State of the Conversion Optimization Industry Report 2018

To assess the state of the Conversion Optimization Industry in 2018, we gave a 26 question survey to 701 people who work in the optimization space.

This year we partnered with VWO, the all-in-one platform that helps you conduct visitor research, build an optimization roadmap and run continuous experimentation. This partnership resulted in a great success as we were able to reach more than double respondents compared to last year.

This is the third issue of the State of the CRO Industry Report (the first one was published in 2016) and – with three datasets available – we begin to see some trends happening in the CRO space.
Demographics: Age

- 30-40: 48.1%
- 20-30: 26.4%
- 40-50: 19.3%
- 50-60: 5.0%
- 18-19: 0.1%

Age Distribution:
- 18
- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50-60
- 60+
Demographics: Gender

- Male:
  - 2016: 75.00%
  - 2017: 75.00%
  - 2018: 75.00%

- Female:
  - 2016: 25.00%
  - 2017: 25.00%
  - 2018: 25.00%
What kind of CRO work do you do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>In-house</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-house 57%
Agency 43%
What kind of company do you work for?

- Agency/Freelance
- Ecommerce
- SaaS
- Lead generation
- Publisher/Media
- Non-profit

**Bar Chart**

- **2016**
- **2017**
- **2018**

**Pie Chart**

- **Agency/Freelance** 30.9%
- **Ecommerce** 33.9%
- **Lead generation** 13.5%
- **SaaS** 13.8%
- **Publisher/Media** 5.8%
- **Non-profit** 2.6%
Which platforms does your Team optimize?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desktop websites</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile websites</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile apps</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Combined Platforms

- Desktop + Mobile Websites: 59.14%
- Desktop + Mobile Websites + Apps: 10.35%
- Desktop Websites Only: 8.33%
- Other Variations: 9.80%
Work experience: How long have you worked in a CRO role?

- 10+ years: 7.3%
- 9 years: 0.9%
- 8 years: 2.6%
- 7 years: 2.6%
- 6 years: 4.9%
- 5 years: 9.5%
- 4 years: 9.9%
- 3 years: 16.2%
- 2 years: 18.6%
- 1 year: 12.2%
- <1 year: 15.3%
Annual salary (USD)

- $150,000 or more: 6.02%
- $100,000 to $149,999: 13.87%
- $75,000 to $99,999: 16.61%
- $50,000 to $74,999: 25.18%
- $35,000 to $49,999: 14.60%
- $25,000 to $34,999: 9.31%
- Less than $25,000: 14.42%
Annual salary by country
Annual salary by industry

- Agency
- Ecommerce
- LeadGen
- SaaS

Salary ranges:
- $150,000 or more
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $75,000 to $99,999
- $50,000 to $74,999
- $35,000 to $49,999
- $25,000 to $34,999
- Less than $25,000
Annual salary (USD) by work experience
### Who does CRO in your organization?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Description</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A specific team of people</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A single dedicated person</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People across teams</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRO is nobody's primary job</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who does CRO in your organization (by industry)?

- **Ecommerce**
  - A specific team of people: 30%
  - A single dedicated person: 20%
  - People across teams: 10%
  - Optimization is nobody's primary job responsibility: 5%

- **Agency**
  - A specific team of people: 25%
  - A single dedicated person: 20%
  - People across teams: 15%
  - Optimization is nobody's primary job responsibility: 10%

- **SaaS**
  - A specific team of people: 20%
  - A single dedicated person: 15%
  - People across teams: 10%
  - Optimization is nobody's primary job responsibility: 5%

- **Lead Gen**
  - A specific team of people: 15%
  - A single dedicated person: 10%
  - People across teams: 5%
  - Optimization is nobody's primary job responsibility: 5%
How often do you meet with others on your optimization team to discuss CRO?

By industry:

- **Daily**
  - Ecommerce: 30%
  - Agency: 25%
  - SaaS: 20%
  - Lead Gen: 15%

- **Weekly**
  - Ecommerce: 40%
  - Agency: 35%
  - SaaS: 30%
  - Lead Gen: 25%

- **Bi-weekly**
  - Ecommerce: 25%
  - Agency: 20%
  - SaaS: 15%
  - Lead Gen: 10%

- **Monthly**
  - Ecommerce: 15%
  - Agency: 10%
  - SaaS: 5%
  - Lead Gen: 0%

- **Quarterly**
  - Ecommerce: 5%
  - Agency: 3%
  - SaaS: 2%
  - Lead Gen: 1%

- **Only when necessary**
  - Ecommerce: 10%
  - Agency: 5%
  - SaaS: 2%
  - Lead Gen: 1%
Does your team have a conversion optimization process that you follow?

By industry

- Yes, it is documented/structured:
  - 2016: 26%  
  - 2017: 33%  
  - 2018: 38%

- Yes, but it isn’t documented/structured:
  - 2016: 25%  
  - 2017: 39%  
  - 2018: 39%

- No:
  - 2016: 42%  
  - 2017: 30%  
  - 2018: 24%
Do you have a formal conversion/user research process for extracting insights?

By industry

- Yes, we have created our own: 39.4%
- Yes, we use ResearchXL: 6.9%
- Yes, we use some other process we found/borrowed: 14.9%
- No: 38.8%
Do you have a test prioritization framework that you follow?

- Ecommerce
- Agency
- SaaS
- Lead Gen

- No, we just wing it.
- Yes, we have created our own.
- Yes, we use PXL.
- Yes, we use PIE.
- Yes, we use ICE.
Tracking and sharing test results

- Is the percentage of winning tests tracked?
- Is the average lift per test tracked?
- Are CRO test results shared across your team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage of Winning Tests Tracked</th>
<th>Average Lift per Test Tracked</th>
<th>CRO Test Results Shared Across the Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eCommerce</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SaaS</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Gen</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How are CRO test results typically archived?

- Use a dedicated testing workflow tool: 9.4%
- Archived in the testing tool: 27.2%
- Results are exported out: 42.7%
- Not archived: 20.7%

Charts showing the percentage of test results archived in different ways over the years 2016, 2017, and 2018.
# Usefulness of methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital Analytics</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/B Testing</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UX / Design</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copywriting</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology / User Testing</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Survey</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalization</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Click Maps / Website Polls</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Tracking</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biometric</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Usefulness of Methods (scale 1-5)

Digital Analytics
- Average: 4.4
- Ecommerce: 4.4
- Agency: 4.4
- SaaS: 4.5
- Lead Gen: 4.3

A/B Testing
- Average: 4.3
- Ecommerce: 4.4
- Agency: 4.3
- SaaS: 4.4
- Lead Gen: 4.1

UX / Design
- Average: 4.1
- Ecommerce: 4.1
- Agency: 4.1
- SaaS: 4.1
- Lead Gen: 4.0
Usefulness of Methods (scale 1-5)

Copywriting

User Testing

Psychology / Persuasion
Usefulness of Methods (scale 1-5)

Click Maps / Scroll Maps / Mouse Hover Maps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Ecommerce</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>SaaS</th>
<th>Lead Gen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Ecommerce</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>SaaS</th>
<th>Lead Gen</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Customer Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Ecommerce</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>SaaS</th>
<th>Lead Gen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Usefulness of Methods (scale 1-5)

**Website Polls**
- Average: 2.9
- Ecommerce: 3.0
- Agency: 3.1
- SaaS: 2.8
- Lead Gen: 2.9

**Eye Tracking**
- Average: 2.5
- Ecommerce: 2.5
- Agency: 2.7
- SaaS: 2.5
- Lead Gen: 2.3

**Biometric Research**
- Average: 2.1
- Ecommerce: 2.3
- Agency: 2.2
- SaaS: 2.0
- Lead Gen: 2.0
Test types trends

- A/B/n:
  - 2016: 70%
  - 2017: 90%
  - 2018: 98%

- MVT:
  - 2016: 23%
  - 2017: 31%
  - 2018: 32%

- Bandit:
  - 2016: 6%
  - 2017: 11%
  - 2018: 8%
Test type combinations
Does your optimization team have a standardized stopping point for A/B tests?

- Yes: 52.8%
- No: 47.2%
How many tests does your Team run every month?

By industry

2017 2018

20+ 7% 6%
11-19 4% 5%
5-10 16% 20%
3-4 20% 25%
1-2 42% 48%

eCommerce Agency SaaS Lead Gen

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%
Effectiveness of conversion optimization in 2018 vs 2017

- Less: 6.6%
- The same: 37.0%
- More: 56.4%

By industry:

- eBookCommerce
- Agency
- SaaS
- Lead Gen

- More: 60%
- The same: 40%
- Less: 0%
CRO budget 2018 vs 2017

- More: 45.0%
- The same: 48.7%
- Less: 6.3%

By industry

- eCommerce
- Agency
- SaaS
- Lead Gen

- More
- The same
- Less
Does CRO have its own budget?

- **No, CRO is not mentioned specifically.**
  - 2017: 47%
  - 2018: 42%

- **Yes, it's part of the marketing budget.**
  - 2017: 12%
  - 2018: 27%

- **Yes, it's part of the overall budget.**
  - 2017: 10%
  - 2018: 36%

- **Yes.**
  - 2017: 9%
  - 2018: 16%
## Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SCORE</th>
<th>Has documented process</th>
<th>CRO is done in team</th>
<th>Meets at least weekly</th>
<th>Has formal research process</th>
<th>Runs at least 4 experiments /month</th>
<th>Has a test prioritization framework</th>
<th>Has A/B/n standard stopping point</th>
<th>Tracks winning tests</th>
<th>Tracks average lift per test</th>
<th>Archives results</th>
<th>Shares tests results</th>
<th>Uses website personalization</th>
<th>Improved effectiveness</th>
<th>Increased priority</th>
<th>Increased budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecommerce</td>
<td>59.20%</td>
<td>44.08%</td>
<td>44.55%</td>
<td>51.66%</td>
<td>58.25%</td>
<td>68.20%</td>
<td>60.19%</td>
<td>50.71%</td>
<td>65.40%</td>
<td>66.82%</td>
<td>81.04%</td>
<td>87.20%</td>
<td>50.24%</td>
<td>54.03%</td>
<td>62.09%</td>
<td>43.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>59.04%</td>
<td>41.03%</td>
<td>54.87%</td>
<td>45.13%</td>
<td>70.68%</td>
<td>68.72%</td>
<td>68.21%</td>
<td>48.72%</td>
<td>62.56%</td>
<td>59.49%</td>
<td>82.05%</td>
<td>73.33%</td>
<td>48.21%</td>
<td>58.46%</td>
<td>57.95%</td>
<td>46.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SaaS</td>
<td>53.88%</td>
<td>28.71%</td>
<td>45.54%</td>
<td>39.60%</td>
<td>54.08%</td>
<td>61.03%</td>
<td>42.57%</td>
<td>40.59%</td>
<td>62.38%</td>
<td>64.36%</td>
<td>76.24%</td>
<td>79.21%</td>
<td>51.49%</td>
<td>55.45%</td>
<td>63.37%</td>
<td>43.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Gen</td>
<td>59.32%</td>
<td>28.41%</td>
<td>51.14%</td>
<td>46.59%</td>
<td>62.79%</td>
<td>71.29%</td>
<td>47.73%</td>
<td>44.32%</td>
<td>73.86%</td>
<td>67.05%</td>
<td>79.55%</td>
<td>84.09%</td>
<td>46.59%</td>
<td>65.91%</td>
<td>65.91%</td>
<td>54.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>53.80%</td>
<td>35.48%</td>
<td>48.39%</td>
<td>41.94%</td>
<td>61.29%</td>
<td>71.59%</td>
<td>51.61%</td>
<td>45.16%</td>
<td>54.84%</td>
<td>51.61%</td>
<td>77.42%</td>
<td>77.42%</td>
<td>41.94%</td>
<td>51.61%</td>
<td>61.29%</td>
<td>35.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Profit</td>
<td>45.38%</td>
<td>28.00%</td>
<td>68.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>36.00%</td>
<td>80.65%</td>
<td>24.00%</td>
<td>44.00%</td>
<td>28.00%</td>
<td>48.00%</td>
<td>56.00%</td>
<td>84.00%</td>
<td>52.00%</td>
<td>36.00%</td>
<td>44.00%</td>
<td>32.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Issues

We collected 580 responses on the question "what are you struggling with?" We analyzed the responses and identified 39 different "pains" common among CRO professionals.

We assigned a score to each answer and ranked each issue/pain.

6 issues are responsible for 50% of the total "pain score". The first 14 issues sum up to 80% of the total score.
Want to improve your CRO program?

**CXL Institute** trains the top marketing, product, and analytics teams in the world.

https://conversionxl.com/institute/
peep@conversionxl.com

**CXL Agency** offers fully managed CRO programs to help successful businesses grow online profits.

https://conversionxl.com/agency/