THE NEED FOR (PAGE) SPEED

FYRESITE

ALL FYRED UP:

WHY FYRESITE CHAMPIONS SHOPIFY FOR OPTIMAL PAGE SPEED

Page speed is important. No matter what platform you use or what you sell, page speed will impact your bottom line. No one knows that better than Fyresite, a leading expert in eCommerce for over a decade. Since our inception in 2009, we've built hundreds of sites and apps, always making sure the client has everything they need, including fast-loading pages. That's why we're confident that Shopify Plus is the ideal platform for optimal page speed, and the ideal platform for you.

Page speed, in layman's terms, means how fast your site loads. In Shopify, this is measured with Google Lighthouse performance metrics. Why should you care about page speed, and what can you do to make it faster? Fyresite has the answers for you, and today, we're sharing our top tips to make your site go the distance and go for speed.

GET IN GEAR AND CONTACT US

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Whether you're completely new to the concept of page speed, or you've heard it for a while, you may not know why exactly it's important and why Shopify merchants should care.

CONVERSIONS

One important impact page speed has is conversions. Conversions is the number of visitors to your site that end up purchasing products. Shopify calculates this rate as the number of specific actions taken in a period of time / total number of visits to your site in the same period of time. For example, the number of sales by the total number of visitors.

Page speed is very important for conversion rate. In fact, the highest conversion rate happens when a page loads within 1-2 seconds. On average, every additional second it takes your page to load decreases your conversion rate by 0.3%. That's a lot of potential revenue you're missing out on!

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Google includes page speed as a factor for their SEO rankings. The faster the page speed, the higher Google will show your site on the SERP! Web Vitals is the tool that your user experience is calculated, including page speed. For optimal experience, it should load within 2.5 seconds.

Google has a free tool that shows web vital analytics on both mobile and desktop with just a URL. If you notice that your mobile speed is longer than your desktop, don't panic! Page speed is expected to take longer on mobile, as it's calculated using the least performing mobile networks.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer satisfaction is incredibly important for eCommerce merchants. After all, a satisfied customer can lead to good reviews and repeat business. Having a fast loading page is important for this. In fact, research shows that a one second delay decreases customer satisfaction by 16%, and that 46% of customers won't return to a site with poor page performance.

CONVERSIONS

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

WHAT IMPACTS SHOPIFY PAGE SPEED?

IN YOUR CONTROL

While there are some things that are out of your control in terms of Shopify page speed, there are many that are not.

APPS

Apps are in your control. Apps are to Shopify that plug-ins are to WooCommerce. Simply put, they are important! In the Shopify app store, you can see that certain apps are tested for speed. Apps also have the option to remove or rearrange code to be optimized for speed.

Just because you have an app installed does not mean that you're using all the features of the app. This can negatively affect your page speed too. Doing an app audit will allow you to see what features you are no longer using or that are no longer functional so you can remove them.
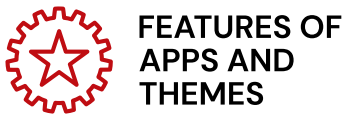
THEMES

You don't have a site without a theme. However, there are parts of a theme that will slow down page speed. Your theme does not load in order of priority, unless you tell it to.

You can control how the JavaScript loads. This allows you to force the site to load the most important JS/CSS first, then the less

important elements later so that the user is impacted by the most important aspects first. For a Shopify site, you can defer the load of content/web apps based on the pages that are needed and/or timed out.

At Fyresite, we use a number of techniques to make sure your theme is optimized for page speed. One technique is lazy loading. Lazy loading means that it waits for an image to be on screen before loading. We also use Shopify Sections, a liquid capability that allows CSS and JavaScript to be loaded by section. If the section isn't used, then the CSS and JavaScript aren't loaded. As we've mentioned above, optimizing resource load is a big deal. By choosing to pre-load critical assets and defer load for non-critical assets, you can keep your page speed up.

When choosing your theme for Shopify, it's important to know what theme version you have. 1.0 themes are slow, inefficient, and lack flexibility. Make sure that your theme is 2.0 for the best page speed.

FEATURES OF APPS AND THEMES

Both apps and themes have features that impact page speed. If you have concerns about what features are and are not working, use a heatmap. A heatmap will show you what features your customers

are interacting with and what ones that are not. Fyresite recommends Hotjar or Lucky Orange.

Iteration is also important. Iteration means changing the design over. And over. And over again to find the best UX for your site. Since the heatmap shows where users are and aren't interacting, you can iterate a new feature to test how it impacts page speed and user experience. It's an important balance, and odds are you won't find the perfect choice on your first try!

LIQUID CODE

Liquid is incredibly customizable, allowing you to be as creative as you wish. This does come with its own issues though. With such customizable code, it can be difficult to have it optimized for page speed. Using themes from the Shopify theme store can help, especially if they are Shopify 2.0. This is because Shopify 2.0 themes are developed by experts with page speed in mind, and utilizes liquid code for its best practices.

That doesn't mean that liquid code is bad for page speed. Fyresite can look at the theme liquid code related to options in the theme. If there's an inefficient section, we can recode the whole section and add our custom CSS code. This means that we look

at your code, and if we find a section that is slowing your site down, we can remove it and rebuild it with our own code made just for you.

IMAGES AND VIDEO

No site would be complete without images and video. That's what adds character to the site and allows people to see what they'll be buying. But you have to be careful about making sure the image and/or video is optimized for page speed. Oversized images and videos slow your site down, so you need to compress them for optimal page speed. The amount of photos is important as well. Too many photos slows down your site, and in that instance you have to choose which ones to keep and which ones to remove.

To compress videos, we at Fyresite use Handbrake. We have found that the best way to optimize videos, especially background videos, is to change the output size. This means that if you have a video that is 1080p, you can output it as 720p. Restricting frame rate is also important. Our preferred range is 25-30fps. Handbrake has a built-in slider for quality, which helps you control how much it is compressed.

It's also important to know what image type is being served. Shopify automatically converts images to WebP or AVIF files. While these do compress images, many merchants and designers do not like the

inability to easily modify them in tools like Adobe Photoshop. It's important to make sure that the photos you have are in a compatible format, like a JPEG, before editing it and making sure it is to your specifications before uploading it to Shopify.

Another important tip? Make sure that you have the proper image size for multiple screen lengths. Don't try to use CSS to edit the photos, just upload the image at the proper size.

FONT

Yes, even your font can impact page speed. While it might seem small, if you're using a special font, the font has to be downloaded to the visiting computer before the page loads. This eats into your page load speed. But there are ways to optimize the font loading process.

Our developers at Fyresite download the font directly into the Shopify theme and use only where needed, rather than relying on a third party source like Google to embed the font. This allows us to bypass embedding which can slow the page speed down.

OUTSIDE YOUR CONTROL

Unfortunately, like all things in life, there are things in regards to page speed that are out of your control.

WHERE YOUR SITE IS BEING VIEWED FROM

You can't control where customers are viewing your site from. Someone viewing your site from Canada may have a different speed than someone viewing your site from Japan.

SHOPIFY INFRASTRUCTURE

You also can't control Shopify's infrastructure. Shopify infrastructure is constantly evolving and making improvements to be better. You can check the status of your Shopify site here.

CACHES

The side-server page cache is out of your control. However, while the cache may cause the page to load slower the first time you use it, but every visit after will be faster. The local browser cache is out of your hands.

CONTENT DELIVERY NETWORK

You can't control your content delivery network. Your content delivery network, or CDN, is a series of servers that work together to deliver content quickly. One major benefit of a CDN is faster website load times. This works because they are globally distributed, which reduces the distance between the person accessing your site and the site resources.

In your CDN, hardware and software are optimized for load balancing, and solid state hard drives make data go faster. They also reduce the amount of data via data compression/minimization.

LIQUID THEMES

While liquid themes are very customizable, one thing that you can't control that impacts page speed is the assets inside the content_for_header Liquid object. Certain features within it optimize page speed, and Shopify is working hard to optimize tags and assets to make it faster.

GOOGLE LIGHTHOUSE

GTMETRIX

SHOPIFY THEME INSPECTOR FOR GOOGLE CHROME

FYRESITE × shopifyplus

TROUBLESHOOTING TOOLS

As we've established, page speed is important. But how are you supposed to know what your page speed is or what areas you need to improve?

GOOGLE LIGHTHOUSE

As mentioned earlier, Google Lighthouse is the tool that Shopify utilizes to gauge merchant's page speed. But that doesn't mean that only Shopify can access this metric. You (or your Shopify Partner) can access it too!

GTMETRIX

GTMetrix is Fyresite's recommended service for page speed metrics. GTMetrix has free and paid plans available. Their paid plan will send you notifications if page speed changes. For example, if your marketing pro adds an image that is uncompressed, your team will be pinged.

SHOPIFY THEME INSPECTOR FOR GOOGLE CHROME

As we mentioned above, your Shopify theme can impact page speed. The Shopify Theme Inspector for Google Chrome is a developer tool that assists in finding any issues with your code. This resource is technical, and is generally easier for Shopify Partners with liquid experience to utilize.

SHOPIFY PLUS PARTNERS

We get it, a lot of this stuff is complicated. Businesses and individuals don't always have the time or energy to do it themselves. Connecting with a Shopify Plus Partner (like Fyresite!) allows you to feel confident about your business and page speed.

SHOPIFY VERSUS THE OTHERS

This white paper focuses on Shopify, and that's no coincidence. As a business with over a decade of experience in eCommerce, we've found that Shopify works best. While there are eCommerce platforms, they just don't add up.

WOOCOMMERCE

Woo needs a lot of plugins to function. Having over 40 plug-ins is not uncommon, with some sites having hundreds. This slows your site down, hurting conversions and SEO. Plug-ins also tend to drop their resource load into every page, regardless of the page. WooCommerce runs on PHP which is similar to Shopify's Liquid. However, developers and merchants alike have had complaints about how PHP is unpredictable, unreliable, and difficult to use.

MAGENTO

Themes are a big part of page speed, and Magento is very limited on what themes you can use. While you do have the option to build your own from scratch, it is time consuming and expensive. It's also harder to maintain theme code based on updates to the platform. Code is constantly updated, so components from the theme (ex: hooks) need to be updated often or else there can be a memory leak which will slow down the site.

SHOPIFY PLUS

You know them, we love them. Shopify Plus is truly the ideal platform for a flexible site that is optimized for page speed and customer satisfaction. Shopify is built on liquid, which allows for a highly customizable and fast site.

Flexible pricing, flexible themes, apps that are built for speed, and easy ways to determine page speed are just a few of the reasons that Shopify is great.

WooCommerce

Full Page Load
Average 4.5 Seconds

Server Response Time
Average 779 ms

Risks to Pagespeed
Out of date Plug-ins

Magento

Full Page Load
Average 4.2 Seconds

Server Response Time
Average 824 ms

Risks to Pagespeed
Theme maintenance

Shopify Plus

Full Page Load
Average 4.3 Seconds

Server Response Time
Average 386 ms

Risks to Pagespeed
Ignoring optimizations for code and images

Page Load Data   Server Response Data

CONNECT WITH US

Fyresite is Arizona's first Shopify Plus Partner, and we built sites that work.
Reach out to us today to see what we can do for you.

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