



Getting started with experimentation

The impact of experimentation

WE LIVE IN THE AGE OF THE CUSTOMER.

Across touchpoints, customer expectations for digital interactions and brand experiences are evolving. Today, it is critical for organizations to deliver high-performing, personalized encounters across the customer journey.



90% of enterprises view the customer experience as a primary differentiator for their brand and are looking for opportunities to refine those interactions.¹

To drive innovation and stay competitive, organizations need to reorient towards the customer—which means being able to understand their needs, adapt to their expectations, and quickly make improvements. But pinpointing where to make iterations across your tactics and digital entities like websites and landing pages can be a difficult task—especially in today’s multi-touch environment.

And the customer experience is too valuable to leave to chance. Making even incremental changes based on hunches, or without the proper research and insight, can negatively impact a potential customer’s perception of your company and keep you from unlocking growth opportunities.



The impact of experimentation

Fortunately, there is a way to overcome these obstacles and gain insights that can improve your existing customer engagement methods; a powerful way to use data to optimize not just your website, but every point of contact that matters to your audience.

Adopting an experimentation philosophy empowers everyone in your organization from top executives to product managers to customer-facing employees. It allows leadership to minimize risk without increasing time, money, and human capital investments.

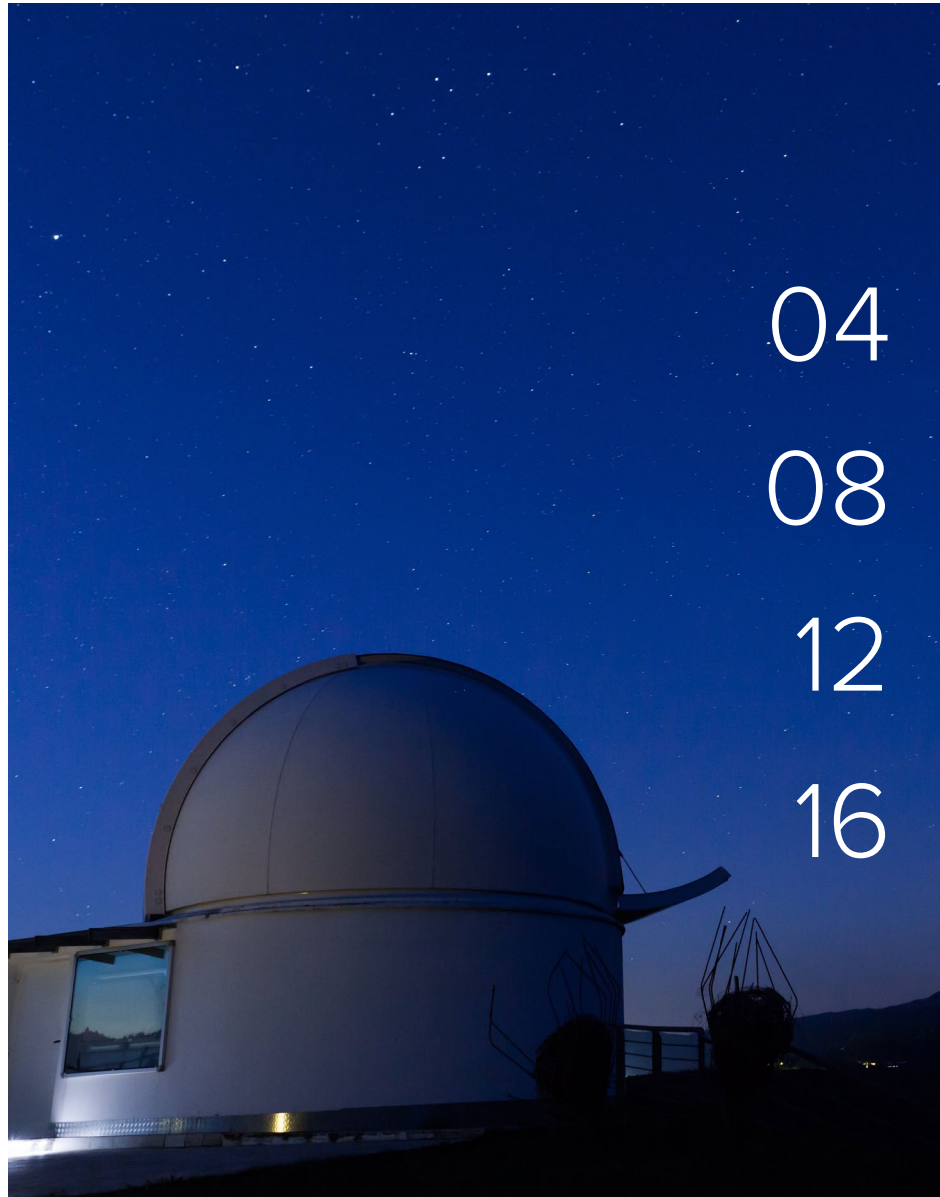
Experimentation allows you to own the optimization process, and, most importantly, inspires employees across your enterprise to become more invested in creating a unified view of your customer base by making hypothesis testing easy and accessible.

Continue reading to discover:

- What experimentation can help you achieve.
- How to effectively advocate for experimentation across your enterprise.
- Where to start with experimentation for maximum impact.



Table of contents



04

CHAPTER 1:

Operationalizing experimentation

08

CHAPTER 2:

Championing an experimentation philosophy

12

CHAPTER 3:

Getting started with experimentation

16

CONCLUSION:

Taking experimentation to the next level



CHAPTER

01

Operationalizing experimentation

Operationalizing experimentation

Experimentation isn't just for scientists. When done correctly, implementing experimentation across your enterprise can help you have a profound impact on the customer experience and, ultimately, the bottom line.

In its simplest form, experimentation creates a method for testing an idea in a controlled environment by comparing an existing method against something new. Often referred to as A/B or split testing, this optimization strategy lets you run two (or more) variations of an experience and compare their performance. Rather than relying on instincts or blind guessing, experimentation provides the opportunity to collect customer data and use that data to determine which version better reaches your goals.

Let's say you notice a high percentage of customers are not completing a multi-step form on your company's website and research suggests adding a progress bar will boost conversion rates. A/B testing would enable you to test two versions of your web page, the original version (known as the control) and a variation with a progress bar added, which are shown to your visitors at random. By tracking and analyzing customer interactions with each variation of your web page, you can determine whether adding that progress bar would have a positive, negative, or neutral effect on form completion.



When Mike Wolf, Product Design Lead for Trunk Club, sought to increase the number of visitors who completed the sign-up process on the clothing service’s website, he conducted an experiment. Wolf hypothesized that the original sign-up flow, which consisted of a standard identification form with minimal visuals, wasn’t exciting enough to keep potential customers engaged throughout the process.

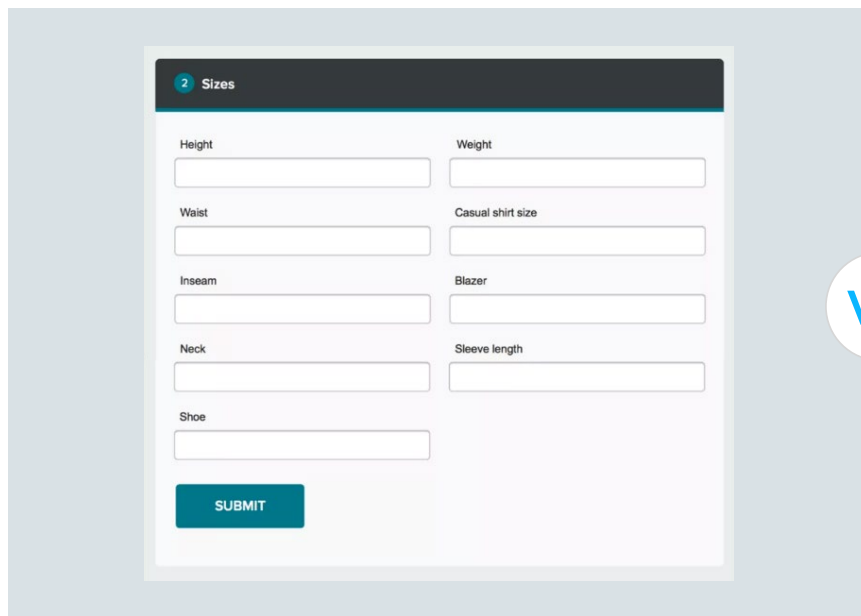
He then created a longer, more visual sign-up flow with focused questions, and showed both versions to new users. When the results came in, Wolf found the focused and visually engaging sign-up flow increased conversion by **133%**.² The concept of asking for more time from your customers seems counterintuitive, and often would never be explored. But, through experimentation, Wolf and his

team found a way to improve their assets and engage their customers, without creating significant risk.

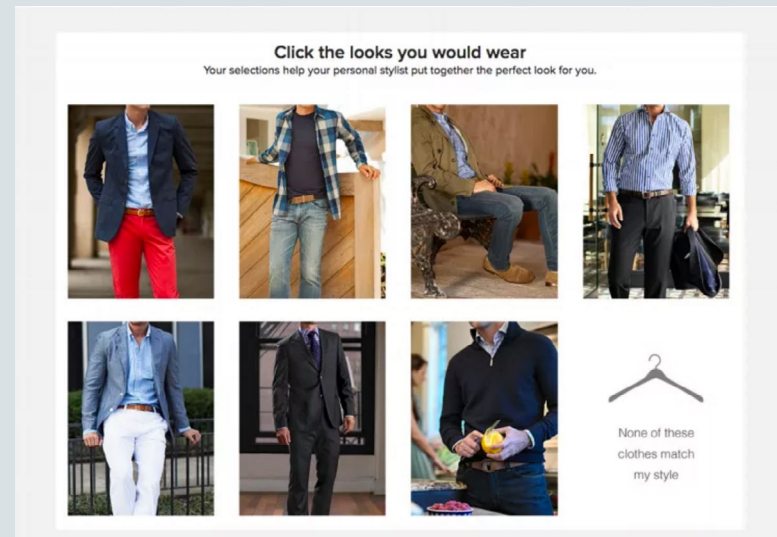
Another type of experimentation, multivariate testing, allows you to test multiple combinations of elements simultaneously to determine which combinations perform best.³

For instance, testing different variations of headlines and images against other combinations to determine which pairing performs the best, would require running a multivariate test.

While multivariate tests do require a larger sample size to reach a statistically significant result, these experiments can serve as powerful tools for website and mobile application optimization.



VS



One of the steps from the original Trunk Club onboarding flow

One of six steps in the new variation onboarding flow

Operationalizing experimentation

Regardless of your business goals or what kind of test you want to run, experimentation makes continual optimization easy and accessible for everyone in your enterprise.

It allows you to harness the power of data, gain insights into complex customer behavior, and compete more effectively in your market. It empowers your team to suggest bold changes, and make those changes, with minimal associated risk. Experimentation enables you to start refining the customer experience, and achieving tangible results, right away.

But building excitement about an experimentation program and achieving buy-in company-wide can often be a difficult task.



CHAPTER

02

**Championing an
experimentation
philosophy**

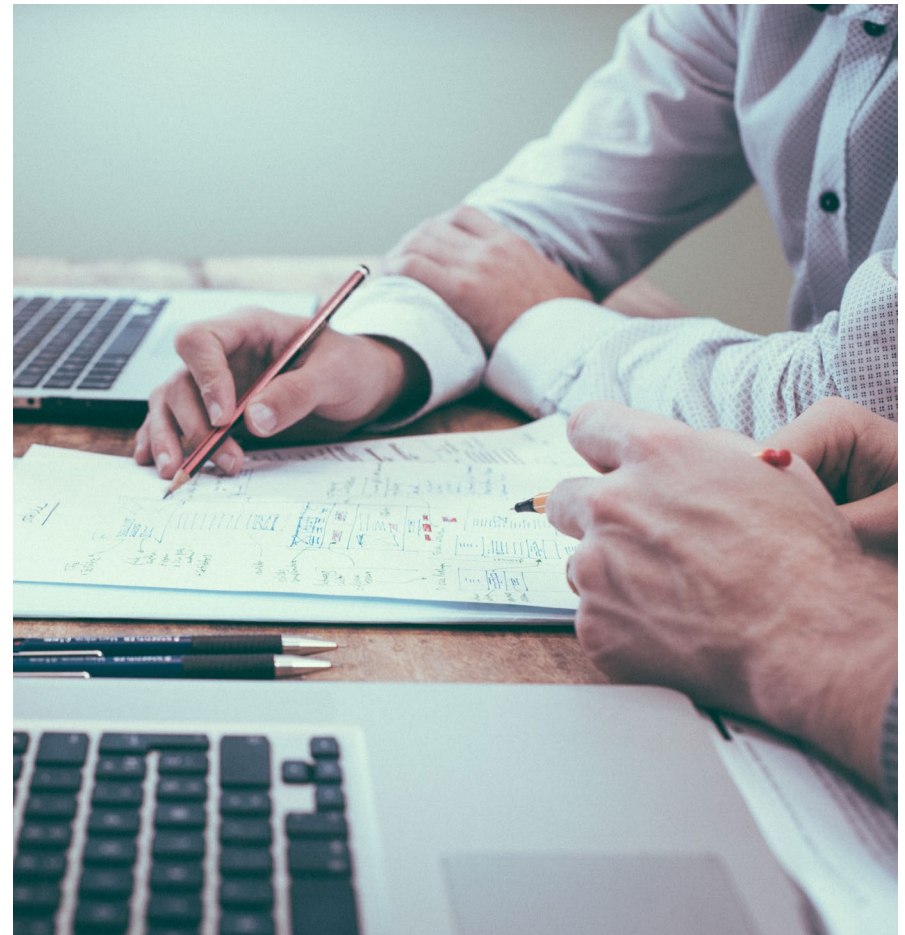
Championing an experimentation philosophy

Being a truly experimentation-led organization represents an unprecedented opportunity to optimize your customer journey. It also represents a significant paradigm shift from the way many enterprises have previously approached testing.

Often, optimization goals are owned by a single individual or group of stakeholders, each with his or her own agenda. Rather than collaborating company-wide, the resources and talent required for optimization are divided among siloed departments and teams. Under this traditional approach, marketing managers and their teams are the facilitators that receive direction from top leadership.

But there are several other key obstacles to implementing successful optimization, especially for marketing leaders. Too frequently, ideas on how to improve performance on a site or application aren't prioritized for a number of reasons. At companies that lack alignment on optimization goals and processes, the relationship between digital engagement and revenue growth may not be fully understood.

Maybe there's a misconception that experimentation involves a significant increase in investment. Or perhaps a culture of not accepting failure impedes the sharing of ideas across the enterprise.



Keep in mind, those failures don't have to be losses, but rather learning opportunities. Experimentation helps shift that mindset by identifying what isn't working and opening the door for new concepts and strategies. Convincing all employees and departments of the power of experimentation is the first step towards turning ideas into action and delivering high-performing experiences that meet your company's business objectives.

Championing an experimentation philosophy

Being at the forefront of your company's digital interactions with customers puts you in a prime position to debunk common misconceptions and advocate for experimentation. Start by demonstrating how sharing ideas and resources empowers everyone to invest in the customer experience, implement rapid hypothesis validation without creating unnecessary risk, and unearth unexpected ideas and insights that can help improve interaction across assets.

Consider the impact an experimentation mindset is having on Vitamix. Over the past 96 years, the American-owned home appliance company has built a reputation for producing durable and reliable blenders. Recently, the Vitamix team committed to improving digital customer experiences through continual optimization, and the results speak for themselves.

Aligning everyone in the company behind a focused, experimental approach led Vitamix to identify the root issue behind cart abandonment as a lack of personalization on its website. By implementing a "mini-cart" experience, the company improved order conversions by nearly **14%**, and developing a "blender recommender" function that increased add-to-cart by **5%** and purchase conversion rates by **3.5%**.



Championing an experimentation philosophy

Vitmix serves as an excellent example of how uniting behind an optimization strategy enables your company to target content and experiences based on customer behavior. For Vitmix, and many other organizations, experimentation helps reduce complexity by pooling together siloed resources and teams, and enabling everyone within the organization to run smarter experiments in less time.

A best-in-class experimentation-as-a-service platform allows you to accomplish these objectives by:

- Integrating with your company's current solutions
- Elevating your data management capabilities
- Unearthing insights from your customer data
- Enabling you to deliver personalized experiences across touchpoints

When employees across the enterprise see how easy it is to conduct meaningful experiments, and witness the potential of the high-impact changes being made, they'll be eager to contribute to a core philosophy of experimentation. Every team—sales, service, operations, product, and others—will want to further explore how running experiments can help your company compete more effectively when it comes to customer experiences.



Implementing a system for distributing results internally via email or a real-time dashboard on display in a break room can help foster creativity and create a culture of experimentation. We've even heard of companies generating a little healthy competition among its teams by creating games to track the performance of their experiments. In one case, a mock horse racing track was set up, with each horse representing a different test variation.

Regardless of your desired method for reporting experimentation results, taking steps to ensure everyone within your organization feels empowered to share ideas can help you shift the mindset and drive meaningful change.



CHAPTER

03

Getting started with experimentation

Getting started with experimentation

Now that you've successfully cleared those hurdles and are championing experimentation internally, it's time to run some tests! This chapter is designed to arm you with information and sample experiment suggestions that will help you reach your potential as a data scientist.

High impact change starts by clearly defining the challenges of your current customer experience and determining what success looks like. Use the internal and external data at your disposal, like previous tests, website analytics, and industry research, to probe assumptions and identify customer pain points. Are low purchase rates and/or amounts the big problem? Is the issue low conversion rates for form completion? Are you simply trying to garner more clicks from website visitors? When you connect testing to your business pain points and objectives, you can ask the right questions and run smarter experiments.

Initially, organizations may want to run experiments that help impact their key metrics such as:

- Purchases/conversions or revenue per visitor
- Leads
- Page views/clickthroughs



For each of these scenarios, inform your hypothesis with research. In other words, determine what you expect to happen based on the change you're testing. Take Earnest, for example.⁵ When this financial services company noticed low conversion rates on the final results page of its website, testing identified information overload as the problem. In this case, Earnest's hypothesis was that simplifying the results page—the page where clients can explore their loan rate options—would lead to more conversions.

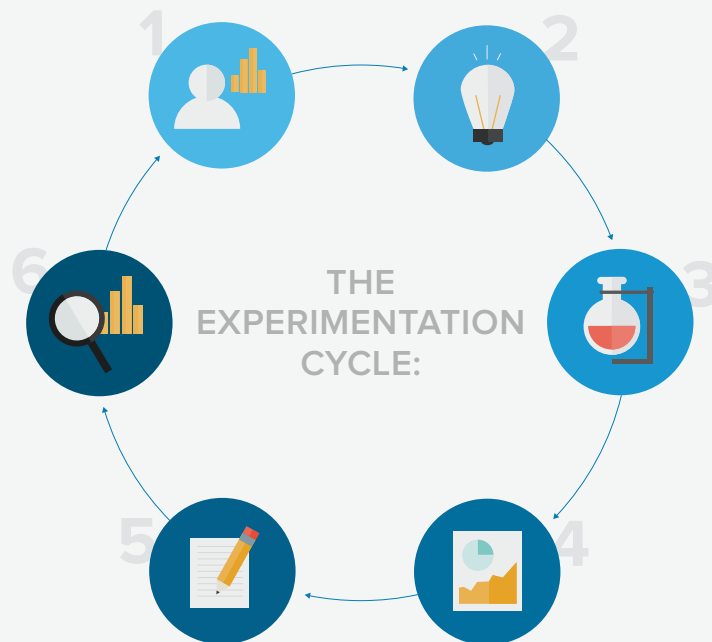
After creating a hypothesis, the next step is deciding which type of test to run. If your primary goal can be attributed to a single change in the user experience, a traditional A/B test is the right experiment to run. If you want to measure how multiple changes interact and collectively impact your primary goal, then a multivariate test is the right experiment for you.

Because Earnest's hypothesis attributed conversion rate improvement to a single change on the results page (i.e. removing an interactive slider function that allowed users to explore all possible loan options), they chose to run an A/B test.

After showing users two versions of the results page, the original version and a variation that only displayed the best available loan option, the experiment proved Earnest's hypothesis. The simpler, more direct, results page improved conversions by **70%**.

But success isn't always achieved on the first try. If the results reject your hypothesis or turn out to be inconclusive, use those conclusions to create new questions and try again.

The beauty of experimentation is that it makes the pursuit of continual optimization easy and powerful for everyone within your enterprise.



STEP 1: Gather data about customer behavior and use insights to ask questions

STEP 2: Formulate a hypothesis based on these insights

STEP 3: Design and implement an experiment based on your hypothesis

STEP 4: Analyze your results to determine if your hypothesis is confirmed or rejected

STEP 5: Formulate and document conclusions

STEP 6: Use conclusions to create new hypotheses. Repeat

Getting started with experimentation

If you're not sure where to start experimenting, try prioritizing based on performance and opportunities. Evaluating engagement metrics like bounce rates can help you identify which websites and specific pages need attention. Considering current trends—especially trends related to user experience (UX)—when assessing your existing copy, images, and functionalities can also unearth optimization opportunities.

Maybe your homepage isn't generating the desired number of conversions. Try testing different variations of taglines and your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) to see what captivates your audience. Do they respond better to shorter or longer versions of headlines and taglines? Does emotional or logical content resonate better with them? Which words or phrases on your CTA buttons convert more visitors?

Or perhaps your landing page isn't delivering the memorable first impression you hoped it would. Try replacing stock photography with hero images that display the value your product or service can provide your audience.

Experiment with different variations of your USP to see what kind of claims and promises prompt visitors to keep clicking. Is the length and/or placement of your lead generation forms contributing to low conversion rates? Does your CTA need to be featured more prominently?



For more experimentation ideas and case studies, check out [The Big Book of Experimentation](#).



CONCLUSION

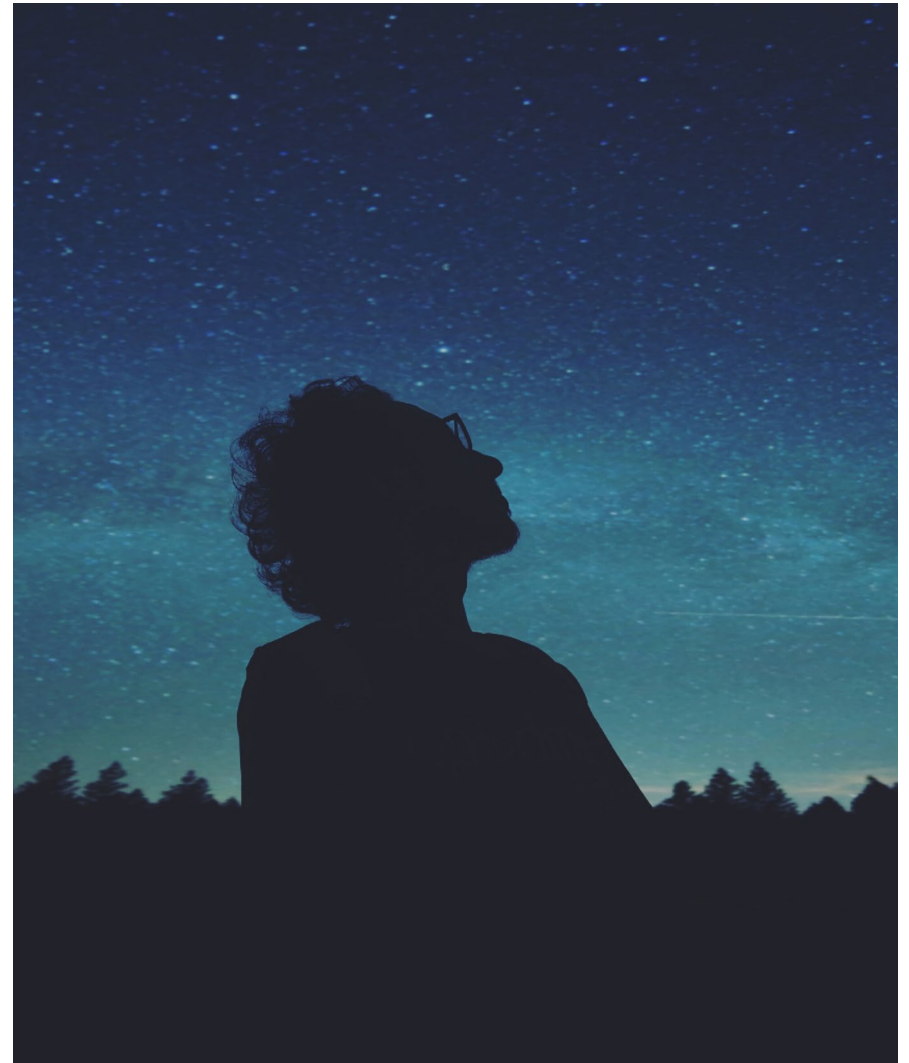
**Taking experimentation
to the next level**

Taking experimentation to the next level

In the age of the customer, continual optimization is more important to your company's success than ever before. Experimentation is the key to delivering the most memorable and impactful experiences across all points of contact.

Experimentation allows you to harness the power of understanding to make bold changes across your customer-facing assets. Whether you're looking to change one word in a call-to-action button, refine one area of a site, or perform a complete website overhaul, experimentation empowers everyone in your company to ask the right questions—without compromising the delivery of a rewarding customer experience.

At this point, you're armed with the information and evidence needed to overcome optimization obstacles and advocate for the democratization of ideas across your enterprise. It's time to start turning those ideas into action, and empowering everyone around you to become better experimenters.



If you're ready to lead the charge for experimentation at your company and start testing now, visit optimizely.com/get-started/ for a free trial of Optimizely X to begin experimenting today.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Sources:

1. <http://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/test/>
2. <https://www.optimizely.com/customers/trunkclub-desktop/>
3. <https://www.optimizely.com/resources/multivariate-testing/>
4. <https://www.optimizely.com/resources/experimentation-case-studies/>
5. <https://www.optimizely.com/customers/earnest/>

Optimizely is the world's leading experimentation platform, enabling businesses to deliver continuous experimentation and personalization across websites, mobile apps and connected devices. Optimizely enables businesses to experiment deeply into their technology stack and broadly across the entire customer experience. The platform's ease of use and speed of deployment empower organizations to create and run bold experiments that help them make data-driven decisions and grow faster. To date, marketers, developers and product managers have delivered over 700 billion experiences tailored to the needs of their customers. Optimizely's global client base includes Atlassian, eBay, Fox, IBM, The New York Times, LendingClub, Hotwire, Microsoft and many more leading businesses. To learn more, visit [optimizely.com](https://www.optimizely.com).

