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# WHAT IS SESSION REPLAY?

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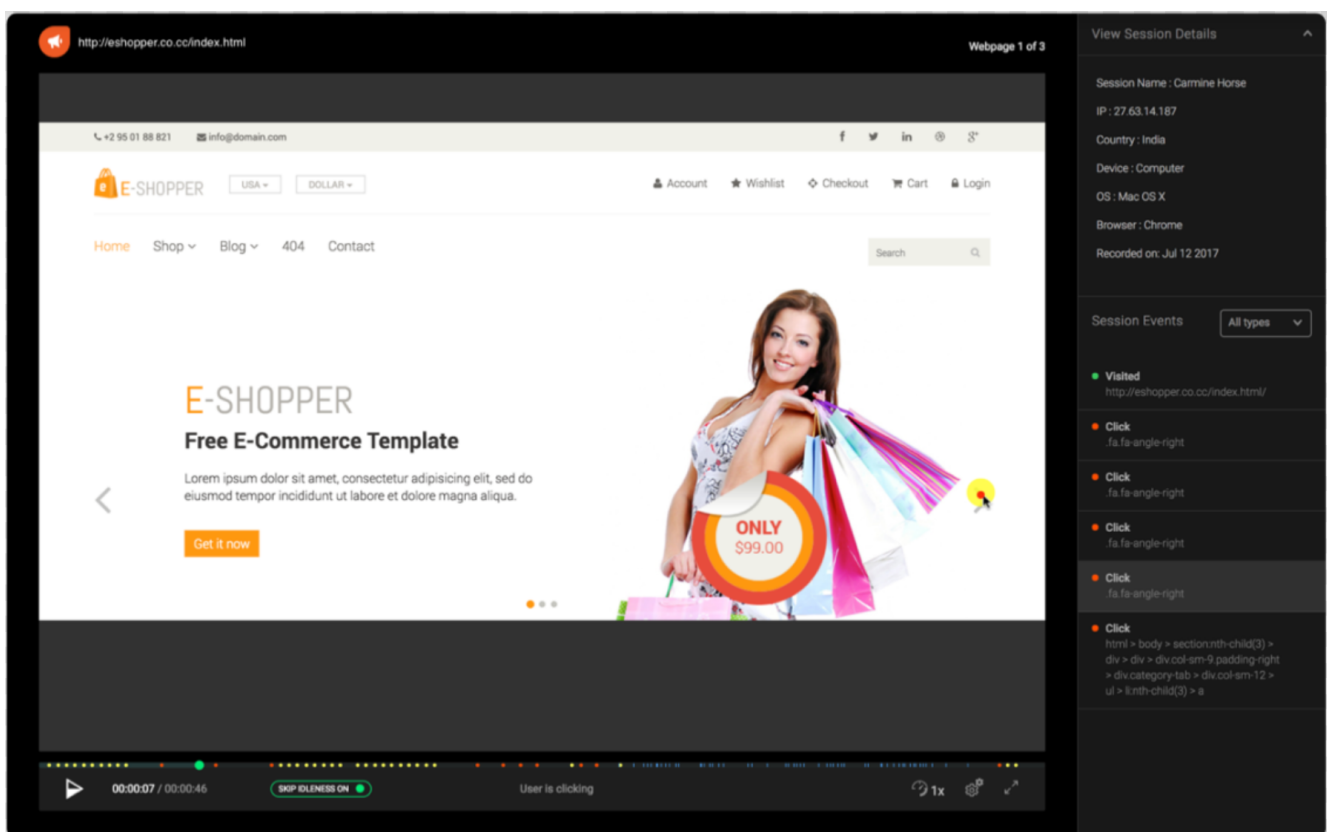
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## What is Session Replay?

*Session replay is the replication of a visitor's journey on a website or an application. Also known as session recording, session playback, and user replay, session replays form an indispensable part of your optimization process and help improve your conversion rates.* It assists in visualizing what anonymous visitor experiences on your website or your application. With session replays, you can record your visitors' movements like clicks, taps, keystrokes, and scrolls, in real time.

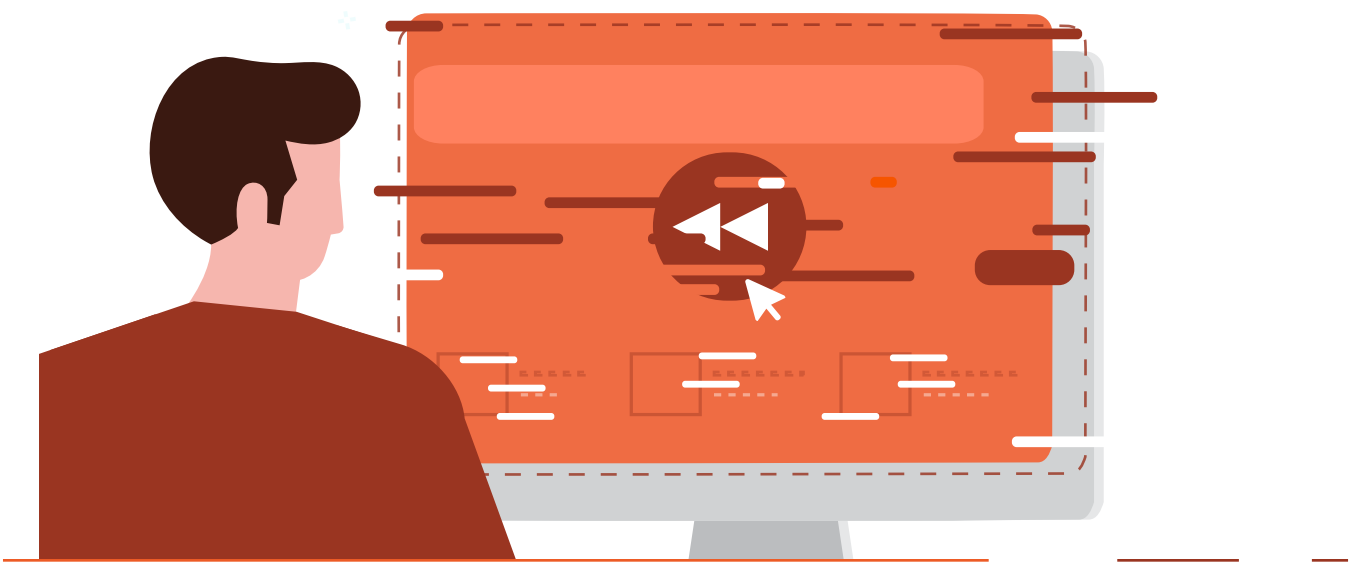


### A brief history of session replays

Before session replays came into existence, marketers were unable to deep dive on user engagement metrics. Steve Krug in his book 'Don't Make Me Think' says that companies used to spend \$5000 to \$10000 per test on user experience and website usability testing. With the advent of analytics and CRO tools in the market, these tests can be performed at a fraction of the above-mentioned costs.

## Why do you need Session Replays?

Other than stating the obvious, session replays do more than being a part of your optimization journey. They provide accurate in-depth insights about visitor behaviors and is the closest to reading your customer's mind. They fill in the void created by heatmaps and scroll maps by providing detailed information based on customer interactions within your website or your application.



Traditional analytics tools like Google Analytics track user metrics to a certain extent. Google Analytics uses cookies to provide the number of sessions used by the visitor, bounce rate, exit time, etc. Though these are valuable information to get a hold on, this data does not provide any context on user experience or user engagement. For example, when Google analytics tells you that a visitor has spent 5 minutes of his time on your web page, this is a seemingly good metric from the analytics perspective. But, we do not know if the visitor spent 5 minutes of his time looking for something that he wanted and if he was unable to do so. This is where session replays come into the picture.

Session replays apart from letting you know the time spent by the users on a particular page, also provides information on their entire activity like taps, scrolls, mouse movements, etc., including idle time.

## Where can Session Replays be used?

Session replays can be used in a number of ways as they contain rich insights on user behavior. They are mainly used to improve website conversion rates, make better products and provide excellent customer service.

Here are a few examples where session replays come in handy:



### Boost conversion rates:

To make the most out of your incoming traffic, you are bound to adopt some CRO techniques like A/B testing and analyzing website heatmaps. Session replays provide inputs for your conversion experiments by helping you understand what needs to be tested based on your visitors' interaction. It also sheds light on where your visitors encounter issues, what prevents them from converting or what frustrates them. By tweaking these areas, your conversion rates can improve while simultaneously pleasing your visitors, thus making it a win-win situation.



### Identify bad UX designs:

Good designs are seldom noticed. It is only the bad ones that are detected spot on and are often eyesores. Bad UX designs apart from frustrating visitors, make your websites extremely hard to operate or navigate. This results in your visitors abandoning your site once and for all leading to poor conversions and high bounce rates. With session replays, you can

- Understand how different design elements work best across different audiences, devices, resolutions, browsers, etc.
- Identify bad UX designs and poor navigation across your website.
- Detect the areas of your website that exerts a cognitive load on your visitors and eliminate them.



### Track web page issues:

A perfect website doesn't exist. The next best thing you can do to achieve a perfect website or a web page is to continuously optimize it and ensure that no errors occur. Session replays can identify issues with page loading time, broken links, hidden CTA buttons, form related issues and more. Session recordings give a crystal clear view of the areas where your visitors' interest drop off on your web page.



### Solve onboarding challenges:

In SaaS, once your visitor has converted into a customer, the next logical thing would be to onboard them into your product. Poor onboarding results in customer churn ultimately leading to revenue loss. Session replays help in onboarding by

- Tracking user behavior patterns
- Detecting the most used/ignored product features
- Identifying interest drop-offs, thus reducing churn



### Discover feature adoption:

So you've released a feature that you're excited about. You are very sure that your customers would be pumped as much as you are about this feature, only to find out your customers hardly use it. Sound familiar? Instead of getting hysterical and dejected, you can use session replays to witness how your customers play about with the newly introduced feature. If your session replay tool can provide custom segmentation of your users like Freshmarketer does, it becomes even more easy to understand the value of that particular feature to a particular audience. In this way, you can plan your promotions accordingly while increasing the discoverability of your new feature.

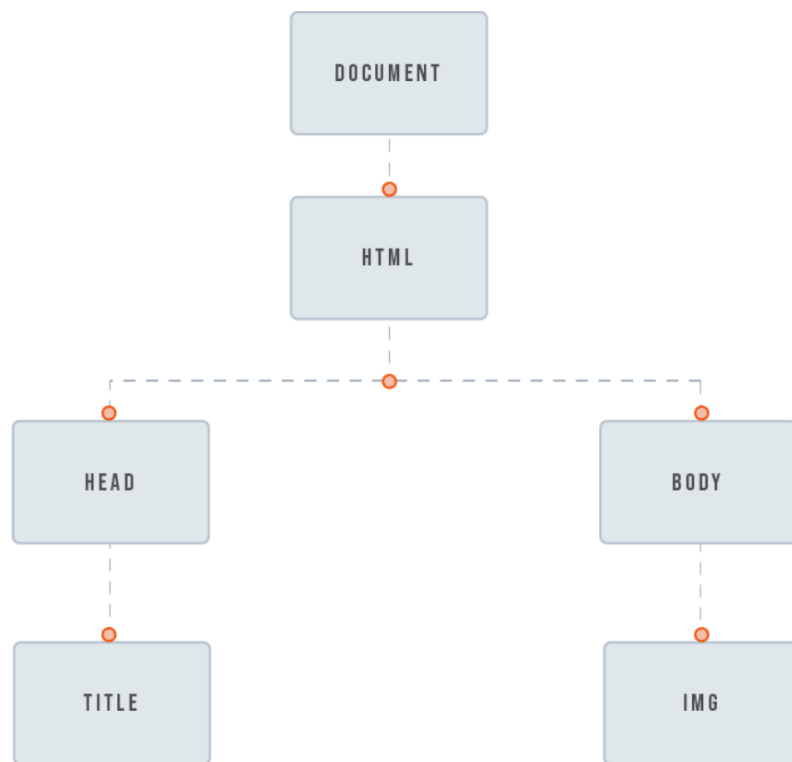


### Improve customer support:

You do not want to get on the wrong foot with an already frustrated customer. With session replays, pacifying a disgruntled customer can now be a breeze. The session recordings provide you with the context of your customer questions even before you ask them. In this way, you get to resolve your customer issues quickly and efficiently without having to go back and forth on these issues.

## How does a Session Replay work?

As mentioned previously, session recordings are not the exact videos of how a visitor interacts with your website. They are recreated from visitor 'events' like clicks, scrolls, taps, keystrokes, etc. to a video-like format. Confused? Let's elaborate on that.



So, in programming, there is a concept called DOM (Document Object Model), where an HTML document is treated as a tree structure. The elements in the HTML document are characterized as nodes and these reside within the DOM.

When a visitor interacts with the website via clicks, taps, keystrokes, etc, these interactions are captured as events. When events occur, the structure of the DOM changes accordingly. *Session replays recreate these events to give a video-like representation of how a visitor interacts with your website.*

## What to look for in your Session Replay Tool?

There are many session replay tools available in the market today. Choosing the one that's best for your organization need not be complicated. We have outlined the five most important criteria while evaluating a session replay tool that will meet your needs.



### Filters:

This is the primary criteria on which you will need to evaluate your session replay tool. Without appropriate filters, it is almost impossible to arrive at meaningful conclusions from your session recordings. Filters help you sort your session recordings based on numerous visitor inputs like date, traffic, device type, etc., and lets you focus on your goals, one at a time. Make sure that your tool allows you to search, segment and apply filters to your recordings.



### Speed and performance:

Some tools use complex code to record your website visitor sessions. This may affect your site speed and result in sluggish performance. Most tools offer a trial period to check them out, and making use of them will help you recognize speed issues beforehand.



### Storage:

Not all tools support storing your sessions indefinitely. It is essential that you know how many days, weeks or months of your data will be retained by your vendor. Sometimes, this may depend on your plan. Choose the plan that will suit you wisely.



### Installation and setup:

You cannot be bogged with too many details on installing and setting up your session recording tool. The complexity involved in the implementation of a session recording tool varies from one to another.



### Getting the maximum value out of your investment:

Session replays are just the start of your optimization journey. While it is good that you have decided to invest in a session replay tool, there are other tools in the market today that provide a complete optimization platform, for the same price or lower as that of your investment. Tools like Freshmarketer, are packed with powerful features like heatmaps, A/B testing, funnel analysis, form analytics and more, apart from its session replay feature.



## Session Replays - a Breach of Privacy?

Session replay tools are often touted as privacy-threatening tools and are vilified. But the truth is, they do not disregard your visitors' privacy. Normally session replay tools are GDPR compliant and they anonymize their visitor recordings making it difficult to identify who the visitor is.

Freshmarketer values privacy and goes to great lengths to ensure that privacy laws are never violated.

*All sensitive and personally identifiable (PII) data can be concealed inside Freshmarketer application.*

We urge our users to safeguard their customers' privacy by marking data like passwords, payment information, medical information, etc. as 'sensitive' so that such data is never recorded. These data can also be protected manually with 'classes' that masks individual fields as well as the content on your website.



Freshmarketer masks your visitors' keystrokes to protect their privacy. This means that your visitors' keystrokes are captured as \* (asterisks). Also, sessions are captured as anonymous visitor experiences, and you will be able to identify a particular visitor's experience, only if you have his/her details.

## Analyzing Session Recordings

Once you've collected visitor recordings from your session replay tool, the next step would be to process them into actionable data. Though there is no single systematic approach to analyzing these session replays, following a heuristic approach is recommended. A heuristic approach, in this case, signifies focussing on one complex issue while ignoring the others.

*Session replay recordings contain huge volumes of raw data and going through each one of them is simply arduous.* To make sense of the collected data, it is best to come up with a standardized methodology that works, and that which can be adopted and reused, until this becomes obsolete.

Here are a few steps that will help you get started:

1

### Set definite goals:

Would you participate in a race that has no finish line? Simply viewing hundreds of recordings without a specific goal is akin to that. The first step in analyzing your session recordings is to understand why you want to examine them in the first place. With goals, you will be able to track a particular action completed by your visitors. For example, you can use session replays to see the number of pages that a user has visited on your website, or you can identify a particular action that drove users to convert.

2

### Create filters:

Once you know your goals, the next step would be to categorize your session recordings based on your goals. Creating filters simplifies this for you by grouping sessions based on user inputs or a combination of them. With session replay filters, you can segment visitor sessions based on time, the type of traffic, the number of pages, device or browser types and more. This will provide more clarity while figuring out the best way to optimize your site and increase conversions.

Freshmarketer's session replay filters provide advanced filtering of visitor recordings that lets you segment and target a particular user group.

# 3

## Review your website:

With the data obtained from session replays, it should be easy for you to identify how your visitors navigate your website, what distracts them, why they convert or why they do not convert. Organize this data into spreadsheets, use tags to make a note of your findings. Similarly go through the session recordings of the main pages in your website like landing pages, campaign pages, payment page, etc., where the visitor has to complete an action and structure the available data.

Freshmarketer lets you tag session replay recordings and add notes to them for grouping similar recordings, that will help you interpret data better.

# 4

## Identify patterns:

Once you've organized your data from session recordings, spot emerging patterns in your videos. For example, your mobile visitors might be fumbling around your website looking for a button that might otherwise be visible on your desktop page. This might cause most of your mobile visitors to drop-off in that particular page. This can be fixed once you optimize the button on your mobile page. Similarly, experiment with different goals using different filters to achieve more conversions.

Session replays are a great start to your optimization journey. A mix of a powerful tool and a systematic approach for analyzing your recordings would be the perfect recipe for sure-shot success in all your conversion related experiments.

Capture visitors' experience on your site with  
**Freshmarketer.**

Get Started

