

Core Web Vitals: what are they and what do they have to do with me?

Having a good website is key for a good user experience related to your company, product or service. In addition, Google keeps its eye on every single page to rank the best ones and show them first, everytime a user searches for its keywords. But how does Google rank so many different websites? It uses its Core Web Vitals.

What does "Core Web Vitals" mean?

Ok, now you know that Google uses Core Web Vitals to rank web pages, but what are they? They are a set of ranking criterias, which are essential for a good user experience, used by Google to evaluate the usability of a page.

We can divide the most important Core Web Vital in three types:

- Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) that measures how long does your page take to load.
- First Input Delay (FID), that measures how long the user manages to interact with the page.
- Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS) which measures the content stability while the page loads and the user interacts with it.

In May, 2020, Google announced that these ranking criterias would be added to the algorithm of its search engine. The intention was to unify a page's quality signals guidelines, rather than dealing with multiple metrics and assessment tools, besides changing the focus of the evaluation to user experience characteristics.

Even though these 3 criteria are the most important, that are dozens of others that help Google evaluate a page, for example:

- Mobile friendly
- Safe browsing
- HTTPS
- No intrusive Interstitials

The three Core Web Vitals plus the other criteria, such the ones listed above are now called "The Page Experience Ranking Factor", and it had its launch announced in June, 2021. To measure the web vitals and other signs of page experience, Google differentiates the origin of the data into two groups: Field Data, based on the real experiences of users with the site and

used for its ranking on Google, and Lab Test Data, which are the approximate metrics, generated in an environment test that attempts to reproduce the user experience.

Now, let's check some details on each one of the core vitals related to user and page experience.

LCP – Largest Contentful Paint

LCP is the ranking criteria that represents the perception of page loading, being considered the most correct way to measure site speed, as it calculates the time from the beginning of the page loading to the rendering of its largest element. According to Google, we can consider 2.5 seconds or less as a good LCP time, between 2.5 and 4 seconds is a reasonable time, which still needs improvement, and above 4 seconds is considered a bad LCP, which needs urgent improvement.

To get some tips on how to improve your LCP, you can consult [here](#) the LCP's optimization guide, written by Google.

FID – First Input Delay

The FID calculates the time between the user's first interaction with the page (the first click, for example) until the time that the browser starts processing response events. It is important to understand that it does not measure the load itself: the FID only measures the delay caused between the user's interaction and the beginning of the loading process, considering each access to the website.

The FID results are divided in this scale:

- Under 100 milliseconds: good
- Between 100 and 300 milliseconds: reasonable
- Above 300 milliseconds: needs urgent improvements.

As well as the LCP's optimization guide, Google wrote a guide for FID improvements too, and you can check the complete material [here](#).

CLS – Cumulative Layout Shift

We can define the Cumulative Layout Shift as the metric that helps us measure unexpected changes in pages, that is, their visual stability. These changes occur whenever a visible element changes from one rendered frame to another. It is important to highlight that only changes that

occur when existing elements change their initial position are considered. So, changing the size of elements or adding a new element doesn't count, as long as the change impacts the position of other visible elements.

To calculate the punctuation and evaluate the quality of the page, the algorithm is based on viewport size and element movement. A CLS below 0.1 is considered good, between 0.1 and 0.25 is reasonable, which still needs improvement, and above 0.25 is considered a bad CLS.

CLS also has an improvement guide written by Google, and you can check all their tips [here](#).

What is the impact of the change on Core Web Vitals on personalization strategies?

SEO strategies and personalization sometimes seem to not walk hand in hand. And the question got even bigger with the changes on Core Web Vitals being announced by Google.

Against popular belief, Google wants page owners to run AB tests and improve the user experience on their pages, and they even offer their own tool to measure page experience, Google Optimize.

But, personalization can mess up some of your results of Core Web Vitals, and the error may occur this way:

1. The site loads the default static content
2. Using the browser's resources, the tool assigns a test or decide the most appropriate content, overriding the default and shifting the elements
3. After the content loads, the user finally sees the modified version of the site.

A delay may possibly occur between steps 1 and 3 and users may be able to see the difference between the standard and personalized content, this event is called FOOC (Flash of Original Content).

The FOOC, or flickering, can lower your CLS as well as your LCP, harming your ranking and your page experience.

But, how can I personalize my page with less impact on web vitals metrics?

Since the most affected web vitals are CLS and LCP, is important that we visualize the strategies of personalization in two different pillars:

CLS:

The deal is, in your personalization you must have personalized content that loads rapidly in a way that users don't see two different versions of the same page. To achieve this objective, you must find a platform that helps you to add your content with very low latency and makes sure that the page loads the content only one time.

In Conclusion

The three new Core Web Vitals are a new reality for every page that worries about user experience, page experience and SEO. So, we must try our best to improve these metrics when we choose the tools that are going to build our page, when we analyze if our content is loading at an ok speed and mostly when we personalize our page.

Don't know where to start your personalization process? Don't worry! Croct is here to help you! We offer a solution to growth teams to create their own personalized applications, focusing on the best experience for the users. Croct monitors aspects such as behavioral profile, interests, and browsing history to build unique experiences for each visitor.

Croct has a Personalization Management System that allows you to display content in a dynamic way without the need to send back to developers each time the page needs to change.

Do you want to know more about our process of personalization? Visit our website, check all the details and start improving your Core Web Vital today: