

Web Analytics And Functionalism: Say Au Revoir

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In an earlier post (http://semphonic.blogs.com/semangel/2006/09/store_planning_.html) I talked about how there are lots of lessons to be learned from traditional retail - lessons in navigation, store layout and merchandising.

With today's Functional Page Class, Completers, I think there's another profound lesson to be learned. When I go into a bank and deposit money, my teller (and even my bank machine) routinely finish by saying something like "You're all set, here's a record of your transaction. Is there anything else we can help you with today?"

Now on most web sites, I can be pretty confident that when I purchase something I'll get part of this with the Thank You page. I'll get the record of my transaction (usually conveniently emailed to me). I'll get the "You're all set." Usually in the form of the Thank You. But how often do I get the "Is there anything else we can help you with today?" Not bloody often.

I've mentioned before that one of the guiding principles of Functionalism is that it should be able to analyze every single page on a web site. And Completers are the type of page that traditionally has been completely ignored. Completers, you see, are your "Thank You" pages - whether for a sign-up, a registration, or an order.

In the "conversion" paradigm, you can't do much with Completers. They are either 100% associated with orders or pretty close to zero percent associated (depending on how you want to look at it). Either way, you aren't going to find out much about your Completer page by looking at conversion percentages.

So what's a Completer Page for? Well, it has the three functions we've already talked about: confirmation that the visitor was successful, access to a record of a transaction and opening up a new dialog.

There are potentially measures for all three of these things - but the first two are almost always handled reasonably well. If you are looking for signs that your "handshake" with the customer isn't being understood, here are a few: a high number of refreshes on the "Thank You." Next steps to help, back into the process or Customer Support or order/account tracking pages. Calls from this page (use a unique 800 number please!). These are all danger signs - but they are rare.

So let's talk about "opening up a new dialog." Everybody knows that your existing customers are your most valuable asset. You've just created one. And you're just letting them go - with a page that says "Order Confirmed" and not much else. Why? Isn't there something you want to tell them?

Listen, this doesn't have to be - maybe even shouldn't be - a sales thing. You already had an opportunity to upsell in the cart and checkout. But wouldn't it be nice to point your new customer to how to get help, to product resources, to some related sites, to some helpful information, to something - anything - other than goodbye? And bad Completer pages are by no means limited to taking orders. Some of the worst I've ever seen are on pages taking leads or when I submit a request for a document. My lord, if I just asked you for your White Paper on dieting with chocolate cake isn't there something else you want to offer me (like a big spoon).

I definitely believe in the Long Goodbye. This isn't telemarketing. Your customers can go anytime they want. They aren't going to be upset by your offering them options on the "Thank You" page!

So the most important Functional measure for Completer pages is re-engagement with the site. We measure this in two ways - tracking against hard exits and tracking against offered routes. Why two ways? Many customers who are offered "Thank You" pages will break back to the Home Page or use other top navigation options. That isn't bad, but it means you haven't engaged them with your offers. So, like a router, you should measure re-engagement with the site via intended offers.

Part of the discipline that measurement provides is a formal process - we built this page, what do we want it

to do and how are we going to measure that it's doing it? And by answering these last two questions, you can often come to a better understanding of how the page should work - even without doing the measurement! Unlike many Functional techniques, this one is almost a complete slam dunk - and it can result in a substantial payoff on many, many sites.