Conversion Rate Optimization with Joanna Lord

Presenter: Good afternoon everybody I hope everyone enjoyed the break out sessions. We're going to be in this room for the remainder of the afternoon together so everybody get comfortable. Quick announcement before I actually let Joanna stand up from where she's already standing. I just wanted to let everybody know that there are notecards on all of your tables and those are actually going to be used for our Q and A session. It's going to be the last session of the afternoon. So, if you guys have questions that you're thinking of that you'd like to ask the panel at later in the afternoon, just write your questions on those notecards and we'll be collecting those later during the break. So, without further ado, I would like to introduce Joanna Lord. She is the director of customer acquisition and retention at SEOmoz. Which is a leading SEO software company out of Seattle, Washington, in case you weren't aware. While she currently heads SEOmoz life cycle marketing efforts for SEOmoz's 15,000 member customer base, she's also a well-known social media enthusiast and frequent conference speaker. Her diverse experience in data analysis, performance marketing, inbound marketing and retention programs enable her to provide tactical strategies that work. So, everybody, welcome Joanna.

Joanna: All right, let's see. We're good here. I'm gonna move around a little bit. I'm not very good at staying still. I'm gonna try to cover the full room, this could get really crazy. I'm here to talk about the new CRO. So, who was in the last landing page authorization panel audit cygram? That was a really good time. Thanks to everyone who put up their sites and asked for feedback. I think landing page optimization and conversion re-optimization go hand in hand obviously. As paid search marketers, we're really obsessed with just making sure that the experience is beautiful, that there's some sort of action taken, that there's an engagement available, but we also have to back it out to conversions. We have to back it out to legion qualifications. We have to make sure we can turn around to our bosses and say it was all worth it. So, what I'm talking about today is something a little different than what you would traditionally expect from a CRO panel. I do want to do a little flash from the past, just so we can all get caught up to speed and just kind of show you the evolution of what I'm thinking. The things that we've done for years that are still very important and then some new things to try as well. So, we all know the basics, we all know we have to be specific. The query that we put in has to match the page, the titles have to match it, the supporting text has to match it. Maybe your image has to match your ad and display advertising. It has to feel comfortable to the searcher. We all know this. We're pretty good at it, I think. Clear

and concise, we've all known this. This is a template for success. People expect things in certain places, right? They want to see trust signals in a certain place. They want to see phone numbers in a certain place, they want to see contact us in a certain place. This is all stuff that they all expect and I think we do this really well. The call to actions. Everyone in this room, I'm sure is well versed in actions. We know what colors mean what. We've tested out buttons, more buttons than we care to admit. It's still very valuable.

Last year, we did a button test and it increased conversions by eight percent. Always good to know, always good to be testing. Beautiful, clear, concise. Trust signals. Trust is an amazing thing and it's something that we've been able to manipulate a bit. We know what signals mean what to people. We know that graying out certain logos and keeping some in color have different reactions. We've tested a lot of this. We want people to know their money is safe with us. I think for a while that really works. It really did. I think that if you just did that, you converted them, you made your money, hopefully got a raise, maybe started a little team and you had them test it all out then you started doing it in a cycle then it got really good. I think today's user expects more and I did a whiteboard fighting on this a little bit ago so there's a little bit of overlap there. But I really think they expect more. What do I mean by more? Contact curation is key. Brad talked a lot about this in the last panel. He didn't call it contact curation but I know it's the same concept. As advertisers, people come to us. It is now our job to show them what they need. It's not just all the options because they have a limited understanding. They'll only process a certain amount in a certain amount of time. You have to tell them what they need to see. Sephora does a great job of this, they tell you what's hot right now. On the upper right, it's really hard to see on the navigation, but they say trends, it list, here's advice.

On the bottom they're doing editor's picks. Even the rotating things that they're going through sephora.com, they just launched a new site, on their old site they're really showing the reasons and philosophies behind their new site. They're answering so much, but they're really putting forward the things that they think are most important. As advertisers we have to do this, this is no longer optional. You can't just expect to drag someone to your home page and for them to look at everything you offer them and know exactly where to go or to stay on you long enough to find it themselves. So contact curation is key. Engagement options: say what you want about the magical homepage. Frankly, it gives me a headache. It stresses me out beyond belief. It works. How do I know it works? Look at all the things they're asking me to do: follow us on Google+, follow us on tumblr and look at the numbers, the sheer volume of engagement and community. The size that they've built. They have 59,000 Google+ followers, they have 2.8 million Twitter followers and all of these things that they're doing on their site, all of these different places they give you to engage with the content is brilliant. If you comment on an article on this it feeds right to Facebook. They're giving you so many streamline engagement experiences, you feel awkward not to engage. You look at all this and say, "I didn't do my job as a visitor." I think that's something we really have to be thinking about when we're thinking about what we're gonna test on our pages. Where we're gonna put social calls. Is it just gonna be the traditional logos and ask them to follow us or are we gonna really give them an experience that compels them to do something with us. We're fortunate that SEOmoz is a pretty good community. It's given us a great place to test different things and I think that before, even a year ago, maybe a year and a half or two years ago, community wasn't expected. You could be an advertiser, because there's a lot of companies out there, it's really hard to make a community. I had someone once ask me, "How am I supposed to make a community around moving trucks?" They come to me, they want to book a moving truck and I'm like, "What are you talking about?" People have so many questions when

they do moving trucks like, can I have it all day, what's the cost, what's the mileage, what's my economic footprint on this and can I rent everything from you or do I need to buy the blanket? If I buy it, is it included. All these FAQs, you could build that into a forum. You can do best practices for lifting. I don't care. There are so many way to make a community and it's expected now. So, if you don't have one on your site you're not trusted. That's what trust is really evolving into. It's an ongoing conversation that we're curating, not necessarily forcing down your throats.

Valuble resources. This is my favorite thing and I think that as paid search marketers, it wasn't necessarily our job before maybe. Definitely wasn't my job at my past jobs. I know that it was something that I kind of counted on the SEO team to do. It's this idea that you wanna build things that when people come to your site, you're the obvious winner. You're offering more value than the competitor. Allposters.com, who knows what allposters.com is? They've been around forever. They sell posters. I bought posters from this site as a teenager and then they branched into E-greeting cards and I'd spam all my friends with posters that were e-greeting cards, it was brilliant. They've evolved into this. They now have actual virtual rooms. I can click through and put in living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens. I can upload my room and I can show how the poster would look framed in different frames. It has become an art service. I mean, they actually now provide artwork. They're evolving as the community needs different things, this is a valuable resource. It's like when you go to indeed.com and use it for the salary guide instead of actually looking for a job but we use it all the time because we want to make sure we're not getting jipped by our boss. It's like, these types of valuable resources, if you can and interject it on to your sites, that's the new CRO. That's the thing you need to test. You need to be testing out the valuable resources, not just having one and assuming it's working. So, that's a lot of awesome stuff. I'm gonna take a breath because I'm talking really fast. Where do I start? There's a lot of things to do. The first is to really sit back and think about what conversions means to you. As paid search marketers, we know what makes us money, we know the secondary conversions, we know the third things we're likely to do, we know the fourth, fifth and the sixth. I think that as this community peace and this new trust signal peace and this new social peace becomes an expectation, what conversions mean is very different. Look at L.L. Bean, they're giving as much share of voice on that homepage to discover something. See our customer's discoveries to fly fishing courses starting at $20. Do you think they make as much money off their courses as they do off of selling some ridiculous sportswear for snowboarding or something, like the full shebang, the tent and all the stuff you need? Probably not but they understand they value of being the educational resource. So they're putting it up there and they're letting it be a conversion. I know, because I go to the site quite a bit, they're constantly testing out what should go here, here and here, what's the best combination. So, you really need to think to yourself what am I giving the most attention to? Once you've really nailed down that you've got people converting on something that's important to you, start pulling in other things, see where it can take you. iPad does a great job of this.

We all know what they want us to, not iPad, see, Apple does a great job of this. We all know what they want us to do but at the bottom they've put in some strange things. They've put in watch the keynote, watch the video about this, watch the TV ad. These are brand plays. They don't put a lot on their homepage but they're putting sheer brand wins, sheer missions statements, sheer philosophy buys. These are really unusual things for paid search marketers to say, "Yeah let's give homepage coverage to a mission statement from a guy that's probably not even employed at apple." They want to become a thought leader. They are a thought leader. They have to huddle that up. So, these are different conversions that they're tracking and giving space to.

A focus on branding. So, what was trust signals before is now a full-encompassed situation around branding and absolutely definitely before, I didn't care as much about branding. So, as a paid search marketer, I knew my brand and keywords, I knew what they did when they came in all that traffic, I optimized for it. But it was someone elses job to go and figure out all that other stuff that made our brand so special. I don't think that's the case anymore. I think that when you look at our landing pages and what we're testing, you have to be testing the most beautiful branded experience, and it has to happen with every query that we buy. That has to happen with every person that comes. I think Tiffany does a great job. What I mean when I say branding is just the choice of the words, the choices of colors, the choices of placement, capture, introduce, glowing, luminescence. The way they put the color with the bracelet across the shirt. That is going to help you in display and targeting and in social media buys when you set up your bio pages and backgrounds. All of this is so much more intertwined than its ever been but you have to constantly be testing these out because you what if you choose all these adjectives, and rolled it across all your different touch points and you told everyone in your team that it's the one to go with but you never tested it. Maybe luminescence sucks, maybe no one wants to be luminescent, I don't know. But you know what I mean?

These are the things that we now have to test as paid marketers, its our job to do this. Jack Daniels. I want to throw this one out there just because, its not, the amount of brand pull on Jack, is just amazing. I mean, you literally can put up a black background and it's like, "It reminds me of Jack Daniels." They've done a great job with it. You look down to the bottom left and it says things like "Friends of Jack" it says welcome. They can roll out that background kind of swirly thing with black and everyone knows this brand. Think of the power that gives you on all of your other touch points. Just think about having that in your ad. You're not forced to put in a bunch of other things in it because everyone knows this is Jack Daniels. So, then you can start experimenting with staples, start experimenting with promos, you can start experimenting with calls. So setting that foundation is really key.

Design. I saw someone had a lunch table conversation with UX, and Design and usability, never been more important that it is now. Everyone out there expects beautiful sites. Your site cannot suck, it cannot be ugly, Tim has been saying it for years, we've all heard it, but he's right. No one wants to go to a site that isn't beautiful. You look at someone like Kate Spade and what they've done is, their latest bag has this blue kind of seashell swirl, they've encompassed it into their homepage, they've rolled it across all their social sites. They know, when that switches out to a different bag, they're going to do it again. Their sort of creative resources, it's hard to justify, but if you can test it and show that it increases conversions, that you are showing people on Twitter saying "I love this bag" or "oh my God, I love these colors."

You can show an actual uplift in community engagement on a sentiment on your brand, that was really hard to do before. I think of someone like Jock Dreads, they're the same way. They've branded themselves through design, which gives them a really nice playing field outside the site. Truth testing, this is the hardest one by far. This is what we were talking about the last landing page, the last session a lot. This concept of you're coming into this job,t here's truths established, and you're part of that truth establishing. They just had an ad that work, and they had the form on the homepage and that form worked. So, all these things are just assumed.

Well, it's our job as conversionary specialists to tell them we need to test it, and there's a lot of friction when you try to do this. But if you look at sites, if you look at Drop Box, this is the first homepage that they came up with. I think it was the overwhelming, "of course, we should throw up a video, and one call to action." Probably not, probably someone that's like "we need to explain it, we need to get FAQs about the pricing. They're like "no, this is what we're doing", and I'm sure they tested to this point. I think that is the part that is really frustrating. When we go to execs and say to them, "I would like to go test the nav" or "I would like to go test everything about our brand", right. If you're an outdoor site, and you say something along the lines, "it's outdoorsy, it's adventurous, it's exciting" I want to test the idea of "discovery, tranquility, softness" I think that they're really like "whoa, you're messing with my baby" Those are the things that if you nail through your tests it helps everything. It's the evolution of your site, things have to evolve. No site can stay the same, we know this.

Mac does a great job of this. It's a really interesting choice for navigation. This is one of the biggest makeup brands ever, but they know what sells. Mac artists are obsessed with bright crazy makeup. They want to show you are in the right place, and it's time to get crazy with your makeup. The left part, I will go anywhere I need to go, to find what I need, because they have the brand equity. I think you really need to get to that point, that you can actually get really playful with how you do your navigation and layouts, and images and colors. You have to get really bold. It helps you stand out against your competitors, and if you test it enough and find the right sequence, or the right kind of puzzle pieces together, you're going to win. So, you might need help.

I think that you hear all that and you're like "I have a lot to do every day, Johanna. I'm really busy." So I'm trying to like make us millions of dollars, and you do. I think there's a lot of things you can do to find help for a lot of these tests. So the first thing is obviously, ask other teams. I think this morning Marc touched on this, and it just rang so true with me. Early on in my pay-per-click career, I wanted to do it all myself, because the more I did by myself, the more money I made by myself, the more commissions I got, the better I looked. I think that that is a really faulty way to go about business, and a really faulty way to build a brand. Ask the other teams, I actually put up Justin. Sorry, Justin. Justin works with me, we handle all the performance marketing, so I put him up here without asking him. Sorry. The top is Aaron, Nick and Karen. They're our help team.

I go to them and say "What are the complaints all day?" and they say " No one knows what a campaign is." Well that's good to know, because at SEOmoz we sell campaign based software, I sell campaign based software and it's all over all of my pages. And they tell me "No one, in good Gods name knows what a campaign is." To SEO people, that's just not as common. Justin and I are like "maybe we should test this. Maybe we should call it site based software, or maybe we should call it anything else."

The middle section is Jan and Erica, and they're the social. What do you guys hear about all day? What are they saying about our pages? They're like "they would love to see video, they would love to know they can take screen shots, they love to see videos of the software, we don't have enough videos." Well, excellent. Because videos I put toward the end of the list, because we didn't have the resources, or the money. I've got proof right here, that people will convert more if I put up more videos, so we're going to put up more videos.

At the bottom is the project team. We've got Miranda, Adam and Sam. We say to them "what are you guys hearing in the customer feedback forum? What are they telling you there? They're saying things like "I don't understand what a crawl is. What is it means when someone crawls your website? Should we build key word research tools, but we have the key word difficulty tool. Why don't people use that?" Well, they don't know what that is. Keyword difficulty doesn't mean anything to SEOs, keyword research does. It's all about those branding messages, that if you just tweak them a little bit, if I called the crawl a weekly site audit, my conversions jump through the roof. Things like that, that we don't think of because we're moving so fast. There's so many queries that we look at all day long, that we have proof that anything works on some level, we're trained in the long tail. That doesn't work when you're doing conversion optimization. We only have a second, right.

Shop around for better tools. More than anything else, with CRO and LPO we get stuck in our tools. I know this, because I used GWO for so long, and there are better tools out there. There are tools that help you do it faster, there are tools that help you do it without tech, like Unbalance, I don't need my tech team. Just some insights I swap out, it's so cheap. Usertesting.com, I don't need to set up a whole day worth of feedback with a team, I can go in and get quick video feedback on a logo, on a buy line, on a forum. You want to test your forums, go to usertesting.com for like $50. It's really valuable stuff, and the tools are coming out fast. Some of them last, some of them don't, but try them. I have this like, kind of friction against it. Because we say to ourselves, "oh we got to check it out, we got to do the pricing, we got to do the phone calls"; and all of us are bombarded with phone calls all day, we were talking about this earlier. The truth is, there are better tools out there, and as marketers it's out job to be on top of the tool landscape and using the best available tools. The best available tools next month are better than this month. That's the way it works, or they wouldn't last.

Ask your users, we do a lot of feedback on SEOmoz, a lot of feedback. To the point that sometimes we're just like, "this is so much data." That really spoke to me today at the keynote. The concept of what do you do with all this data. I don't quite have the answer for that yet, I think we'll find some tools to help us get through all these data feeds I do think that it's really valuable that we say "how can we help you?" Submit a request, take the customer feedback and then as conversionary optimists, I need to go through that, I need to pull out the trends, I need to come up with plans to solve with them. I need to make plans for branding message changes, for location changes, for feedback requests. I need to drive it internally, I need to go to the product team and say "You know, my pages aren't working, it's not totally my fault. So, let's talk about it." You know what I mean? You need to have those open conversations. You're the person, we're the people that have the most data to make these cases. That's how we become the really important levers in the company.

Lock yourself in a room. We actually do this quite a bit. We have a lot of rooms, we have a lot of white boards, we all love it. I don't think you can be in paid search marketing if you don't love white boards. I see all of you smiling, and it's true. So go in there and say to yourself, "if I could start from scratch, if I could absolutely start a new site, I could build the page of m dreams, from my words that I know make money, what would it look like?" Then you draw it up, and then you mock it up in something like Balsamic. Then you go to your designer and he shoots you down. You walk away, and you go back in a month, you've planted the right seed, and eventually it makes it to the live site, something does. The next time that designer draws up a page, that maybe

you're not even involved with, he will draw up something that you suggested. Because we're all in this together, you hope. You hope that happens. I think that's why it's really important to know what you would want, your most ideal scenario. Forget the resource constraints, forget the budgetary constraints and know what you would want in the ideal world.

So takeaways, just in case you were tweeting that entire time. Revisit the basics. They're all up there, we all know them well. You can't forget about them. I did mention I've seen some really crazy pages out there, some really crazy HTML 5 things, and they don't have any of the basics, and we saw some of this in the last session. You still need to have the basics, because people expect those too. So you can't just skip it and go crazy flash, beautiful animation, wonderful resource and hope to convert. You need to have the basics. Then you need to think bigger, it's an expectation now, it's not optional. You don't get an extra star if you come up with something really crazy. You don't win if you don't come up with something crazy. I think that's started. I think if you go back after this conference and say "I want to try something with just one page. I want to try something just a little different." You find the person you most like at the company, you buy them a bunch of beers, you get them to sign something that says they're going to do it, when they're intoxicated. Then you start from there, I think that is the way to start. You have to start small, you have to get the whole funnel change. You're not going to get every color changed, you're not going to get every word changed, but you need to start somewhere. That's all I have. Hopefully it was valuable.