provides you with a less-than-favorable impression of the entire store.

The same holds true for e-commerce.

YOUR WEBSITE HAS A PERSONALITY

As a conversion optimization expert, I'm curious about the psychological factors that motivate or demotivate shoppers. What I've discovered is that the psychological component of conversion is extremely powerful. If you have a strong grasp of web psychology, you will have a powerful advantage in improving conversions.

Your website has a vibe — an aura of positivity or negativity, depending on a host of factors. These factors involves things like color scheme, layout, style of copy, size of images, kerning of font, and about a million other things.

This “personality” — for lack of a better word — should ideally resonate with your target audience. You want to invite them in, interact with them, and encourage them to shop. That's all pretty obvious stuff.

What's not so obvious is carrying this friendly personality vibe into the checkout process.

THE UNFRIENDLY CHECKOUT PHENOMENON

Many sites do a fine job expressing their warmth and appeal in the website. Once a customer enters the checkout funnel, however, things get unpleasant. Why is this? Part of it is ignorance of how psychologically significant this process actually is.

The checkout process, however, is the place where taking care of the customer is more important than ever. Here's why sites often mess up:

Business isn't fun

Checking out is a business transaction. It's the place of secure transfers, credit card verification, online security, and business-y stuff. This approach to a transaction spoils any positivity and fun.

Just the facts

The checkout process isn't a time for making up information and providing false details. When a buyer proceeds to checkout, they are committing to something. When this happens, the site drops its color, its frills, and its friendliness. The unfriendly checkout process has begun.

Forms, forms, forms

Web surfers, browsers and shoppers know about forms. We've come to dread them.

They take time, ask for the same information, and we have to come up with yet another 6- to 14-character password that meets the must-contain-at-least-one-letter-and-one-number-and-one-

alphanumeric-character-and-some-foreign-language-squiggle-and-you-are-guaranteed-to-forget-the-dang-thing-next-time-you-try-to-use-it requirements.

But that's not all. There are names, surnames, credit card numbers, street addresses, expiration dates, CV codes, and a huge array of other information that you have to fill out.

Forms are unfriendly as it is. Few are the websites that try to spruce them up with some cheery colors, happy images, or humorous quips.

Ambiguous buttons

Some checkout processes junk things up with extra buttons that make zero sense. What does “apply” mean? Why does it say “okay” instead of “next step?” Does “proceed with purchase” mean that I’m going to buy it now, or do I still have a chance to bail?

These ambiguities reinforce my anxiety, and reinforce my hostile feelings towards the site. Research from HansonDodge.com advises, “Make sure button names do not require context to describe what they do, and make sure the most important buttons are obvious to the user.”

Restrictions

Some checkout processes are unfriendly, simply because the commerce site provider doesn’t provide a whole lot of flexibility. That checkout funnel? It was designed by a wicked smart programmer jumped up on five bottles of Red Bull during a 24-hour coding spree. He wasn’t in the mood for tossing in fun.

THE UNFRIENDLY FEELING

Just take a look at this example.

There is virtually nothing about that screen that makes me want to go any further. I see red errors, red text, red asterisks, and some obnoxious yellow box with a dotted line around it?

And “customer contribution”?! What is going on here? Red makes me nervous. Yellow makes me angry. And plain gray makes me feel glum. This checkout process is bordering on the hostile.

The screenshot shows a web interface for a utility company's account. On the left is a sidebar menu with options like 'My Account Home', 'Billing & Payment', 'Pay Bill', 'View Bill', 'Payment Activity', 'Bill History', 'Compare Bills', 'Bill Inserts', 'Billing FAQs', 'Third Party Notification', 'My Bill Preferences', 'Energy Analysis', 'My Products & Services', 'Outages', and 'Customer Service'. The main content area is titled 'Pay Bill' and shows a 'Total \$0.00'. Above this, there is a red-bordered box with the text 'Please correct the errors below and try again' and two bullet points: 'Please select a payment date' and 'Please select a Payment Account'. Below this, a yellow box with a dotted border contains the text 'You have a zero balance on your account.' The 'Payment Amount' section shows a message: 'Our records indicate a payment(s) has already been made towards your bill within the last 25 days. Please see [Payment Activity](#) to view your payment(s). To view your previous bills, see [Bill History](#).' There are radio buttons for 'Pay \$0.00 your total balance' and 'Other Amount'. The 'Customer Contribution (Optional)' section is also visible. The 'Payment Date' section has radio buttons for 'Pay ASAP', 'Pay On Due Date', and 'Other Date' with a date picker. The 'Payment Account' section has a dropdown menu to 'Select an Account'.

Here's another example. There's so much gray, so many boxes, so little color. And the heading! Why does it say "Credit/Debit Card Payment - Account/Payment Data Entry"? That string of eight nouns with two slashes and one dash is essentially gibberish.

Tell me instead something like, "Now it's time to provide your credit card information" or something that I can actually understand. This type of payment page makes me feel upset.

The screenshot shows a payment form with the following sections:

- Account Information:** Fields for First Name, Last Name, Account Address Line 1 or P.O. Box Number, City, State, ZIP, Phone Number, and Email Address.
- Payment Information:** Fields for Due Date (04/01/2014), Payment Date, and Payment Amount.
- Payment Method:** A dropdown menu with a message: "One or more of your payment accounts is not available in the payment method dropdown below. To review all payment accounts, please go to the [Manage Payment Accounts page](#)." Below this is a field for Card Number and a checkbox to "Click here to save this account information for future payments." At the bottom are logos for VISA, MasterCard, STAR, NUC, pulse, and Discover.

Buttons for "Continue" and "Back" are at the bottom.

TURNING CHECKOUT INTO YOUR FRIEND

I'll admit that it's difficult to add creativity and zest to a checkout process. There aren't a ton of options for removing steps from the process or eliminating forms without ruining the functionality of your shopping cart. (Eventually, you DO have to get that credit card number or payment information.)

The best way to create a friendly checkout process is simply to use a linear and easy-to-understand process. But there are a few other things you can do, too.

Lighthearted copy

People love to smile and enjoy a website. Pleasantly surprise your customers by using some fresh, friendly, humorous, or lighthearted copy on the checkout page.

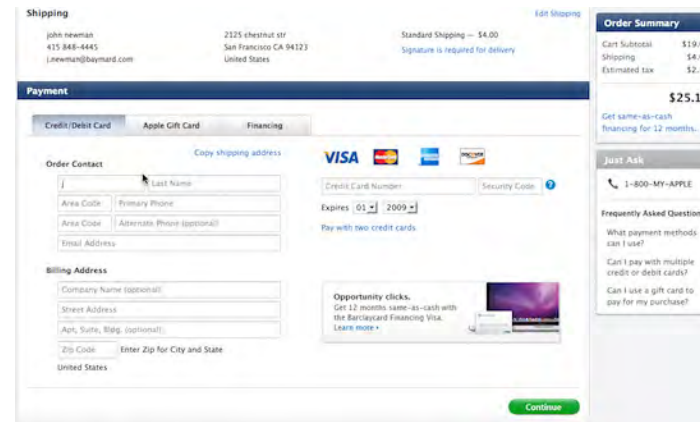
I know, I know. We've become so scared about credit card fraud and scams that we're paralyzed about putting anything remotely human on our checkout pages. Let's dispense with this foolishness, and be real. Here are some examples:

- Hang on, you're almost done. We just need to know exactly where to send your stuff.
- Okay, now it's time to dig out your credit card. Double check those numbers!
- Sorry, our lawyers made us do it. Check the box (or read the User Agreement) to get to the next step of the purchase.
- Our warehouse team is ready to find your item, box it up, and send it your way. Can you just let us know if this is a gift?

Provide plenty of white space

White space (also known as negative space) is the absence of design components. Apple, ever the leader in minimalist design and negative space, uses copious amounts of whitespace in their checkout process.

The image above has a logical layout and areas of the screen that aren't cluttered by forms, fields, and text.

The image is a screenshot of the Apple checkout process. It is divided into three main horizontal sections. The top section is 'Shipping', showing the user's name (John Newman), address (2125 Chestnut St, San Francisco, CA 94123), and shipping cost (\$4.00). The middle section is 'Payment', with tabs for 'Credit/Debit Card', 'Apple Gift Card', and 'Financing'. It includes fields for card number, expiration date, and security code, along with a 'Continue' button. The bottom section is 'Order Summary', displaying the cart subtotal (\$19.00), shipping (\$4.00), and estimated tax (\$2.18), totaling \$25.19. It also includes a 'Just Ask' section with a phone number and a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section.

White space allows our minds to visually relax, albeit in brief intervals. When a user feels more relaxed during the checkout process, they are less likely to get the unfriendly feeling.

(Image from Smashing Magazine)

Use color

Most carts use the color gray way too much. Gray can be a pretty depressing color. You can't go wrong with using blue, the color of trust, or green, the color of life.

Get creative and find alternatives to dismal gray. Color is inviting and kind. But remember to use red sparingly, since this is the color often associated with error messages.

Add images

Most checkouts don't have any pictures. This is unfortunate. Any type of visual pizzazz can freshen up the checkout page, making it more inviting. At the very least, add a picture of the time that the customer is purchasing.

Use Prefills

Automatically filling out information for the customer helps them to feel less like an intruder, and more like a valued guest. When a customer fills out their billing information, for example, you can automatically fill out their shipping information. Don't make them fill out the same information twice.

BOTTOM LINE

The key is to think like your customers. Review your shopping cart experience from the point of view of your visitors. Does it work smoothly? Is it off-putting? Does it drive you crazy at any point? Don't whitewash problems. Fix them.

Conclusion

For Shopping Cart Abandonment

Shopping cart abandonment will be with us as long as e-commerce exists. Even though you've just read an entire guide on the subject, you're still going to see disturbingly high abandonment rates. As I wrote in the introduction, get used to it. It's part of life.

But at the same time, don't settle for sky-high abandonment. While some abandonment is normal, there are other abandoners who can be saved. This guide explains how you're going to do that. There are a billion reasons that cause shopping abandonment. But there are solid, awesome, and practical steps that you can take to remedy the situation.

Let's get a quick roundup of how you can change your abandonment rates and improve your conversions:

1. **Your website lacks trust factors.** If your site is as scary as a dark alley, you need to get trustworthy. Add payment verification symbols, improve color psychology, and address the quality issue.
2. **Your website has usability problems.** If people can't use your site, they won't buy from it, either. Create a seamless and fluid process that allows them to breeze through checkout without a second thought.
3. **Your checkout process is long and complicated.** Use a linear checkout process.
4. **Your system requires account creation prior to checkout.** Don't require account creation unless your revenue tops \$1 billion. By that point, you've earned the right.

5. **Your shipping charges take shoppers by surprise.** People don't want to pay shipping. If you do require it, make sure you tell them about it early in the sales process.
6. **You don't have a return policy.** Add one, and make it really good.
7. **Your payment options are limited.** Invite payment from every source imaginable.
8. **Your security measures are either too strict or too lax.** There's no need to read like a government tax form, but you shouldn't come across as scammy, either.
9. **Your shopping cart is hard to find.** This needs to be one of the most prominent items of your design.
10. **Your coupon codes don't work.** Try dropping coupon codes. It could just make your conversion rates go way up.
11. **You provide no help during in the checkout process.** Hold customers hand as they make this important decision. Your success depends upon it.
12. **You toss in extra charges. Drop them if possible.** Compensate for them in other ways if you can't.

13. Your checkout process is bland or unfriendly. Smile a little bit when they transact. You're going to score a conversion, but you've got to have the right attitude about it. Spiff up your copy, add some color, and watch the attitudes improve.

I'm totally with you when it comes to shopping cart abandonment issues. After years of researching this topic, it's apparent that this is an evil that can be remedied.

Start with some serious A/B testing. Then put these 13 recommendations into action, and you're going to start enjoying more revenue and less abandonment.

I can't wait to hear the success stories.

