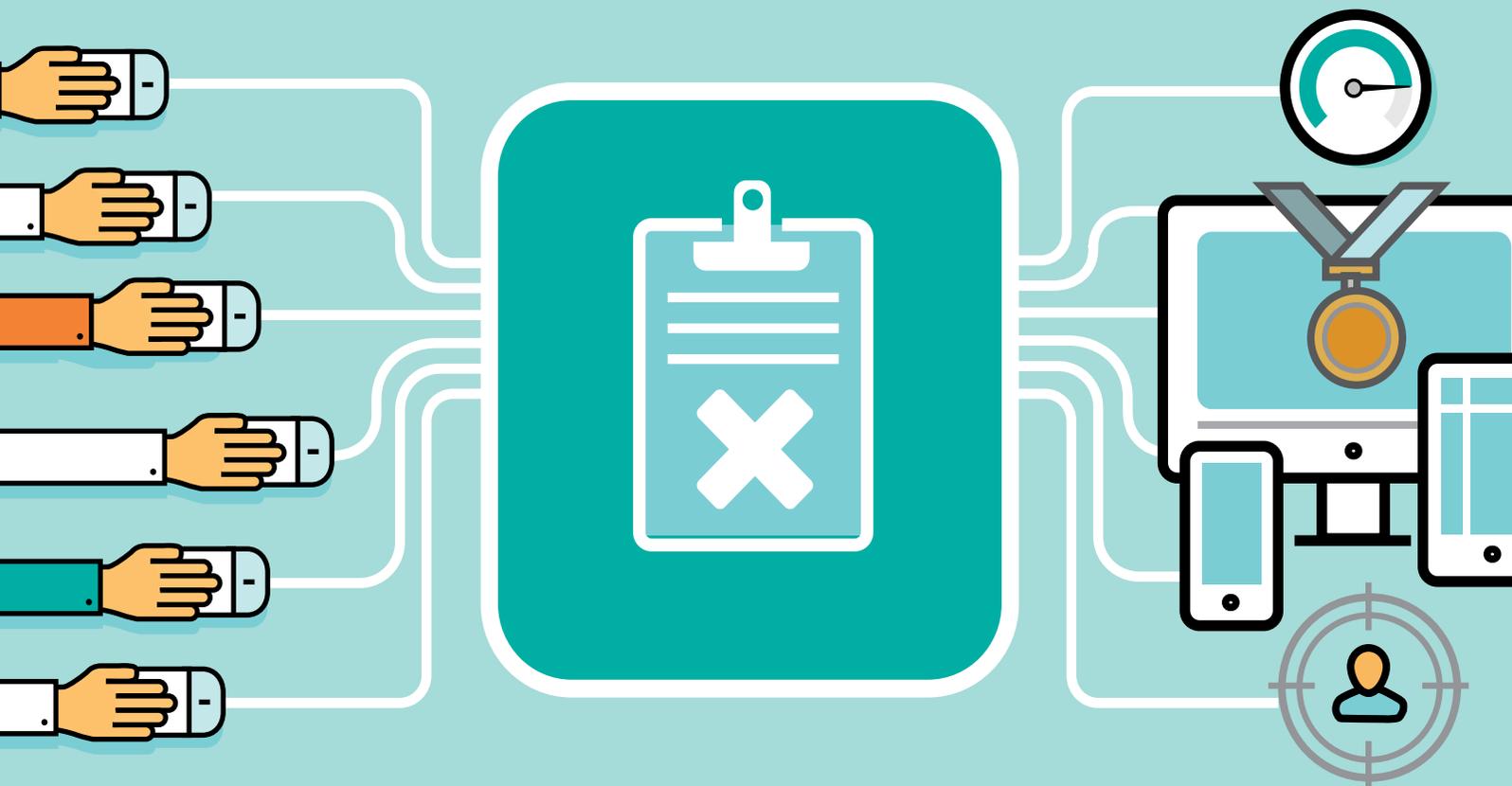




CONVINCIFY

WHAT TO DO WITH LOSING TESTS

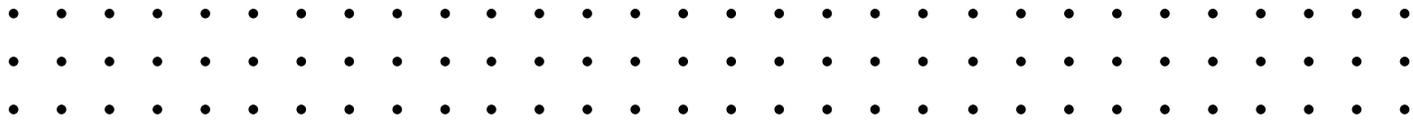
10 TIPS ON TURNING LOSSES INTO WINS





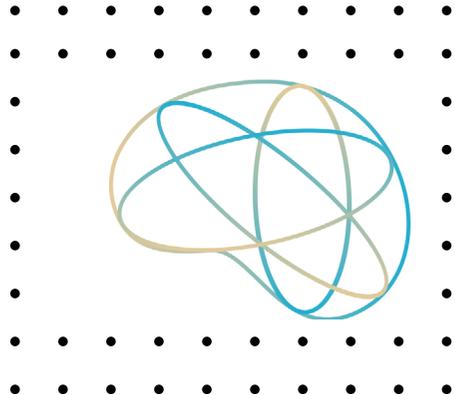
CONTENTS

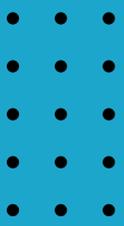
| | |
|--|----|
| THE FIRST THREE THINGS YOU SHOULD DO | 4 |
| Double-check test setup & tracking | 4 |
| Look for very low-performing segments | 4 |
| Have you given it enough time? | 5 |
| FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS TO EXTRACT POSITIVE TAKEAWAYS | 6 |
| Did the test stick to the original hypothesis? | 7 |
| Did we identify a “problem” that didn’t exist? | 7 |
| Did we get radical enough? | 8 |
| Did we not get to the root of the problem? | 9 |
| Do you have incongruence with your new experience with other aspects of your site and traffic? | 9 |
| If you continually run into negative tests... | 10 |
| WE’RE HERE TO HELP | 11 |



WHAT TO DO WITH A LOSING TEST

The First Three Things You Should Do





FIRST 3 THINGS TO DO WITH A LOSING A/B TEST

1



DOUBLE CHECK TEST SETUP & TRACKING

This is especially important if your confidence in the test being a successful one was very high. Questions to ask yourself:

- Is our analytics program tracking correctly? In particular, look for rare conditions that can happen between Javascript based testing and analytics tools causing collection issues.
- Are the test tools configured and implemented correctly, and is the test code setup correctly inside the testing software?
- Did the test get QA'd across all of the major platforms and devices and did you account for any special, but regular user circumstances?
- If you are testing a radical experience, did you QA metrics tracking from all angles correctly?

2



REVIEW DATA FOR VERY LOW PERFORMING SEGMENTS

Here you are looking to see if particular user groups are distorting the test's data, bringing down the performance. It can be the case that certain user segments have issues with test variations. Some segments (especially on responsive sites) to research performance in are: mobile, OS, resolution, traffic source, user types (new vs return, members/non, personas, etc.), form field interactions, server or website error instances, and browser type.

FIRST 3 THINGS TO DO WITH A LOSING A/B TEST

3



HAVE YOU GIVEN IT ENOUGH TIME?

It is easy to jump to conclusions very early on in a test. Many times companies launch a test and stare at their monitor for hours over the first couple days. At the first sign of poor performance, they are apt to pull the trigger and call a test a loser to perform some sort of damage control. The fact is, many tests fluctuate in performance before settling on a stable state, especially with radical variations. Make sure you are setting sample size requirements and test run duration, then honoring them as much as possible. Even A/A tests can show false positives when sample sizes are low.

As an example, Optimizely has a great chart showing the performance lifecycle of a test and how many false-positives can arise:

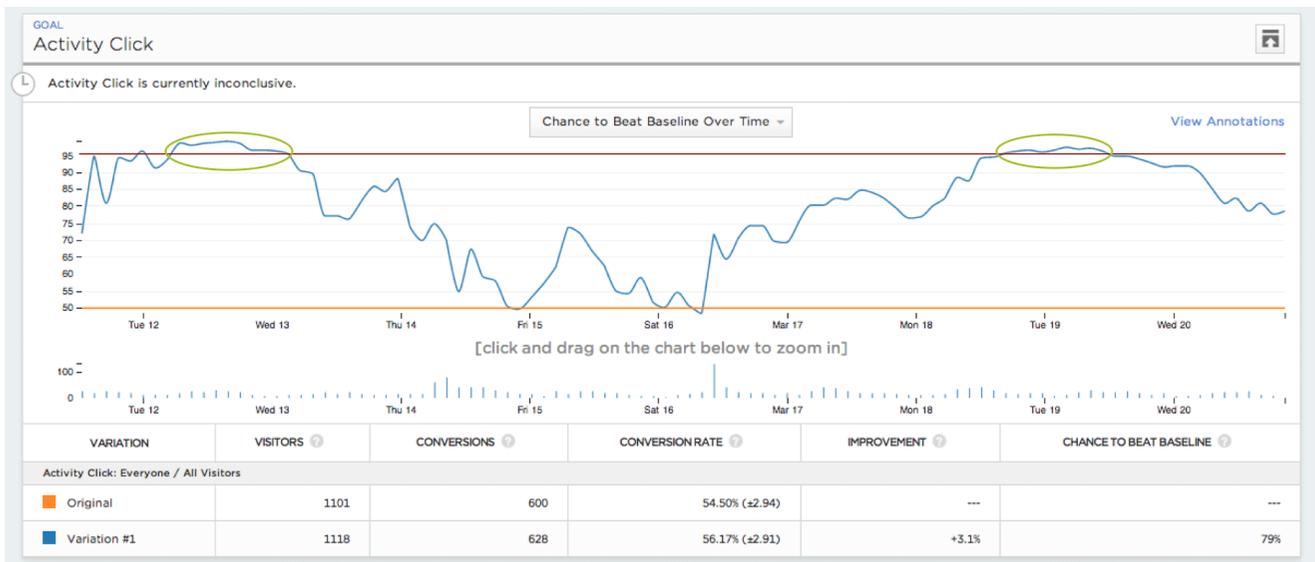
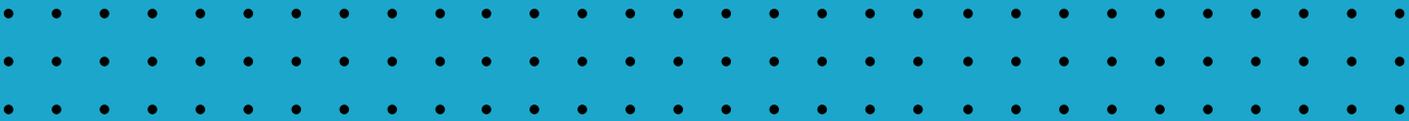
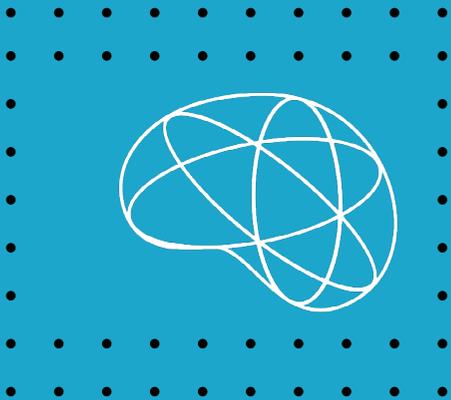


Photo from Optimizely.com



WHAT TO DO WITH A LOSING TEST

Follow-Up Tips to Extract Positive Takeaways



FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS TO EXTRACT POSITIVE TAKEAWAYS

4

Did the test stick to the original hypothesis?

What was the goal of the test and what problem was it trying to solve for? Tests can often change throughout the process of launching. Designs get changed after people give opinions, development cannot make certain things happen, the testing team needs to change the setup, etc. Any one of these could result in the test getting lost in the process and changing in such a way that it no longer properly solves the problem it was initially intended to.



5

Did we identify a "problem" that didn't exist?

Many times when navigating our sites we find issues, or what we perceive as large roadblocks to conversion. In some cases, this is actually not a big issue to users and when tested we are shocked that it does not increase performance 120%. Think to yourself, was the original idea flawed in that it relied on bad data, bad user feedback, or internal complaints not founded in data/reality? Double-check the source of the test hypothesis data. If the test idea was data-driven user feedback, double-check the analysis or methods you use to collect panel/survey data. You may find many companies inadvertently lead their panelist to arrive at the same conclusions they have in panel question construction.



FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS TO EXTRACT POSITIVE TAKEAWAYS

6

Did we get radical enough?

It is often tempting to make the simple changes to get tests up and running - more tests are better, right? Button color changes, headline changes, and removing copy are all quick fixes that may not do a good job of pushing the needle. Maybe the quick headline test wasn't enough to make any significant difference. What else can be tested that may have a more significant impact on performance?

Many people look at testing small issues expecting these huge gains because that is what they are used to reading from case studies.

Really think about it: should changing a button's color alter performance 50%?

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The fact of the matter might be that your test variations are not really getting at why people are not converting. Here are a couple questions to ask:

- What is the value (or perceived value) of what you are offering?
- Is the page you are optimizing the real issue, or could it be within the prior steps of the experience the user navigated to before arriving here?
- Does the delivery make sense, or are you talking to users assuming they understand what you consider "givens"?
- Did you change the color and add flashy graphics without changing the messaging or flow?

8

Do we have incongruence between our new experience with other aspects of the site or traffic?



Even with radical testing, the test variations need to look and feel like the rest of the site. The copy tone and messaging need to be consistent as well. For example, you might be testing a new cart page. However, the design and how one interacts with the page is so foreign to the rest of your site

it causes confusion or concern to the visitor. It might not be that the page in isolation is that bad, but how does the entire user journey play out?

9

What variables of change went into the test?

If there are multiple aspects to the experience that you changed, it may be necessary to test the individual variables to understand what could be pulling down performance. If it is just a single variable change, perhaps look at your execution. It is possible that your hypothesis was correct, but your solution was off-base.

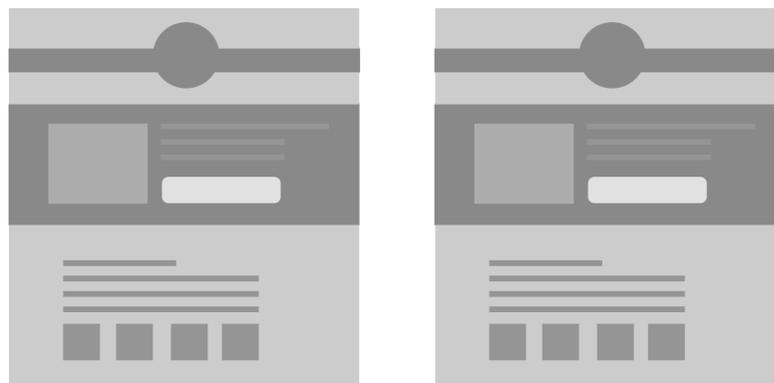
Testing tools have made it too easy to test too many things at once.

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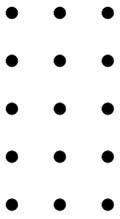
This can leave us in a poor spot, even with winning tests, with not really understanding what is playing a part in the performance change.

If you continually run into negative tests, we suggest running an a/a experiment to remove the potential of instrumentation issues.

While it is easy and feels good to blame the testing tools for bad test results, it can sometimes be the issue. To set up the experiment, configure a test to run that doesn't actually change anything in either variation.



As long as you run this through an appropriate sample size, one would expect to see no difference with confidence. A word of caution though, at the start of an A/A you might observe a difference between the variations with confidence. Again, allow the test to run through the proper sampling paces, and then check to see if there is an observed difference. If there is a significant enough difference, you need to look at what tool might be causing the issue, whether it is a testing tool, or analytics collection problem. Perhaps there is an inherent bias to the control you need to adjust for. For example, your control content is cached on a different server where your treatment code is not, causing latency differences.



WE'RE HERE TO HELP

START YOUR OPTIMIZATION TRANSFORMATION TODAY.

We hope you enjoyed learning about what to do with losing tests and are now empowered to turn even the losing tests into wins. Our goal is to educate digital marketers in the intricacies of A/B testing and conversion optimization, so they can get reliable results and drive more revenue.

If you found this guide helpful, please pass it along to your colleagues. We wrote out a tweet for you to make it even simpler:

Free A/B Testing Guide: What to Do With Losing A/B Tests - 10 Tips on Turning Losses into Wins by @Convincify - <http://bit.ly/1O5lkxj>

CLICK TO TWEET 

WORK WITH US

Our clients range from Fortune 500 organizations to budding start-ups. With years of expertise in A/B testing, we have the tools and expertise to guide your company through effectively measuring and optimizing your digital marketing efforts.

Call or email us to schedule a consultation and start your conversion optimization journey.

CONTACT US