

Conversion Rx: How To Diagnose {and Cure} Client Websites - Lydia Kitts

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Decisions are being made on screen every day, and those decisions are impacted by design. To trust or not, to connect or not, to buy or not to buy. Our job as designers is to help our clients build trust and connection through structure and style so that their website visitors convert. My name is Lydia Kitts. I run a boutique design agency called Turnquist House. As an ex-professor and extra nerdy, I also mentor designers to become better at their craft, using data and design to create websites that delight clients and visitors. You can learn more about that at dataanddelight.com. But first, let's dive into our workshop, Conversion RX, how to diagnose and cure your client websites. Though we've all heard the myth that humans have a shorter attention span than goldfish, if there was to cite your work and check your sources one on one class, Microsoft would have failed it. Over a decade ago, Microsoft shared this stat that they found a study that has since been disproven, but people still spout it as if it's the golden rule for marketing and design.

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Yes, we've got a short amount of time to capture attention, but humans, we are really good at focusing on whatever we're interested in. How many hours have you scrolled social media, spent reading, or bingeing a Netflix series? Your attention span? It's not the problem. What we're fighting against is interest, and honestly, it's not a fight. It's an opportunity. We want to quickly capture a visitor's attention with words and visuals, answering the questions they're looking for. This is why it is so important to understand where your traffic is coming from. What is the main driver of traffic to your site? What page do people land on first? What is your marketing actually doing? We need to capture their interest. It was already piqued or else they wouldn't be on the site. They're looking for one of three things, validation that you're a credible business to see your offers and to learn more about their problem. They're coming to your site ready to decide if they trust you and want to work with you. But sometimes our website designs break that trust. Today, we're doing an overview of how to use data and insight to understand a user's behavior, then make a plan to drive them towards the next action.

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We need to understand the behaviors, map a customer journey to create an experience that converts, diagnose the issues and where you're losing visitors, and then we need to fix those issues with design. There are multiple definitions and implementations for user behavior, even within our field. For this conversation, user behavior is all action the website visitor takes. Direct actions such as clicks, scrolling on the page, time spent on the page, and indirect actions such as where they stumble, back button behavior, and where they leave the site. We can see a lot of this using analytics tools. If you don't already have those installed on your client site's predesigned process be sure you do or get access. I'm not going to get into super technical reports in this workshop, even though those are a lot of fun. But they take a lot of prep time and data that you might not have at the moment. Tools that are helpful for this are traditional analytics, screen recording, surveys, click maps, scroll maps, and my favorite, heat maps. We have decades of experience and research to pull upon when creating something new or diagnosing why design isn't working. We know that users shop where they trust.

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They love and crave control and consistency. They want the best solution quickly. Distractions are distracting. They read and interact quickly and habitually. I'd like to add that they start with a cup full of trust. What does this mean when we're focusing on creating websites that convert? Focusing on your website conversion strategy is critical to delivering qualified leads and ultimately, sales to your client. Our goal as designers is to capture their interest so that visitors take the next step, the next click, consume the next information that they need, and then take action. We can harness behavior to guide actions. Every single interaction on our site should be helping to build trust between the brand and the visitor so that they are ready to take action when presented. We can do this through basic design principles and strategies like design elements, which is what you use: line, color, shape, base, symmetry, scale, and texture. We can also use design principles, which really is how you use those design elements: emphasis, balance, and alignment, contrast, repetition, proportion, movement and white space, consistency is what we want to go after. Building trust. You can also use the Gestalt principles to create layouts that show how information is related.

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We want, again, to develop order and trust. Then there are some more advanced strategies and techniques such as the serial position effect and Hicks Law. We can use these to optimize website navigation and reduce cognitive overload. The serial position effect is whenever you're reciting items in a list, most people start with the first and then remember the last few things they heard. The same happens when we read. Design your website navigation to have the first and last items be the two main pages you want to drive traffic towards. Keeping heavily used and important action items all the way to the left or to the right. When creating a menu, make sure that the most popularly used tasks are accessible and consistently in the same position and at the beginning or the end of the menu to make it easy for users to navigate. Think of this as home buttons being all the way to the left, which is where we expect them, and then login buttons being all the way to the right, which is also where we expect them. Another strategy I

like to use is Hicks Law, which helps us to understand the age old issue of going to a restaurant with too many menu options.

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We have difficulty making a decision, so reduce the choices above the fold and help visitors take the right next step by simplifying the decision making process. Or use Hobson's choice, providing two calls to action that present the user with a less desirable action that is still considered a lift on their end. We can use these effects to back up the rationale behind CTA buttons that are bigger and visually distinctive, or progress bars and checklist to harness the power of tension that inspires us to keep moving forward by interrupting a task before it's completed. Affordances and reading patterns can be used to nudge visitors along. I like to think of affordances as clues, clues for how a design should be used. A good example of an affordance is a button. We want to use color to set the tone and inspire action. Then also we want to make sure that the affordance is high. A high affordance means that it, or a strong affordance is what it could also be, is that somebody knows that they should click it versus a low affordance where you're not really sure if you're to click it or if it's just regular text.

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By very clearly showing that it's clickable through color and hover effects, but also using the copy on the button and micro copy around it. We want to build trust through consistency. Repetition, repetition. Did you catch that mistake? Did it make you do a little double take? Did you lose trust in me just a little bit? You may have noticed the error because you're a spelling wizard, but it's more likely that you saw it spelled out right twice and then saw it messed up. We want to use repetition and consistency in order to build trust. If we put all of this together, we can build a site someone trusts, connects with, and that inspires action. Using what we know about design to create sites that guide users along and capture their attention and harness the power of known user behaviors. User behavior allows us to understand how to capture your visitor's interest based on what we expect a target audience to do. We can design experiences to help guide visitors to the offer or solution that's right for them. We can look at our website data and see what they're actually doing. This is where the opportunity lives when we get to see where everything overlaps, what should happen versus what is happening, and then make design decisions based on that information, using behavior trends to capture attention and conversions.

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Then you can start applying the design theories, elements, principles, and laws to fill in the gaps. In order to understand what's wrong with the site, you also have to map the customer journey so you can create a customer experience that converts. We talk a lot about client avatars in this industry, and I think it's really important to consider client intentions. What are they looking for? Both our assumptions of what they're looking for and what we actually see them looking for through analytics data. Each visitor is looking for something, remember, validation that you're a credible business to see your offers or to learn more about their problem. We can use keyword data to understand their mindset and see the pages people visited

based on those keywords. And more importantly, we can see the amount of time they spent on the page and where they went next and the actions that they took there. If visitors are leaving a page very quickly, then it probably isn't satisfying their informational needs, so you should review the content. If visitors are reading the page and then leaving, you've given them what they wanted but failed to draw them into the rest of your site and onto that next step.

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This can be fixed with a stronger navigation and calls to action. When you think about this, what does your current customer journey and experience look like? If you're a website designer and developer, it probably looks like a referral, going to the homepage, going to your services, checking out your portfolio, going back to the services, and then the inquiry. When you're thinking about this, though, what does the referral need to know about you? What lens are they looking at your work through? Do they need to get straight on your calendar or check out your testimonials? When you look at each of your pages through a referral's eyes, what's missing? How could you make their experience simpler and more delightful? Do you add interactive elements, a secret menu page for referrals only, or a fun brand touch point that alludes to your personality and experience? For me, whenever I looked at this and saw that this is what my clients were doing, and I realized that they needed to be doing this, I went through and saw that I needed to make it simpler and better. Now I have people going from referral to home to the services portfolio, inquiry, and then to a next steps page.

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I added direct buttons straight to the inquiry form on my portfolio pages so that clients were just a click away and didn't have to go backwards in their experience. After the inquiry was submitted, I started redirecting people to a next steps page that allowed them to see more about our process and to help them get excited and feel confident in their decision. I want you to take some time and draw this out using multiple colors to help you see how everything is connected. If you're a digital instead of analog, I also love the tool Coggle for this. To diagnose, we need to look into analytics and intuition and then also applying design theories and laws. To diagnose each website, you need to look at the data and the design itself. If sales are sinking, a new boat isn't going to magically fix things. Instead, you need to look at the offer, audience, and brand to see where to find holes in the sales experience. In grad school, one of my professors shared that a website is like a bucket. Your visitors are the water going into the bucket. A broken link, poor navigation, forms that don't load, confusing messaging, and lousy SEO are holes in your bucket.

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Those holes, they're opportunities for potential customers to slip out, opportunities for trust to be lost, as well as revenue. Here are a few reasons for why people leave. I'm not going to read these off. Feel free to pause it and look at it. All right, this is overwhelming. Again, pause to look at it if you need to. But every funnel or website is a little leaky, and it should be. Nothing in this world converts at 100%. Even these

numbers are a little inflated for easy math. What we care about here, though, is identifying and fixing the leaks in your customer experience that shouldn't be there, the leaks that are fixable. As you're looking at your funnel, think about where traffic is coming from, what page it's going to, what the process looks like, and what pages do they go to along the way. When we're diagnosing what's wrong with the website, we like to look at three main elements to do it. Structure, which is how the site is laid out and organized, what orders the content in? Is the positioning front and center, style, is there a clear and consistent style to the design? Is it compelling and help the user to know what they should be doing through visual cues?

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And behavior. This comes from data and experience, but it does the design support natural behaviors of the ICA. The goal of the structure is to create focus and provide comfort. You want to structure your site in a logical way that is creative but consistent with the expected user experience. Think of this as a glorified wireframe, looking at how the content is arrayed and double checking that you've got buttons and CTAs in expected locations to drive conversions. Don't make people think about where to go next. Show us and show us often. Our intent is to subtly guide the visitor to keep scrolling by crafting an effective information hierarchy. A lot of this legwork is done through copy, but as designers, we get to work on displaying and communicating that copy. Introduce the business with a clear value proposition. Address the challenges and have a CTA above the fold. Keep your navigation clear and simple. Remember to use serial position and Hicks Law to optimize your Nav menu. Your design should encourage scrolling, teasing the next section by leading the eye down the page. You can do this through design elements such as lines leading down a page, staggering content, animations, and compelling copy.

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Give your content enough white space to breathe and help your visitor hone in on the information that is important to them. Creating a target for the eyes, encapsulation and proximity work really well here. Use content width to your advantage. Text boxes should be about 700 pixels wide or 8-10 words for quick reading and increased comprehension. Style. This fit is where you're going to decorate your wireframe, adding in brand elements and visuals to help give our site some rhythm and movement, guiding your user to the next step in their journey. Balancing aesthetics and information to create comfort and trust on your website. Use images to support your site's goals. I like to think of this stage as the copy and images having a conversation. If the image you're using doesn't add to the conversation, select a different image. This is one area where we don't want tension. The copy and images should match in subject and vibe. We talked about user behavior, so let's put this together. The layout on the left is short and wide, bunching up the elements and overwhelming the viewer with information that has little hierarchy and poor structure. The hero space is just an image with no text to capture attention.

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There's one CTA. The redesign is tight and long, using the Hero section to capture interest and provide a clear call to action. We've added white space to create visual targets for the eyes, encouraging scanning

and movement down the page. The testimonial is encapsulated, using a container to highlight the information. Instead of one CTA, there are three. Now that we've diagnosed some issues, let's go and look at, again, some issues and prescriptions to make them better. The biggest one that we can't control for the most part is brand and positioning. We need to make sure that the value proposition is front and center on the homepage, making sure that it's also clear what they offer and why they're different. You need to answer this question, why should we work with them instead of somebody else? Most people don't really think of this as a website conversion problem, but it is. Positioning and copy are the backbone of a digital ecosystem. Visual design and branding is another big factor and one that we can use to build trust and authority through consistent design choices like we've talked about. Consistent design, again, is not boring. It's reliable and makes it easier for a user to find the information that they need.

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Here's a symptom. We've got a low conversion rate on a sales page. What I want you to look for whenever you're thinking about this is one, looking at that offer. Is it clear and consistent? Is there a clear call to action and did you use it frequently? Did you use a sticky bar or could you add in a sticky bar in order to make it so that whenever somebody scrolls down past a certain point, they have another bit of a navigation to use? Do your buttons actually work? Plenty of times that's one of the big problems is that they've used a model button and didn't set it up properly. Is the page loading slowly? Is it insecure? Is your messaging clear? Then once you're looking at this, going and looking at the data and seeing where you can use design to help support this structure. Another symptom could be that people are going to your inquiry page and not scheduling or submitting a form. This is more of a structure thing as well of making sure that you haven't had too many form fields or that your copy isn't quite as strong. Maybe your form isn't loading or maybe you didn't have availability.

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If you have a product and people aren't completing their purchases, go and look at that checkout process. Go through it yourself. Are there multiple pages? Do they have to put in redundant information? Is the checkout button real big and easy to see? Do they have any integrations that make payment easy? A lot of this is more on the development side or the structure side than actual design. But we're designing experiences, not just visuals. All right, I hope that you learned some things today, and if you have any questions about implementation, please let me know. I want to encourage you to go and grab that prescription pad. It's at dataanddelight.com/prescriptionpad. That prescription pad is going to have an audit. It has symptoms as well as prescriptions. What you can do to fix an issue that is already happening on a site or whenever you're doing a complete redesign that you can be keeping in mind as you move forward. I found it really helpful and so have my students. I hope that you can go and grab it. For the Page Builder Summit, it's free.