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The Buying Funnel Is Broken—Here’s What Conversational Search Can Do for You

90% of consumers will use a search engine during the process of purchasing an item. Whether they’re comparing product reviews, checking a company’s credibility, or purchasing online, consumers are leveraging the Internet to make spending choices.

However, that pipeline is broken. Picture a brand that sells luxury shoes, trying to reach a customer looking to buy a pair of pink heels for their next event. Simple enough, right?

Type the search term ‘pink heels’ into Google Chrome, a search engine that accounts for 90% of all search activity. In under one second, you’ll get 6,620,000,000 results. From slingback heels to stilettos, the options are endless.

The Search-and-Buy Process is Broken

This isn’t how the buying process should be. People don’t do well when confronted with dozens of choices, much less billions. There are three issues with the current approach.

1. Paralysis by analysis
2. FOMO
3. Industry jargon

Paralysis by analysis occurs when potential consumers feel flooded with options. It’s a combination of overwhelmed feelings and sheer dread. Any savvy shopper knows how to filter these choices, of course. They could add a brand name, or a qualifier to search ‘slingback pink heels.’ Or they could filter by price, same-day pickup, and more. This makes the buying process even longer and more exhausting.

Fear of missing out, also abbreviated as FOMO, occurs with so many choices. When consumers feel there is something better lurking just around the corner, they don’t pull the trigger. They put it off. This delay could lead to losing them from the buyer’s funnel altogether.

Industry jargon is another issue with current search-and-buy funnels. It’s not the consumer’s job to be an industry expert. Consider all the jargon associated with a single pair of pink heels—ankle-hip alignment, midsole, traction—what does all that even mean?

When consumers are expected to study product descriptions like an upper-level chemistry textbook, that’s a problem. Since many brands are trying to rank higher with SEO-oriented product descriptions, that’s exactly what consumers have to do.

What’s the solution to this broken funnel? Some brands think the answer is SEO—which is partially true! Conversational search, when paired with SEO, is the biggest factor to successfully convert customers.

How Conversational Search Can Help

What is conversational search? It’s a marriage of SEO and AI—here’s how it works.

Think about walking into a classy department store. A salesperson will approach and ask what you’re looking for. In a few sentences, you may tell them about any number of things: your favorite shoe brands, pink heels, the event you’re attending, and more. The salesperson then filters this information through their experience with past customers, their knowledge of store brands, and their sales training.

Then, they lead you through the store to a certain section. There, on one shelf, are the heels you’re looking for. Suddenly, the playing field changed. You’re no longer dealing with 6 billion choices on Google or the overwhelming chaos of an entire department store. Instead, your choices have been filtered down to a single shelf of shoes. Instead of billions of options, you’re facing between five and ten.

How’d you get here? Someone listened to your needs, filtered through the options, and presented you with personalized choices. That’s exactly what conversational search does.

What Do I Need to Know About Conversational Search?

Here’s a breakdown. Conversational search leverages interactive experiences—often guided by AI, algorithms, and chatbots—to help filter your needs.

This puts the grunt work of shopping on algorithms and chatbots. For instance, how would your experience shopping for heels be different on a site that leverages conversational search?

You’d find their site through SEO. Then, you’d have an interactive experience where a bot replaced the salesperson in the above scenario. You might select from three options: “Are you wearing these shoes for a night out, at a company event, or for walking?” You might select a few of your favorite brands.

Each selection narrows your choices more and more. At the end of the funnel, the algorithm presents you with five to ten personalized choices. By mimicking the back-and-forth of a needs-oriented, human conversation, conversational search accelerates the buying funnel.

Getting Results with a Needs-Based Approach

This needs-based approach boosts conversions. By predicting needs and eliminating traditional hurdles from the buying funnel, customers are much more likely to make an actual purchase. In return, your conversational search functions will collect millions of data points.

- How are certain brands performing?
- Is the chatbot advanced enough to keep up with human conversations?
- What terms are buyers actually using to express their needs?

All this information tells you what products are popular, whether your buying funnel is working, and can help you create detailed buyer personas. With an accelerated buyer funnel, your sales are likely to increase, too.

If you need help with implementing conversational search, Affirma can help! It’s a great way to step into the future, fix broken buying funnels, and treat your audience with empathy. Your consumers will be infinitely grateful!

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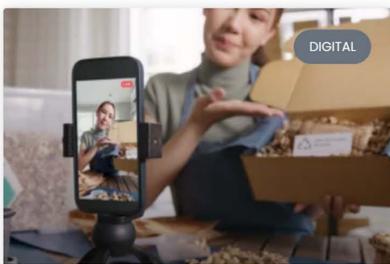


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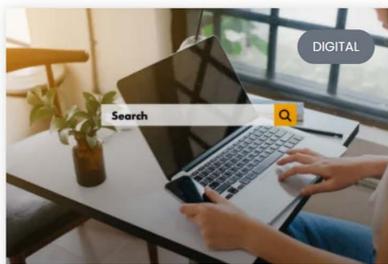


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