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Landing Page

Handbook

How to Raise Conversions —
Data & Design Guidelines

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Second Edition –Revised and Updated



MarketingSherpa Landing Page Handbook

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MarketingSherpa Inc.
customer.service@marketingsherpa.com

Fellow marketer,

I recently received an email from a MarketingSherpa reader asking how he could point people to the Landing Page Handbook. He ended the email by saying ...

“I still think the Landing Page Handbook is the best resource on the topic that has ever been produced.” – Ken Molay, President, Webinar Success

And the data shows it. **The MarketingSherpa Landing Page Handbook is one of the most popular resources we have offered in 20 years of publishing.** So we dug into our archives and are now offering this handbook free to you, the MarketingSherpareader.

In 2019, the landing page has become the key conversion point for marketing and advertising. All the time, money and effort spent on everything from newspaper and magazine advertisements to digital search, social and display ads attempt to send potential customers to a landing page.

MarketingSherpa has been writing about (and its parent research organization, [MECLABS Institute, has been researching](#)) landing pages since their very inception.

In fact, this is just one of three intro letters you’ll read in this handbook, making me feel a bit like religious scholars who add commentary on top of commentary from previous writings. This handbook was originally published in 2004, and then the second edition was published in 2007 (at which point 36 million search engine results was a proof point of the growth of landing pages. Today that number is 476 million).

But many of the lessons in here are timeless, which is why we are providing it to you right now. A few of my personal favorites are:

- Tips for creating hero shots – on page 84
- Using photos of people – on page 86
- Buttons: Can you see your button from across the room? – on page 104 (even more important now with the rise of mobile)
- Analysis of gobbledygook in press releases – on page 128
- How to test a landing page contest to test new “outside the box” ideas – page 249

While I hope you find this handbook helpful, we of course have more recent content about landing pages that you might find helpful as well:

- [Landing Page Optimization: 57 guides, case studies, examples and experiments to help you increase conversion and sales](#)
- [Research-Backed Landing Page Templates to Scale Up Your Testing Program](#)
- [Landing Page Optimization on-demand certification course](#)

Thank you for reading MarketingSherpa, and for downloading this handbook.

Here’s to your landing page success,

Daniel Burstein
Senior Director, Content & Marketing
MarketingSherpa and MECLABS Institute
d.burstein@marketingsherpa.com

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Introduction to Second Edition

What a huge change the past few years have seen! When we began researching the first edition of MarketingSherpa's Landing Page Handbook in the fall of 2004, we found next to nothing out there. In fact, if you plugged the term "Landing Page" into a search engine, a tiny handful of mentions appeared. Now type "Landing Page" into a search engine and you'll get more than 36 million references.

Agencies and consultants have sprung up specializing in landing page design and testing; Web content management systems have been developed to enable easier landing page creation and testing, and a landing page speaker is present at every industry convention. This growth has been exacerbated by Google's announcement late last year that landing page relevance would affect pay-per-click ad rankings.

Yet, after reviewing the enormous amount of information out there on landing pages, I was disappointed by how little of it expanded in any way on the first edition of this Guidebook. Everyone seems to repeat the same factoids and best practices.

That's great on one hand – as you'll see from the results of our new research study included in this Guide, a startlingly low number of marketers are actually applying best practices to their landing pages. So, the more everyone in the landing page universe can get the word out to improve things, the better.

However, it's time for renewed research into improving landing page results. So, in this greatly revised and expanded edition you'll find a wealth of NEW information on landing pages for:

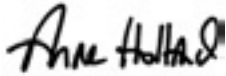
- Blogs
- Organic search traffic (especially for business-to-business Web sites)
- Ecommerce sites
- Email campaign landing pages (including mobile phone clicks)
- Copy, graphics and layout

We've also updated our practical chapter on Testing Landing Pages (including multivariable, A/B and eyetracking testing tips), as well as added an all-new section on how to conduct a "Black Ops" landing page campaign ... quickly and cheaply making landing pages on the fly when your own Web or IT department can't build or test them for you.

Naturally, we've also added and updated the numbers (great for comparing your landing page conversion results to those of your peers) – as well as published never-before-seen data on "Bail Patterns" where you'll see precisely when typical consumers leave a landing page instead of converting. Turns out, the oft-mentioned "seven-second" rule is misleading.

Last but not least, we have included loads of fresh creative samples from real-life landing pages that you can use as inspiration when creating your own landing pages. Nothing's worse than staring at a blank computer screen while trying to come up with something new ... or explaining your ideas to a designer who can't "see" what you're talking about. These real-life samples should help.

Enjoy, and may your landing page results continuously improve until our next edition!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Holland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Holland
Founder, MarketingSherpa

Introduction to Original Edition

Last year, I was interviewing the VP Marketing for a major consumer name brand about a multichannel ad campaign in which her organization had invested hundreds of thousands. All the ads in every type of media – including radio, print and Web banners – focused on telling consumers to visit a particular Web page to sign up for a special free offer.

“What was your conversion rate on that page?” I naturally asked her. “80%!” she said happily.

“No,” I told her. “That’s the wrong number. You have a very nice landing page. It’s among the best, but there’s no way you are getting 80% conversions. Nobody gets 80%.”

She was silent for a minute. “Well, I’m pretty sure we are,” she reassured me. “That’s what it said on my Web stat reports.”

“Can you do me a favor and doublecheck that number?” I asked.

A few minutes later, she called me back on the phone, crestfallen. “Our conversions are 8%. I read it wrong.”

It’s understandable that she misread a report – who hasn’t made a mistake now and then? What wasn’t understandable to me was that she didn’t catch the mistake on her own. The number was so glaringly incorrect. 10 times inflated. How could such an experienced marketer even dream that a landing page with a form requesting visitors to input their name and address ever get an 80% conversion rate? It’s an insanely high figure.

At that moment, I began to realize how little most marketers know about landing pages. We had been publishing Case Studies featuring anecdotal data for years, so I was well aware of what was normal and what wasn’t. But, apparently, most people weren’t.

So, I asked our Metrics Editor, Stefan Tornquist, to start researching a formal report to educate the industry on the topic. I figured we would gather all the information out there into one handy place for you. Once a week this fall, Stefan and I had an editorial meeting. Each week, he shook his head saying, “Anne, there’s not much out there. I’m having a hard time researching this data.”

Each week I urged him on, more and more convinced we were providing a valuable service. If it was this hard for our full-time research expert to find data, how could the average marketer with a full plate of other responsibilities find information on his or her own?

You have the resulting report in your hands. It's a combination of the most useful stats from five years of MarketingSherpa Case Studies and research studies and rules of thumb from usability and Web analytics experts.

Perhaps the most surprising factoid we discovered in our research, though, was a lack of other research on the subject. When you consider how many billions of dollars marketers are spending on search marketing, email marketing, online ads and offline campaigns driving online traffic, it's slightly shocking that few have spent much time considering the best way to convert that traffic once it gets to their landing pages.

If you can use only one idea in this report to improve your conversion rates – even a little – you will:

- Have a distinct competitive advantage over others in your vertical who aren't trying as hard as you are.
- Increase your return on investment for traffic-driving campaigns.
- Become a rock star to your boss (or clients).

The good news is that most landing page improvements won't cost you much money. If you have an in-house Web team they won't cost you anything out of pocket at all. Most improvements are simple things, mainly consisting of tweaking your design elements and copywriting.

This past fall, as we were researching this report, we were running a marketing campaign of our own for another MarketingSherpa offering. I had to give our own designer instructions to create a landing page. It was the first landing page project I'd been involved in for several years, and I felt terribly self-conscious about having to get it right!

After all, how could we give you advice if we couldn't do the project properly ourselves?

Anyhow, you'll see on the following page a copy of that page. Can you also spot the mistakes I made with it? (Yes, the irony of the name of the offer does not escape me.)

Sample I.1: MarketingSherpa's "Mistakes" Landing Page



The landing page features the MarketingSherpa logo at the top left, with the tagline "Practical Know-How & Case Studies". To the right, it states "Praised by The Economist, Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge Site, and Entrepreneur.com". The main headline is "Top 10 B-to-B Lead Generation Marketing Mistakes". Below this is a "Special Offer" section asking for a name for a free copy of the report. It includes input fields for "My Name:", "Company:", "Phone:", and "Email:". A note states: "* Required. You'll be emailed your Mistakes report. Your email privacy is assured." Below the form, there is a section titled "Please choose one option:" with three radio button options: "Yes! Also send me FREE info on: East Coast - Lead Generation Marketing Summit Oct 18-19th, Washington DC", "I prefer to get FREE info on: West Coast - Lead Generation Marketing Summit Nov 18-19th, San Francisco", and "No thanks, I will not be able to attend either Summit." A red arrow points to a button labeled "Click here for your Top 10 Mistakes Report". At the bottom, there is a copyright notice: "(c) 2005, MarketingSherpa Inc. Privacy Policy Service (877) 895-1717. service@marketingsherpa.com 499 Main Street Warren RI 02885 USA".

Having just read through the final edits to this report, I've realized the Mistakes Landing page above could have been improved in at least two significant ways for better conversions. They are:

Improvement #1. Add a caption under the graphic. People read captions, and it's a great place to put copy, such as a short description of the offer.

Improvement #2. Change the radio buttons to check boxes. People often leave radio buttons on the default setting without even reading them carefully to make sure they're correct. This definitely happened with about 15%-20% of our responses.

My best for your own landing pages. For such a simple piece of marketing collateral, they do take a lot of thought.

Anne Holland
Founder, MarketingSherpa

Chapter 1: New 2007 Landing Page Study Data

Thanks to the thousands of MarketingSherpa readers who actively participated in our Landing Page Marketing Questionnaire in September 2007. Thanks also to the more than 500 marketers who unwittingly participated in our first Observational Landing Page Study, which took place July-August 2007.

We'll share all their data with you so you can see how your site measures up. Plus, we'll describe what "state of the art" means in 2007 for landing page design. But first, just to make sure we're all on the same page, here are some basics and a rather annoying fact about abandon-rate measurement.

What's a Landing Page and Why Does It Matter?

A landing page is where people "land" when they click on an ad banner, search engine result or email link, or when they visit a special promotional URL that they heard about on TV, radio, or other offline media.

Very few perfect landing pages exist. Most of the samples in this report aren't perfect, although they represent the current cream of the crop.

The perfect few are usually the result of extensive testing. And when we talk to the marketers behind them, invariably they say: "But I have a few more tests I'd like to run to see if I can improve conversions a bit more" (More on testing in Chapter 4.)

Unfortunately, most marketers don't have the time or budget for extensive landing page testing. They have a campaign launching soon, and a landing page is needed pronto! Often, the landing page is the least considered element of the campaign. Marketers who will fuss over ad creative and fret for hours about media buys will ask the design department to fling something up there to land on.

We suspect some marketers truly believe that if their outbound campaign is good enough, the creative will pre-sell prospects on the offer no matter how lame the landing page is. In other words, many marketers think the outbound campaign is doing the heavy lifting, and the landing page exists simply as a passive collection cup for all the sales or leads generated by the campaign.

The exact opposite is generally true.

The only thing the outbound campaign did was get prospects to click or type a URL into their browser. That's a microscopically unimportant decision compared to whatever the landing page asks them to do.

Your ad convinced them to click. It's a split-second, what-the-heck decision.

Your landing page has to convince them to stick around for at least a minute or two and possibly do a bunch of fairly unpleasant stuff:

- Do a bunch of reading (90% of the population doesn't much like reading).
- Laboriously type their name and address (only geeks use auto form fill).
- Hand over a phone number so a telemarketer will pester them.
- Give an email and take the risk of being spammed.
- Dig out a credit card and maybe have it stolen by a phisher or fraudster.
- Pay for something.

No wonder average landing page conversions are in the single digits — even for free offers! How do you get visitors over those nasty humps? Well, that's the purpose of this report.

Typical Landing Page Conversion Rates Are Fairly Low

As you can see from the chart on the next page, landing page conversions from typical campaigns are not thrilling. The data were gathered from more than 5,000 MarketingSherpa readers who are active online marketers responding to our surveys.

What's Not a Landing Page?

Landing pages are often confused with splash pages, bridge pages, jump pages and microsites.

Splash pages are graphic introductions — often full screen — to Web content, usually a homepage. Usually, splash pages are made in Flash and allow the user to skip them. (Note: Splash pages are, in general, an extremely bad idea. Users dislike them, often vehemently, and your site traffic will generally plummet as a result of having placed this barrier in front of it.)

Bridge pages (a.k.a. doorway, portal, and gateway pages) are designed to be particularly enticing for search engines, not visitors.

Jump pages attract attention to a particular offer or event. They must be closed or navigated through to get to the desired content. An example: a full page ad that appears in front of you when you are trying to visit the homepage of Salon.com.

Microsites are a cross between a landing page and a regular Web site. They often have their own domain names and even brands separate from the organization's brand. They are used when a marketer wants to offer a user an extended experience for branding or educational purposes — a site the visitor might even return to as a destination.

Although landing pages can have several linked pages, they generally don't allow many navigational options. You can move forward through the conversion process or you can leave. On the other hand, microsites invite you to explore and click around within the experience.

Table 1.1: Conversion Rate Averages for Search and Email Landing Pages

	Conversion Rate
Total Average Conversion Rate	3.84%
Shopping Engines	2.90%
Search	
Paid Search	4.42%
Natural Search	4.07%
In-House Managed PPC Search	3.84%
Outsourced Managed PPC Search	5.40%
In-House Natural Search Optimization	2.62%
Outsourced Natural Search Optimization	4.76%
Emails to House Lists — Free Offers	
Business to Consumer	2.51%
Business to Business	8%
Email to House Lists — Sales Offers	
Business to Consumer	3%
Business to Business	2%

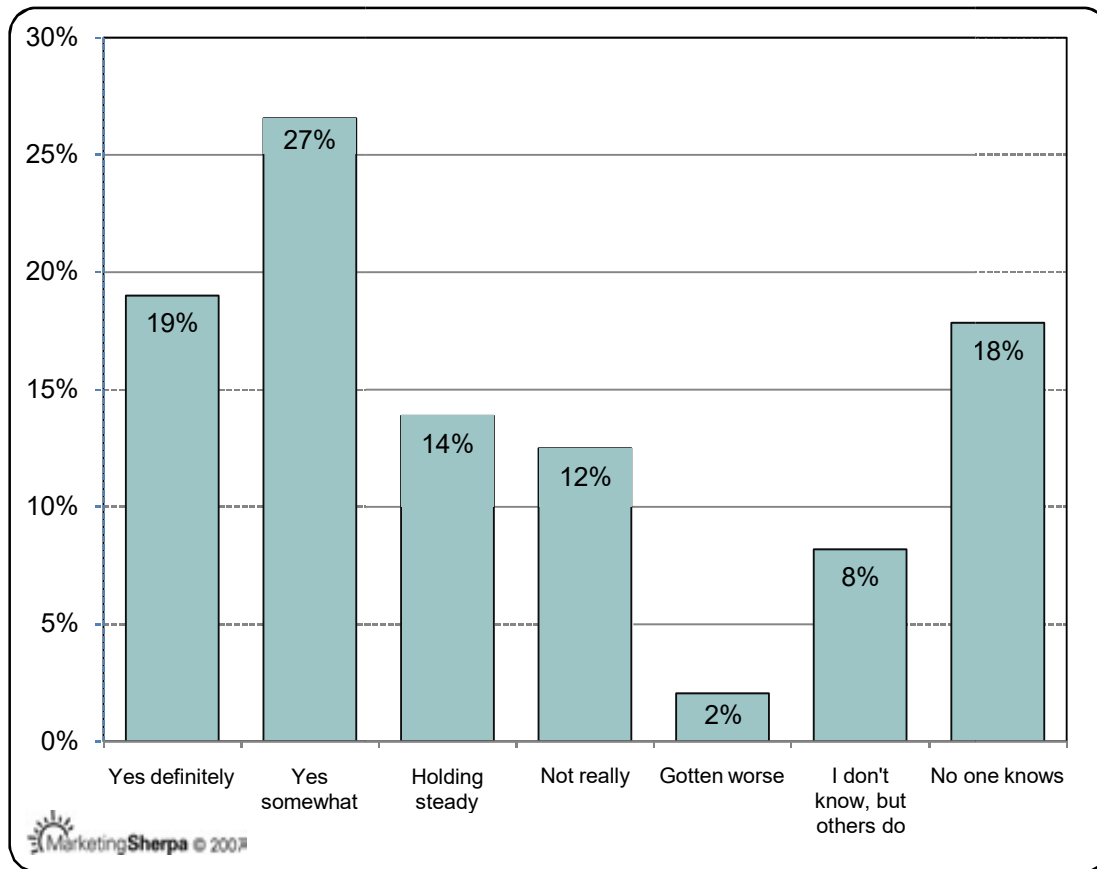
Emails to 3rd Party Lists — Free Offers	
Business to Consumer	1.80%
Business to Business	2.50%
Email to 3rd Party Lists — Sales Offers	
Business to Consumer	0.50%
Business to Business	1.25%
Email to 3rd Party Newsletter — Sales Offers	
Business to Consumer	0.90%
Business to Business	1.40%
Email to 3rd Party Newsletter — Free Offers	
Business to Consumer	2.10%
Business to Business	3.60%

Source 1: Search Stats from MarketingSherpa. Search Marketing Benchmark Survey, July 2007

Source 2: Email Stats from MarketingSherpa. Email Marketing Benchmark Survey, November 2006

Despite these fairly low baselines, we are seeing that the majority of our survey respondents are reporting positive year-over-year increases in their landing page response rates.

Chart 1.2: Have Your Average Landing Page Conversions Improved Over the Past Year?



Base: n=3,411

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

Anecdotal evidence from MarketingSherpa Case Studies indicates the situation may not be as dire for visitors who are generated by offline campaigns. We've heard of conversion rates as high as 50%, but, more often, responses are in the teens for free offers and higher single digits for buy-now offers.

The theory: Because prospects have to make more of an effort to respond to an offline campaign by going to a computer and typing in a URL, they are already further down the decision tree or are more emotionally vested in your landing page being the right place for them. Teaser campaigns for products that don't have broad appeal, however, often drum up lots of interest resulting in lots of traffic, but they wind up having extremely low conversion rates (remember the ads featuring President Lincoln and a beaver that wound up being for sleeping pills?).

Here's the funny thing — every single click you get to your landing page is hoping to convert. They really want your page to be the right place. It's a bit like an audience listening to a comedian do a stand-up routine; they're there because they really want to laugh. But that doesn't mean lousy jokes will work. And neither will lousy landing pages.

As the data above indicate, most landing pages are pretty darn lousy.

Want to improve yours? First you have to see it from the visitor's perspective.

Six Steps of the Conversion Process: How a Visitor Experiences Your Landing Page

As you can see from this figure, the average visitor goes through six very distinct stages in the conversion process. The numbers are extremely rough averages, but they give you an idea of the process:

Figure 1.3: The Six-Step Conversion Process, a Rough Guideline



Stage One: The ADD Crowd asks, “Should I bail?”

Most people don’t come to your landing page, read every word of your copy, review every graphic, click on every link, and then mull over their decision.

Even though you got people to click, they are undecided about accepting your offer. Their first decision takes place in seconds. They glance at your landing page to decide if this page is worth looking at. They want to know: “Am I in the right place? Does this match what I was expecting/hoping to see? Should I bother to read the copy, or should I click away immediately?”

If they are foot-tapping, attention-deficit-disorder-type of people or they are in the 17% of U.S. consumers with 56K or lower bandwidth as of 2007, chances are they’ll bail in microseconds. In fact, 2006 research conducted by Dr. Gitte Lindgaard that was published in Behavior and Information Technology indicated that Web users form first impressions of pages in *as little as 50 milliseconds* (that’s 1/20th of a second.)

Age plays some part in forming impressions. High school students in Canada were able to discern a lot more about a Web page more quickly than older folks.

Stage Two: Regular folks consider bailing

You’ll lose the vast majority of your clicks at this stage. As many as 50% may decide — based on a quick glance — that your page isn’t worth it to them. If your landing page has multiple goals, then the bail rate may be higher because copy, hotlinks, and design elements may not be focused enough to prove — at a glance — that this page is worth viewing.

Design elements that can have a direct impact on the bail factor:

- Scary-looking registration forms with lots of fields to fill in.
- Wording in your headline and its relevance to the *individual* visitor.
- Graphics that apply directly to the key benefit of the page, rather than generic “feel good” stuff like unknown logos and clip art.
- Overall length of copy, combined with perceived readability (tiny type, reverse type).
- Layout: Will this be hard to figure out or does it look fairly straightforward?
- Design: Does this look professional or amateurish?

Stage Three: Should I accept this offer?

After visitors decide your landing page is worth viewing, you have anywhere from a few more seconds to a couple of minutes (depending on your offer and obvious value) to convince them to convert. During this time, visitors may read copy.

Design elements that can directly affect the acceptance decision:

- Writing
- Rich media information (streaming audio and/or video)
- Testimonials and other credentials such as guarantees and security icons
- Design of your competitor's landing pages, especially for hotlinks from search because visitors may have two or more landing pages open at once
- Information about offer: Are there enough details to make a sound decision?

Stage Four: Maybe I should think about this awhile

Statistics on delayed conversion are fairly compelling. It turns out plenty of prospects are impressed enough by your offer to want to mull it over for awhile before they ultimately convert. See data and a laundry list of action tips in Chapter 2 for dealing with this phenomenon.

Stage Five: Conversion attempt

They decide they want to say yes to you. Now, they need to actually do it. You can still lose the conversion at this stage, especially if it's an impulse item that visitors don't desperately require. During this time, visitors are actively typing information into forms or searching for click links, order buttons or contact info for customer service.

Design elements that can directly affect the conversion decision:

- Do a bunch of reading (90% of the population doesn't much like reading)
- Cart hang-ups and post-click error pages
- Required fields in forms, especially telephone number
- "Clear form" or "reset" button that might be mistaken for the submission button
- Inadequate shipping and/or pricing information
- Multiple hotlinks leading to different destinations rather than one single conversion destination (including a search box, "About Us," and other standard navigation from your main site)
- Lack of email privacy information directly next to the email input box
- Lack of alternate modes of communication/conversion (email, phone, IM)

Step Six: Conversion success

Wahoo! They've done it. They've clicked the form submit button, added to their cart, or had such an engrossing experience with your microsite that their offline purchase intent is soaring. And it worked: No errors, no typos, no problems.

The Bad News About Tracking the Bail Process

In our last edition, we solemnly advised you to track the just-described bail rates via your own Web analytics reports, thereby pinpointing potential problems in your process. If too many people left far too early, your overall design and/or headline may have had a massive problem. If too many people hung on for an agonizingly long time but then decided against converting, your body copy and illustrative details needed work.

That's a great idea in theory. Unfortunately, it's darn hard to put into practice. Why? Because almost no one's Web analytics track single-page landing page bail rates by time spent on that single page before leaving. You may think they do, but they don't.

Here's how Adam Davis, our own head of technology, described the problem and suggested a solution:

"Measuring a bail-out rate based on time thresholds implies an understanding of the total time spent on the site by each of your visitors. When measuring Time On Site (TOS), it's important to realize that the majority of all TOS metrics are based on an $n-1$ equation, where 'n' represents the total number of pages viewed in the site. With this equation in mind, if a visitor reaches only a single page (for example, the homepage) before leaving the site altogether, that visitor's TOS will not be measured. In other words, traditional TOS measurements account for all the time spent on the site, except the time spent on the last page. Traditional analytic tools assign a unique session to each visitor. With this unique session, the whole of a visitor's activity can be measured in aggregate. With all of the session data in hand, a tool can compare the time stamp on each page request. The time difference between the first page request and the last is calculated as the TOS.

"However, this methodology does not account for the time taken to view the last page in the sequence, as its end is signaled by a page request to a completely different server somewhere out on the Web.

"If the $n-1$ methodology is sufficient for the organization's needs, there are a huge number of analytics packages that will track this metric on the site with only a very minor installation effort necessary (Google Analytics is a primary example). TOS is a common metric in all third-party analytics offerings and should require no further configuration of the software once installed.

"If an organization strives to understand the complete time on site, including the time spent on the last page visited, custom development is necessary.

"To set this up, a Web team would need to deploy a server-side language capable of handling session management (such as, ASP.NET, PHP,

ColdFusion, Ruby) in conjunction with a client-side language (JavaScript or Flash) capable of making asynchronous calls back to the server (using AJAX or Flex). The client-side language can be used to key on an event in the browser that is triggered when the visitor moves to a different page (even if that page is on a completely different server). Using this method, it's possible to measure the full TOS, including the time spent on the last page visited.

“It's important to note that the method referred to above is not infallible. Users can still turn off scripting in their browsers. Additionally, this method does not show the time spent on the last page if the user closes down the browser altogether.”

After we received this formal memo from Adam, we asked him if he were using such a method to measure bail times on MarketingSherpa landing pages. His short answer: “No.”

Next, we contacted seven of the largest and best known Web analytics provider brands in the world to see if they had this data. Only one, Omniture, held out some hope, although the solution is not (as of this writing) in their main offering. Spokesman Mikel Chertudi said: “I think this is possible — you would need to start a timer upon initial page load, then on page blur/exit, you would trigger a custom link that would populate the custom event into SiteCatalyst. I've copied our team to further vet additional out-of-the-box options.”

Which we really appreciated. But it's no help for most marketers immediately. All we can say is to contact your Web analytics provider and ask them to implement a feature of this nature. By knowing what your page abandon patterns are in seconds, you can shortcut design improvements and test factors that really matter.

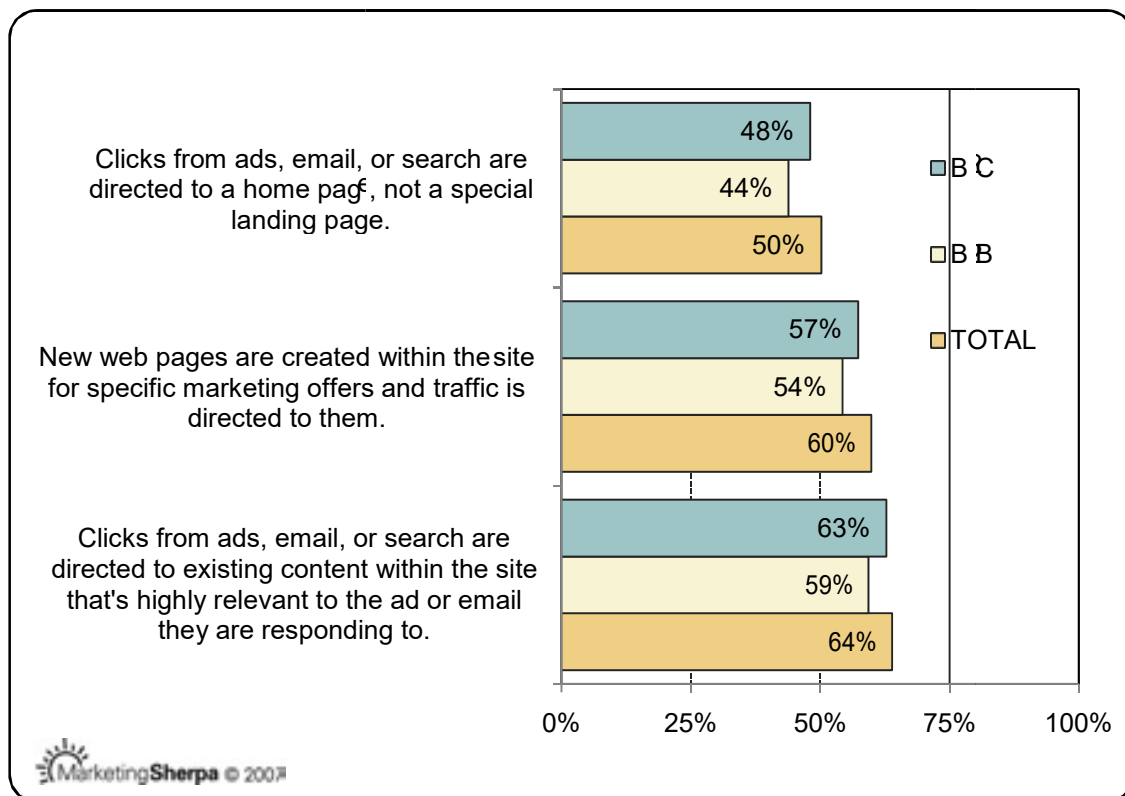
In the meantime, here's a wealth of information on what your peers and competitors are doing with their landing page tactics — from two all-new studies by MarketingSherpa's Research Team.

MarketingSherpa's New Landing Page Observational Study & Real-Life Marketer Survey

All guidelines are based on substantial evidence from multiple real-life tests. However, every guideline is subject to your own testing; no best practice is a best practice in every single situation. Test for yourself.

First, do you even have a landing page? According to our survey of marketers, slightly more clickers wind up on a landing page than not, but sending clickers to a homepage is still quite common.

Chart 1.4: % of Marketers Sending Clickers to Homepage vs. Landing Page



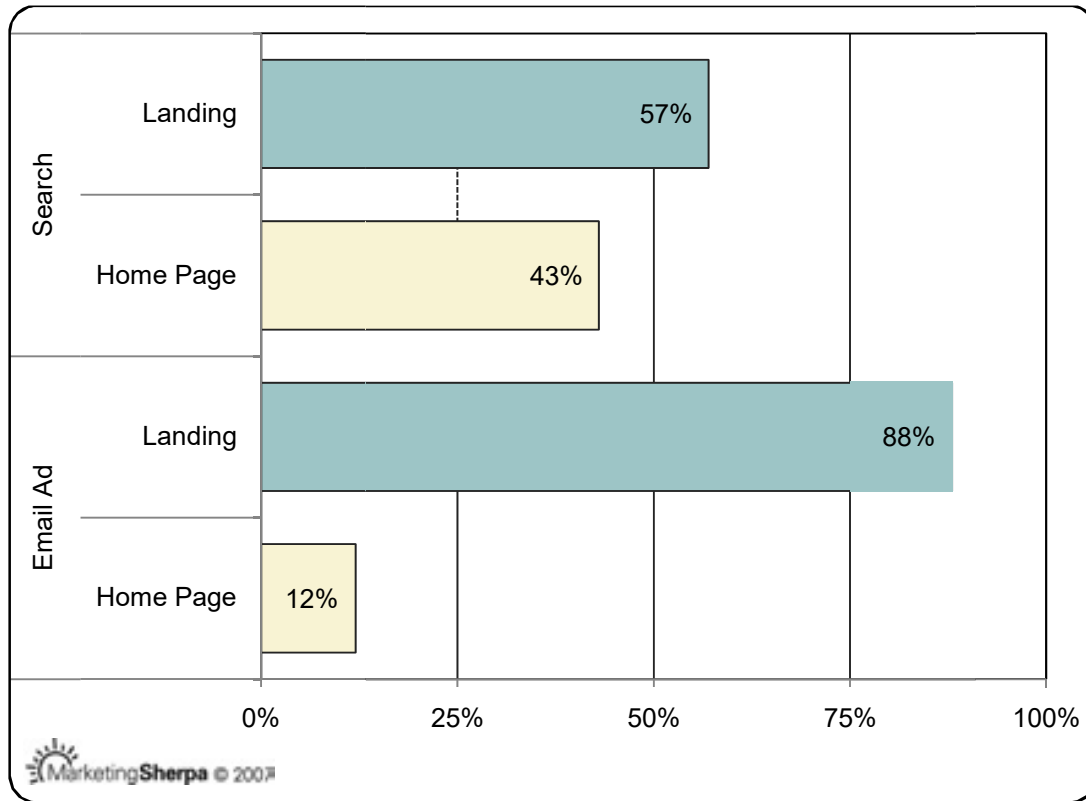
Base: Total n=3437, B2B n=1,391, B2C n=1,154

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

Of all the links we clicked on in our observational study of landing pages (920 to be exact), 26% of promotional links took us to a homepage rather than a landing page. While this is actually somewhat comforting, once we break the data out by search vs. email, we notice it starting to slip a bit.

Chart 1.5: Where Do Promotional Link Clickers Go?



Base: n=920

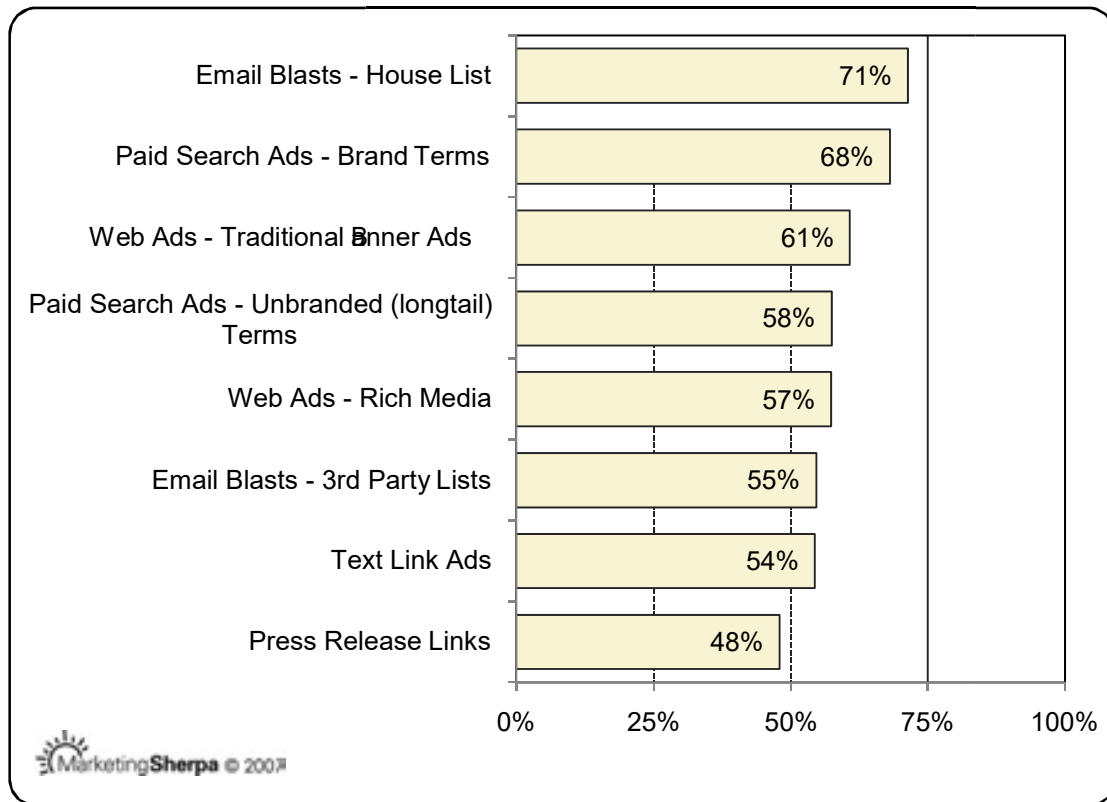
Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Observational Study, August 2007

Methodology: 920 promotional links from a wide variety of online sources, including search and email messages, and B2B and B2C industries were clicked and information from the landing pages cataloged throughout August 2007. Data is directional only and not meant to be a perfectly representative sample of all landing pages.

The obvious reason that marketers are more likely to create a landing page for an email ad is that it's practically made already. Once the creative elements have been built for the email, especially if the email already contains graphics and is in html, simply not copying all that onto a landing page would be supremely lazy. While simply copying the email onto a landing page might strike you as only slightly less lazy than doing nothing at all, you'll see that this actually makes good business sense. We'll also show you how to come up with a similar solution for search marketing.

Looking at the responses from our survey of marketers, we see that here, too, email is far more likely to get a corresponding landing page than search or text links.

Chart 1.6: % of Marketers Implementing Landing Pages by Tactic



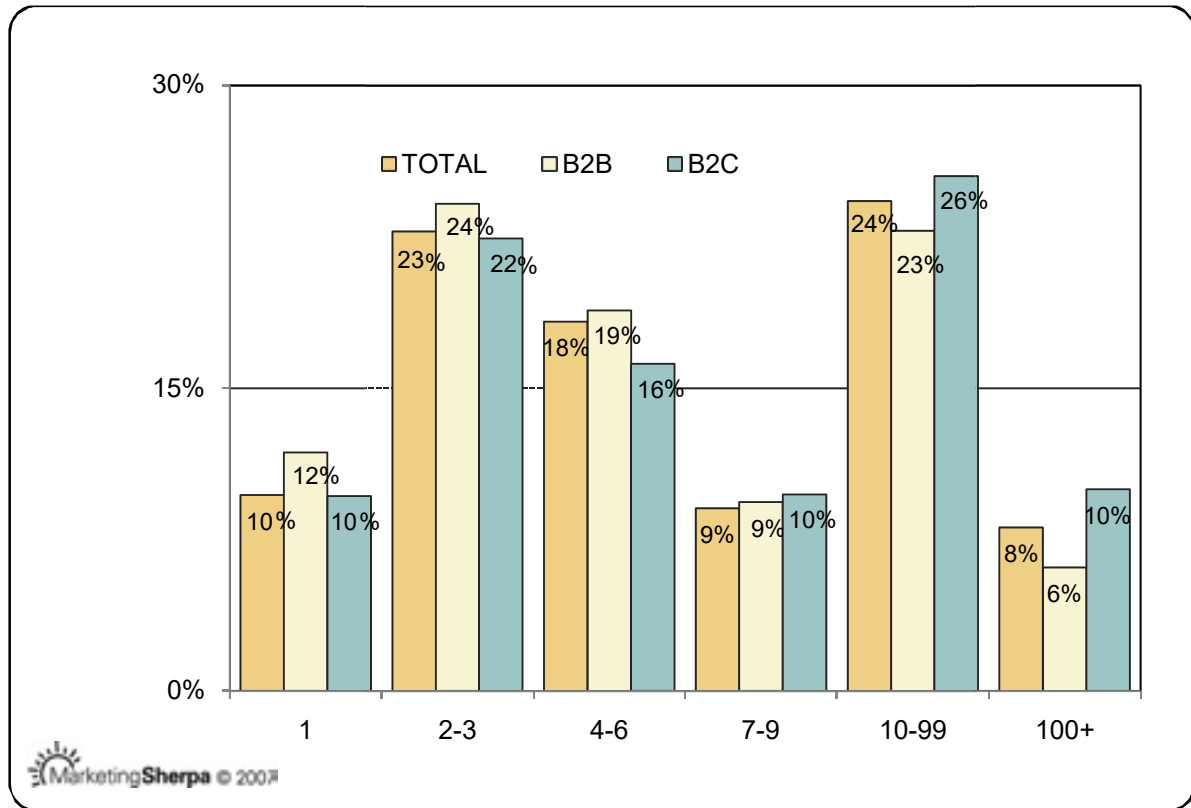
Base: Total n=3204

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

Among our marketer survey respondents who are actively using landing pages, we find that most fall into the 2-3 page group or the 10-99 page group.

Chart 1.7: Number of Landing Pages Currently in Use



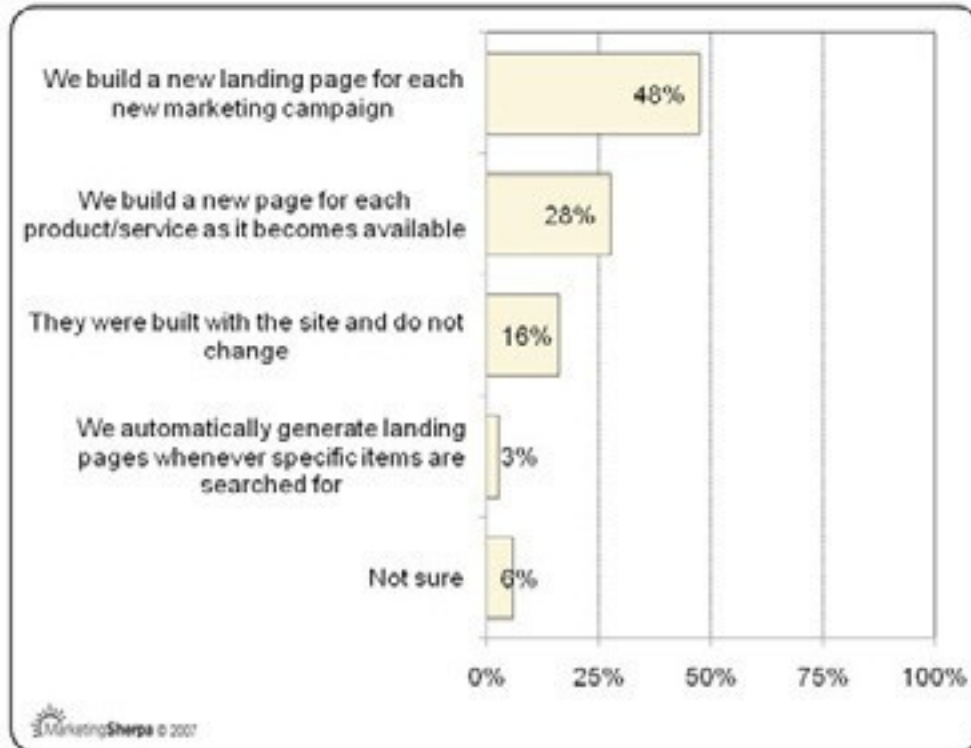
Base: Total n=3458, B2B n=1401, B2C n=1167

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

We also found that it's most common for marketers to create landing pages specific to marketing campaigns, while some build one for every product.

Chart 1.8: What Prompts the Creation of a Landing Page?
Base: Total n=3451



Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

Getting to the Landing Page

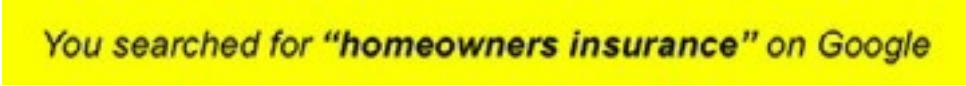
Consistency = Conversion

Consistency is an important part of the journey to conversion. Ideally, you want an individual to experience precisely the same wording, look, and feel through the entire conversion process. This flow should be uninterrupted throughout.

ad headline => click link words => landing page headline => landing page submit button

According to our survey of marketers, 68.2% of those who tested “altering landing pages dynamically depending on offers or search terms” reported that their conversions were “definitely better” after implementation. According to the survey, linking to a landing page with a search term was the single most effective tactic for improving conversions. Out of the 3,451 marketers we asked, only 3% are already automatically generating landing pages when specific items are searched for.

Search marketing consultancy OTTO Digital recently tested reinforcing the search term on the homepage to see if that would increase conversions within a real campaign. Using Offermatica, OTTO parsed the keyword the user actually used from the URL that was generated when the user clicked into a graphic that appeared on the landing page. When a user searched for “homeowners insurance” and then clicked on the link, they were served a landing page with a graphic that looked like this:



You searched for “homeowners insurance” on Google

Compared to the same landing page without this reinforcement, they found:

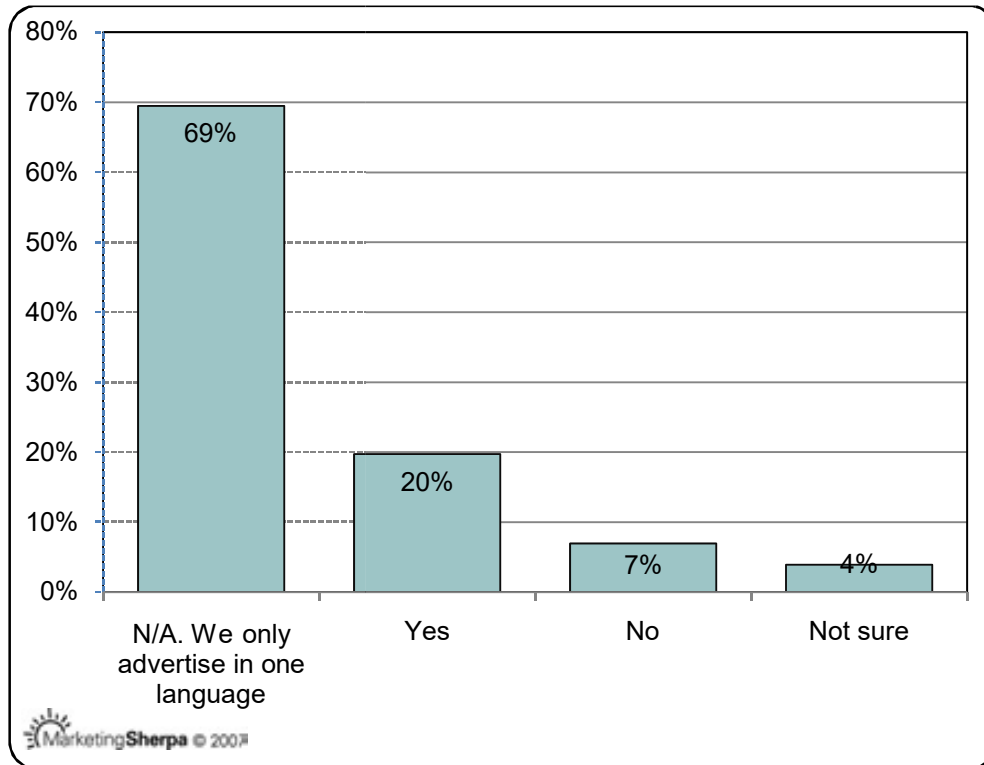
- Exact Match +2.63% Conversion Rate
- Broad Match +4.36% Conversion Rate
- Phrase Match +15.16% Conversion Rate

Clearly, consistency is important, and the more specific the searcher’s query is, the more specific and relevant the resulting landing page needs to be. If you have only a few landing pages or products, create distinct paths to purchase. If you have hundreds of landing pages, figure out a way to let technology do the heavy lifting through dynamic content generation. Either way, keep each step of the path from awareness to purchase consistent for the end user.

Consistencia

One of the more obvious disconnects we encountered when asking agencies about trouble they’ve had with their clients when building landing pages was a “lack of foresight in including a Spanish language (or other language) option for either U.S. or international campaigns.” In case you’re scratching your head, too, yes, there are actually marketers out there creating ads in one language, then sending them to a landing page in an entirely different language – 7% of marketers surveyed are doing this, in fact. Another 4% aren’t even sure if they’re doing so. Qué desconexión!

Chart 1.9: % of Marketers Sending Clickers to Wrong Language Landing Pages



Base: Total n=3247

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

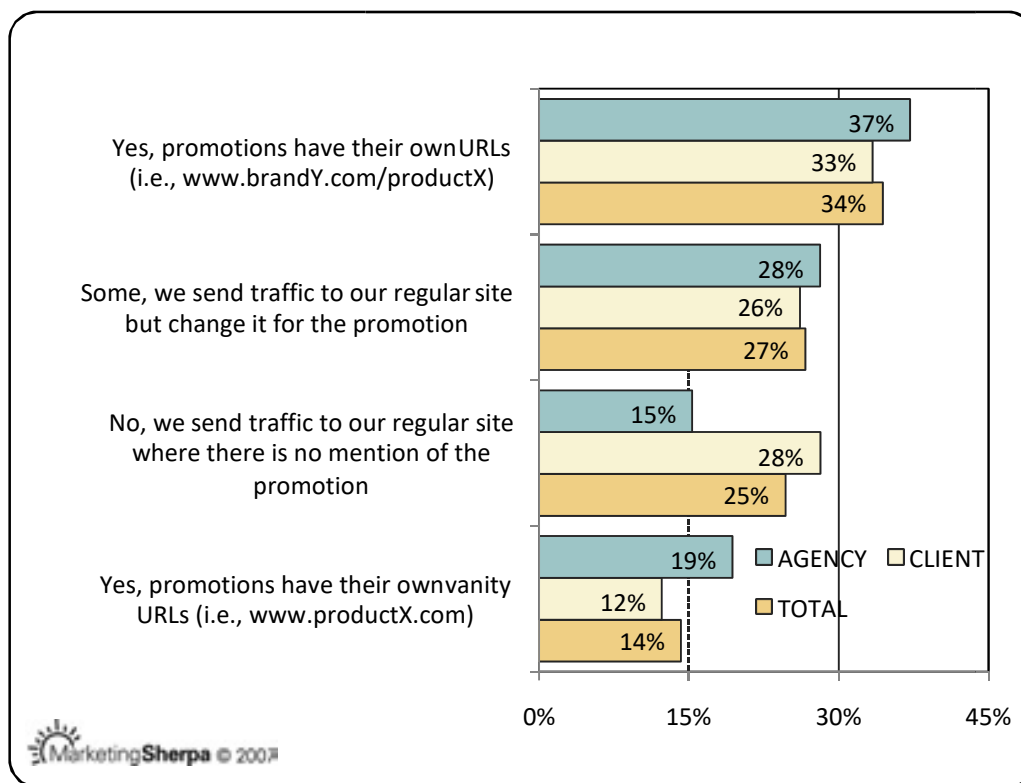
Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

Always Use Readable URLs, Except in Most Cases (Huh?)

The best practice when it comes to landing page URLs that can be passed by word of mouth, or must be typed into a computer after being read in print or on TV, is to use short, readable, rememberable URLs. In a purely digital format, such as a link from a search engine to a landing page, however, we find that most marketers are not using readable URLs and are probably better off for doing so — more on that in a minute.

As you can see in the chart below, 75% of the marketers surveyed for this book reported that they are sending traffic from offline sources to a readable and relevant URL.

Chart 1.10: Types of Landing Page URLs Used in Offline Advertising



Base: Total n=2957, Client n=2148, Agency n=809

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

Additionally, when asked to rate using personal URLs (i.e., www.brandY.com/productX or www.productX.com) as a tactic, marketers rated it a solid 3.2 out of 5 in terms of effectiveness.

Going back to our study of actual landing pages, however, we find that the opposite is true. More than 90% of the landing pages we looked at had URLs that looked more or less like this:

http://fakeexamples.marketingsherpa.com/Promotions/0,,research|2077|pkg_main,00.html?Source=GOOGLE&Keyword=landing_pages?WA1=03010&WA2=67355229&WA3=15251423&WA4=0

So what's going on here?

When you're asking a human being to remember and then type a URL, it needs to be simple — but in an all-digital format. The benefits of improved tracking through information-rich URLs outweigh the benefits of using an easy to remember URL.

Analytics software such as Omniture can parse out each piece of a long dynamically generated URL to record all the details of a click. In the example above, the URL would first get the clicker to the page they wanted, but it would also drag with the source (Google), the keyword the person typed (landing pages), along with whatever other custom data fields we wanted.

This may be great for tracking and will probably never be a problem if people tend to convert on their first visit. It's not so great, however, if you rely on clickers to spread your information to others virally. If this is the case, you may want to make it easier for people to do so by including send-to-a-friend options that make it easy on the user.

It's even possible to include some form of tracking when sending people to landing pages from non-digital media yet still have easy-to-remember URLs. All you need to do is switch up the URLs so each one is directly attributable to the source. For example:

TV = marketingsherpa.com/landingpageguide

Print = marketingsherpa.com/lphandbook

Billboard = marketingsherpa.com/landingpagebook

Each can have the same content, yet allow you to know how people got there. If you redirect them all to yet another unique URL, you can even factor in pass-along and viral spread from people cutting and pasting the link once they get there.

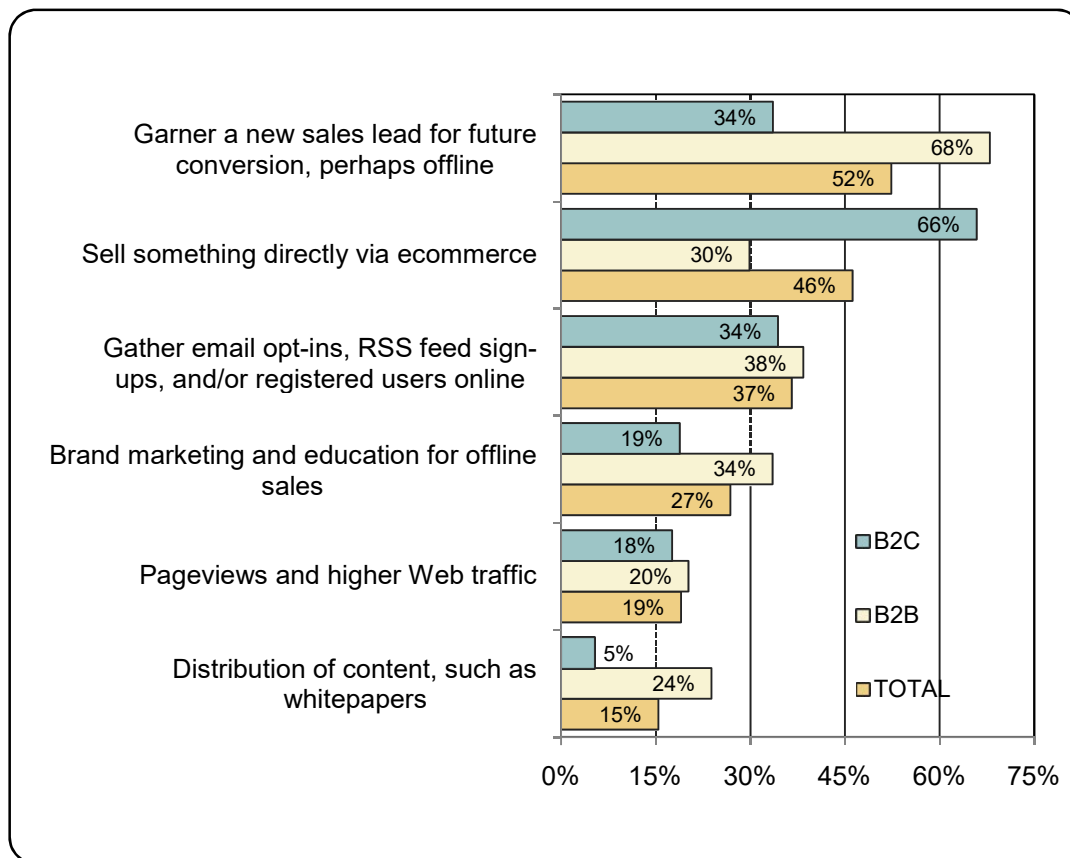
The important thing to remember is to never make consumers do more work than they have to; always get them where they want to go quickly and still collect data whenever possible.

Someone Clicked! Now What? Landing Page Design!

Cut the Clutter

The point of a landing page is generally a simple one: conversion — getting someone to complete the desired action. The chart below shows what metrics marketers are judging their own landing pages by.

Chart 1.11: Marketing Goals for Landing Pages



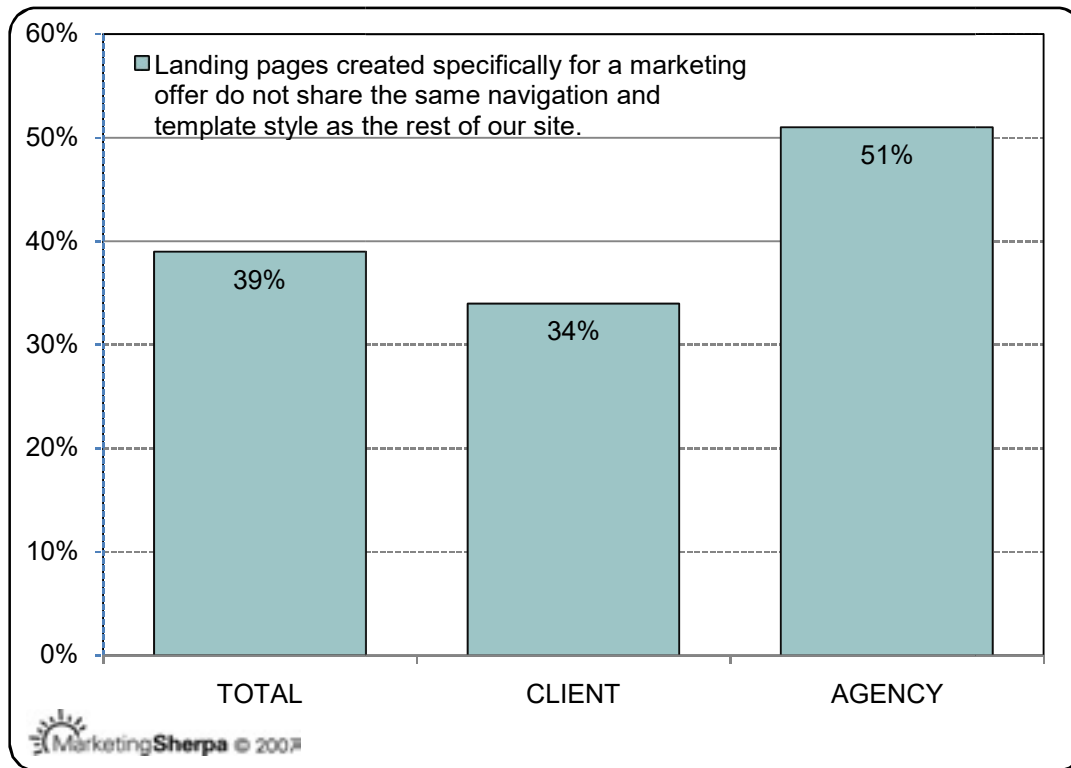
Base: Total=All Clients n=3108, B2B n=1698, B2C n=1410

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

Whatever your metrics, it's a mathematical certainty that every link on your landing page that doesn't result in conversion will decrease your rate. Making a Web site less navigable will seem horribly counter-intuitive to most people, but that's what you may need to do to keep your visitors from getting distracted. According to our survey, 39% of all marketers are creating landing pages that are stylistically different than the rest of the site (which means, of course, that 61% of you aren't).

Chart 1.12: % of Marketers Who Customize Landing Page Templates



Base: Total n=3437, Client n=2545, Agency n=892

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

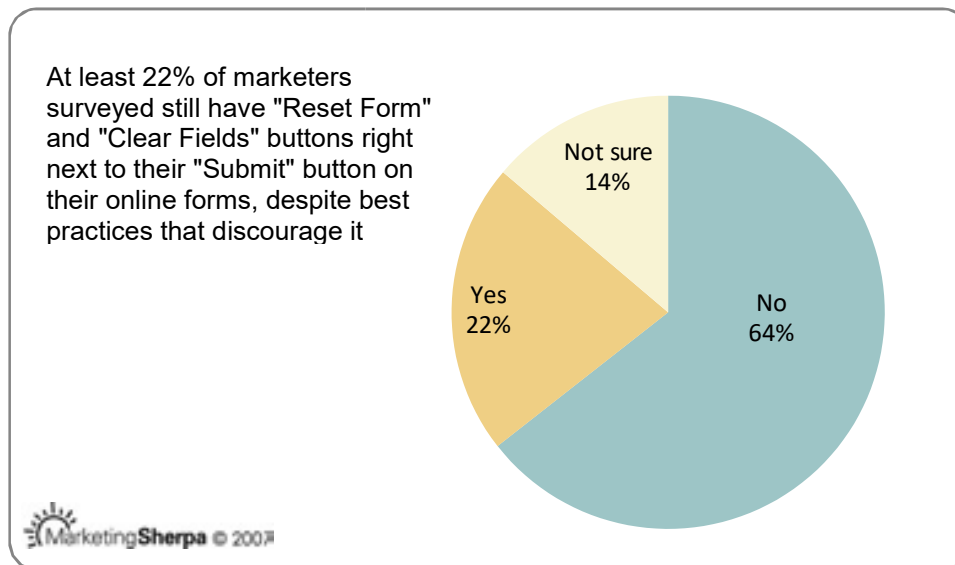
Note in the above chart, however, that agency marketers are way ahead of in-house marketers when it comes to customizing their landing pages. The obvious reason is that's what they get paid to do. Considering the No. 1 complaint among in-house marketers is a lack of time (67% of in-house clients cite this as the biggest barrier to creating or testing improved landing pages), it probably makes a lot of sense to let your in-house IT guys worry about the main Web site. You can outsource the creation of fresh, high-performance landing pages to an agency.

On the flip side, 33% of agency marketers report that their biggest frustration is clients insisting they use a template when designing landing pages, or refusing to follow best practices such as these. Clearly, if you have the cash to spend, outsourcing design work to an entity with the time and freedom to implement best practices can benefit your bottom line. So how do we define best practices?

Simplicity Defined — Buttons

Have you ever wanted to clear an online form after filling it in? I, for one, have not. I know where I live, I generally remember how to spell my name correctly, and I hate having to enter my credit card information more than once. Why then do “Clear Fields” and “Reset Form” buttons exist and, even worse, why are they right next to the “Submit” button where it’s so easy to accidentally hit the wrong button? Unless there’s a really good reason to keep these, get rid of them! According to our survey, 22% of marketers still have these buttons on their landing pages.

Chart 1.13: Use of Unhelpful Buttons on Online Forms



Base: Total n=3299

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

Pare Your Navigation

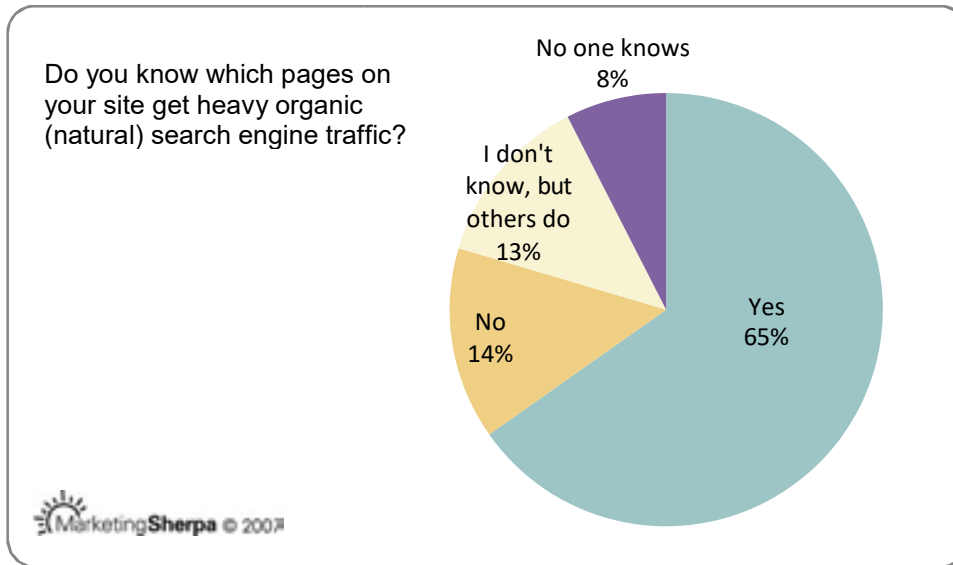
Generally speaking, the more money, time, and effort you’re asking of someone, the more ‘stuff’ you’re going to need on your site to entice someone to make a decision. You don’t need to put anything more out there, however, than is relevant to the context of the specific decision being made. Most Web sites would be best served by chucking any navigation elements they have altogether.

Our study of existing landing pages found that only 16% of landing pages are free of navigation bars.

If you feel strongly that you need navigational elements, they should lead nowhere but to relevant information. This may mean creating two Web page templates: one for

prospects and one for existing customers. Another possible reason for including navigation elements is if visitors are circumventing your planned path of entry by coming directly through natural search to a page deep in your site.

Chart 1.14: Who Knows Which Pages Get Heavy Organic Search Traffic?



Base: Total n=3418

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

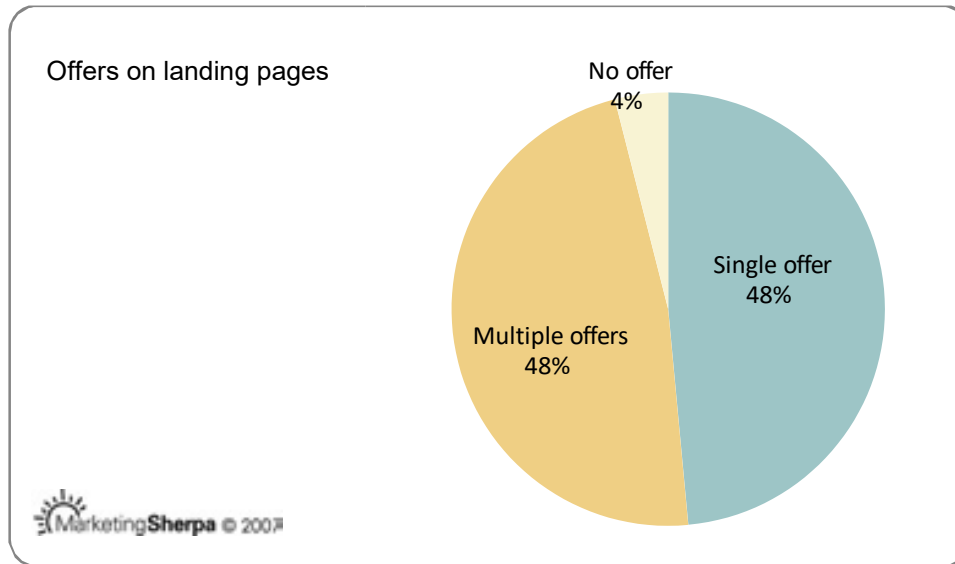
Most marketers know which pages receive lots of natural search engine traffic. It makes sense, therefore, to take a fresh look at those pages and make sure they make sense to someone coming straight to the page without the context that finding it through the site would have provided.

Give Options Without Overwhelming

In a fairly famous 2000 study, Columbia University researchers Sheena Iyengar and Mark Lepper tried selling jam out of a cart stocked with only a few varieties. They found that giving people little choice resulted in 10 times greater sales than when they offered them a host of choices. Results like these have been repeated over and over again in the years since then to prove the point.

The application of this idea to a landing page is obvious — don't overload your landing page visitors with so many choices that they make no choice and bail. We found in our observational study that 49% of the pages had multiple offers on them.

Chart 1.15: Single vs. Multiple Offers on Landing Pages



Base: n=719

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Observational Study, August 2007

Methodology: 920 promotional links from a wide variety of online sources, including search and email messages, and B2B and B2C industries were clicked and information from the landing pages cataloged throughout August 2007. Data is directional only and not meant to be a perfectly representative sample of all landing pages.

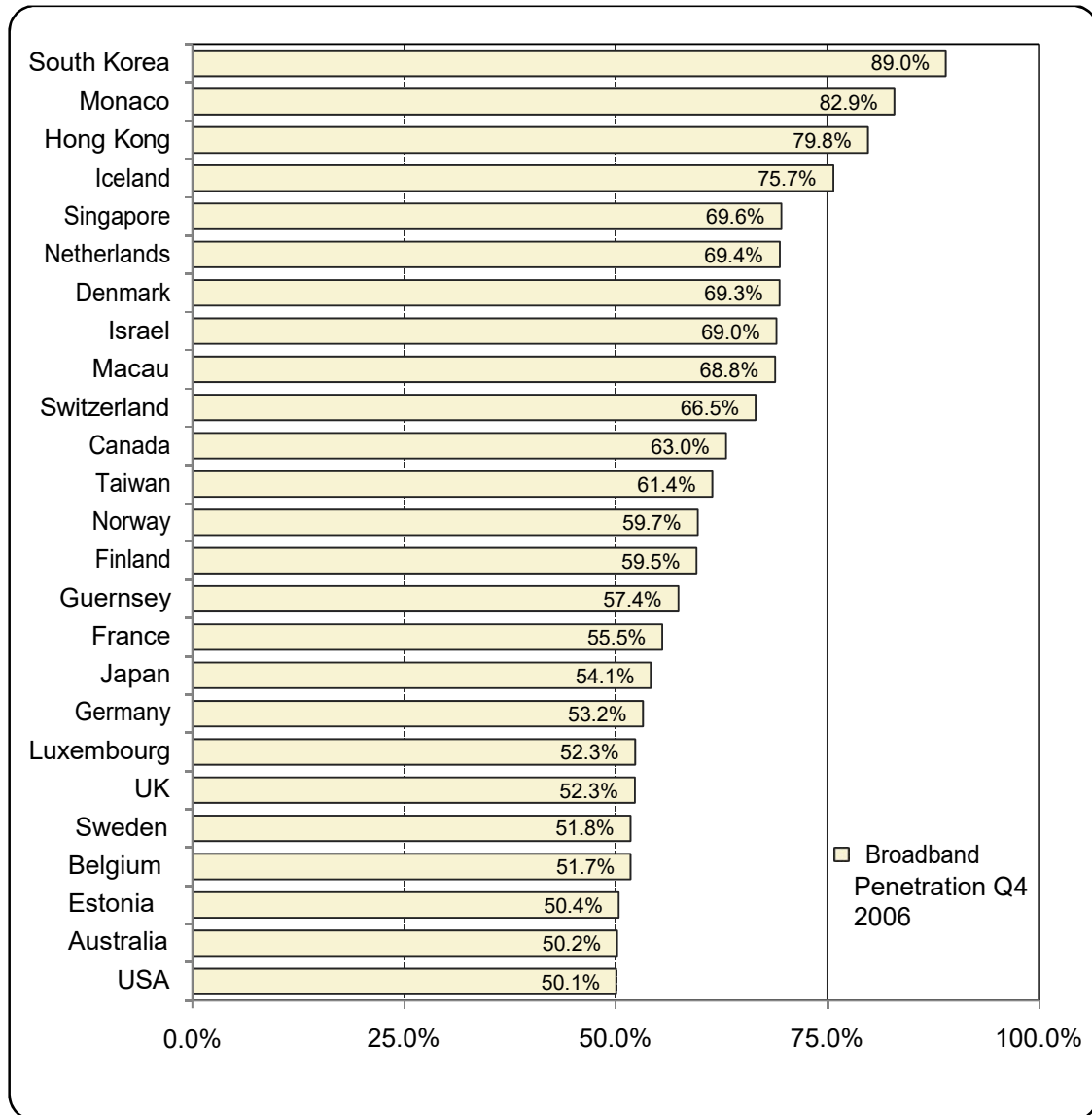
While your site may have lots of great stuff that matters to you, you don't have to show it all off all the time. If you have a lot of products and rely on up-selling or cross-selling, do a cluster analysis of existing buying patterns. Chances are you can find groups of products that tend to get bought together. Rather than presenting your entire catalog, try presenting just the few that show strong relationships.

Copy Length and Need for Scrolling

In the past, conventional wisdom was that it is better to have all of the content you need to show on one page and have a user scroll rather than click to further pages. In a world where dial-up and slow broadband speeds are the norm, this makes a lot of sense. For someone on a 54k modem, every click is a 10-second window to think about doing something other than looking at your Web site. If your audience is viewing the site on a fast connection, however, a click will often bring up buried content much faster than scrolling for it – especially if it's hidden below the fold.

Most analytics programs are capable of telling you what percentage of your traffic is using which connection speed. If only a small percentage of the audience coming to your site is still on dial-up, it may be time to switch tactics.

Chart 1.16: Global Broadband Penetration



Source: Websiteoptimization.com

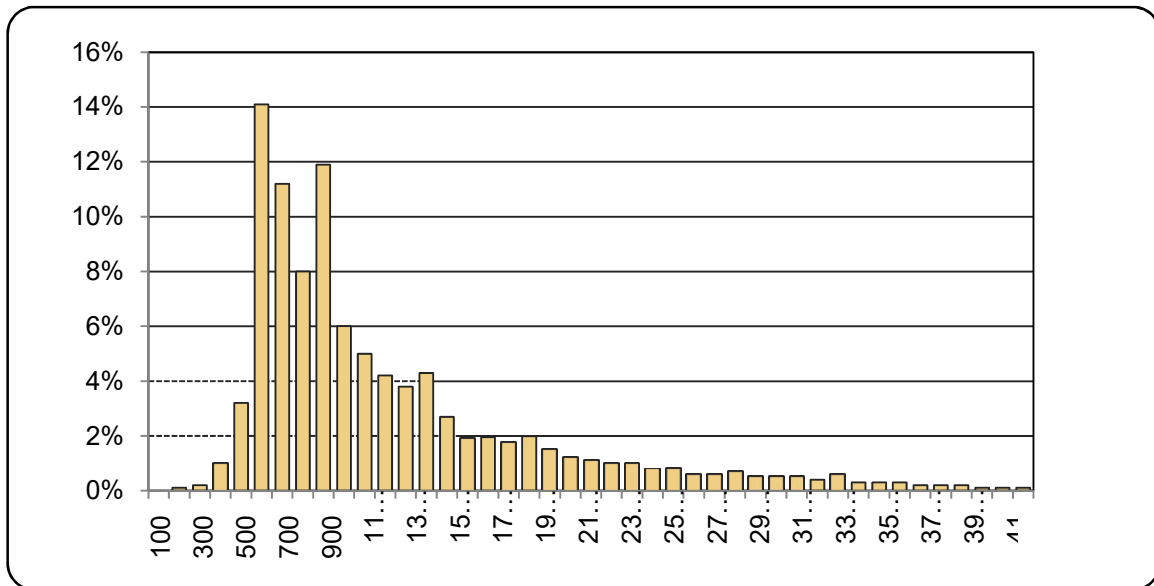
As you can see in the chart above, the United States is still way behind in broadband penetration compared to other developed nations. It also has some of the slowest broadband service speeds in the world, although we're catching up. If you do stick with scrolling, a study by Clicktale shows some interesting stats. Looking at a sample of 120,000 page views over the course of November and December 2006, they found that:

- 22% of page-views were scrolled all the way to the bottom of the page.
- 76% of page-views showed some scrolling.

They also noted that 22% was actually fairly high, since some pages were viewed repeatedly by the same person. This means that they likely scrolled to the bottom at least once.

The chart below shows the distribution curve of how likely the page was to be seen in pixels from the top. You'll notice that it flattens quickly once the page gets beyond two screens worth of content. It's also worth noting that the pages measured in this study were mostly content pages with lots to read, not landing pages designed to provoke conversion.

Chart 1.17: Distribution of Absolute Scroll Reach



Source: Clicktale

What's even better than choosing between scrolling and multiple pages? Do neither. Ask yourself honestly: Do you really need all that text? Or could it be whittled down to be even more relevant and intuitive? If you're sure you need it all and can't cut any copy, try turning to technology and employing some Web 2.0 tactics, such as using AJAX, to bring buried content to the forefront of your main page with a minimum of clicking or scrolling. Regardless of your setup, the end result should always be that it's as easy as possible for someone looking for your information to find it.

On the Page: Text & Graphics

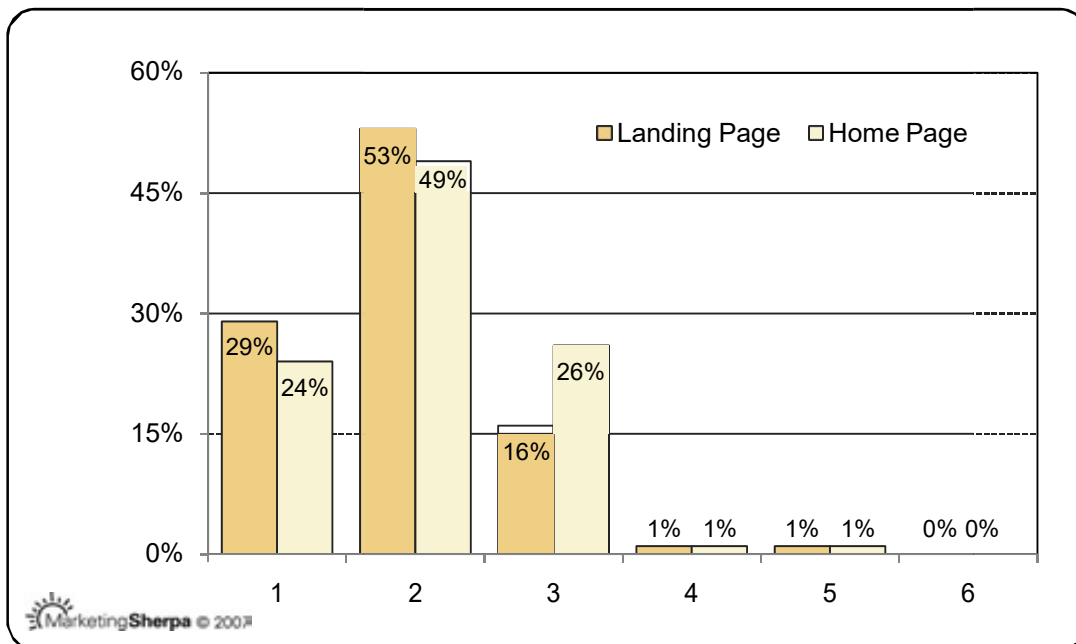
As David Ogilvy said in 'Ogilvy on Advertising' way back in 1983, "good typography *helps* people read your copy, while bad typography prevents them doing so Which typefaces are easiest to read? Those which people are *accustomed* to reading." The differences in resolution between a printed page and a monitor make it harder to read classic print fonts, which is why fonts such as Arial and Verdana were created. These

fonts were purposely designed to look good on a computer screen. Unless your text is a design element, use them. If your text is actually meant to be read, don't prevent the reader from reading.

While technology may have changed some, our eyes haven't. **We still can't read black on white text as well as we can read white on black text.** We can't read WORDS THAT ARE IN ALL CAPS as well as we can read words that combine upper and lower case letters. The reason for this is that your brain reads words whole when it recognizes them quickly, but has to read them letter by letter otherwise, which slows comprehension. If you are a designer used to staring at odd fonts and headlines in all caps all day, you may have trained your brain to read words in these formats as easily as everyone else reads "normal" text; if so, you are not normal (call it "evolved," if you prefer).

Just as the eye has trouble with white on black text, it has trouble tracking back to the next line if columns of text are longer than 40-60 characters wide. For this reason, you'll probably want to lay out your text in multiple vertical columns. While this look will differ drastically depending on the amount of text you mix with other design elements, we found that most of the landing pages we visited employed a simple two-column design.

Chart 1.18: Distribution of Number of Columns Used in Page Design



Base: n=920, Landing Pages n=720, Homepages n=257

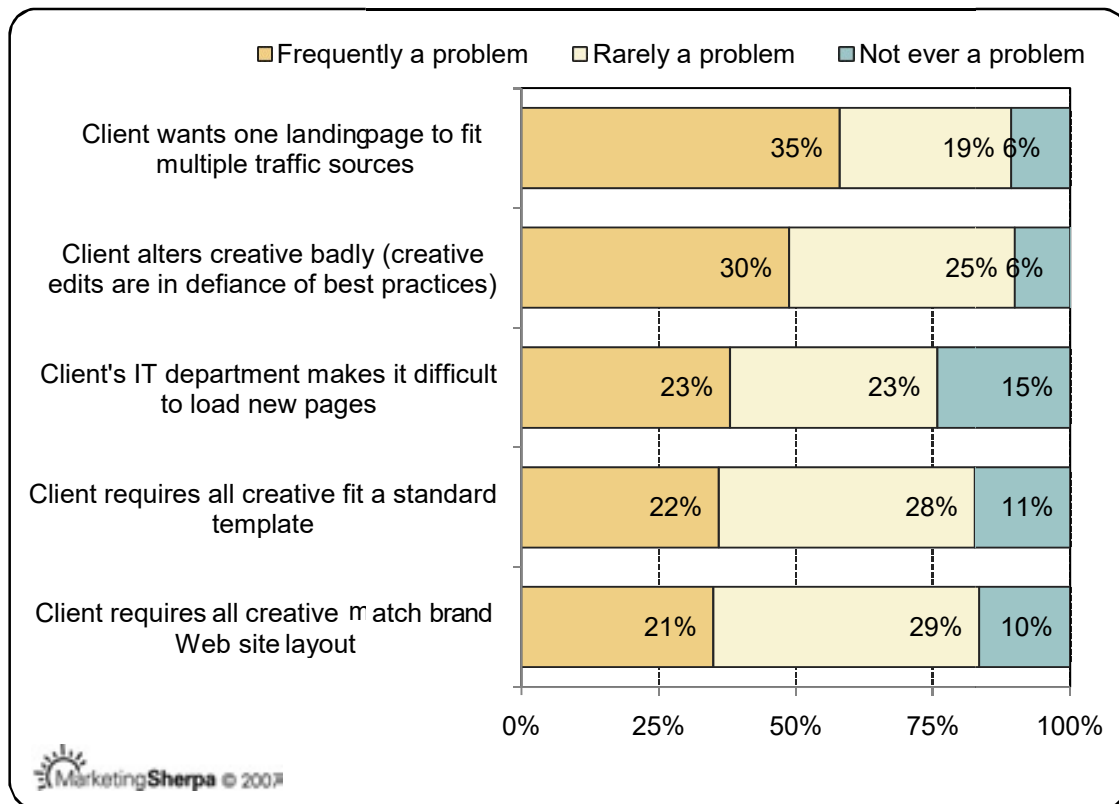
Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Observational Study, August 2007

Methodology: 920 promotional links from a wide variety of online sources, including search and email messages, and B2B and B2C industries were clicked and information from the landing pages cataloged throughout August 2007. Data are directional only and not meant to be a perfectly representative sample of all landing pages.

And, yes, vertical columns of text are boring. They’ve been around since the printing press was invented. Designers, rather than disregard the good sense of hundreds of years of layout editing, try putting your degree to work and figure out an elegant way to use these stalwarts of readability. You’ll get a lot less push-back from your clients if you can figure out a way to make your pages look good and read easily.

Tension between designers and clients is as old as the profession. In our survey, we asked agency marketers about the difficulties in creating landing pages for clients. Many of these complaints are absolutely legitimate, but best practices are best practices, and agency folk better have a dang good reason for disregarding them in favor of what David Ogilvy referred to as “artdirectoritis.”

Chart 1.19: Frustrations of Agencies Providing Landing Pages to Clients



Base: Agencies n=1093

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

If you find yourself in the shoes of a client dealing with an ad agency, make sure you talk about best practices before the design process ever starts. If they obviously know what they’re doing, have the humility to let them do their jobs well, but don’t assume that they do. If you agree on a set of design benchmarks, as well as the metrics you

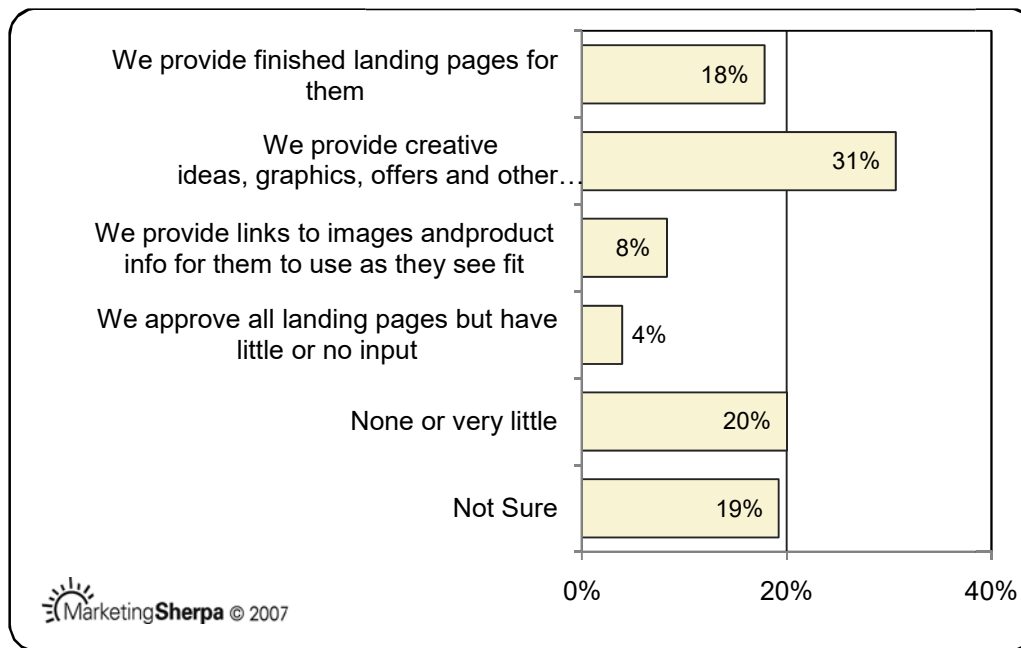
intend to use to hold the page accountable, you'll make the agency's job far easier and your marketing far more successful. You can also do everyone a huge favor by making sure you've got your IT guy with you in the room when you meet with the agency to talk about implementation.

Finally, never forget that you get what you pay for. If you want to pay for only one landing page when you need many, it's not the agency's fault if it doesn't work very well.

Are You Your Affiliate, or Are They You?

For many online consumers, there's no difference between you and your affiliates. Affiliate emails and landing pages carry merchant logos and branded terms. Yet, for many organizations, there's little input or oversight. Fewer than 20% of merchants are providing finished landing pages, and about 33% are providing content for affiliates to use.

Chart 1.20: Creative Input for Affiliate Marketer



Base: Clients n=2340

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

Issue #1: Brand reputation is a vital component of customer and prospect relations, and affiliates are a key external advocate. Many companies simply rely on rules of do's and don'ts they distribute to affiliates, but the stick is not nearly as effective as the carrot. The best way to positively affect how your brand is being treated is to provide affiliates

with effective, finished content that they can easily implement. This system gives merchants control over their brand and saves affiliates time they don't have.

Issue #2: Few affiliates have the resources to fine-tune their landing pages, even though many are motivated marketers. Merchants can help their own bottom line by enabling their affiliates with finished content, such as landing page and email templates that have been tested and optimized.

The message for marketers is a simple one: The more you can do to help your affiliates, the more they'll help your bottom line. You'll also be able to exert greater control over how your brand is exposed to current and future customers.

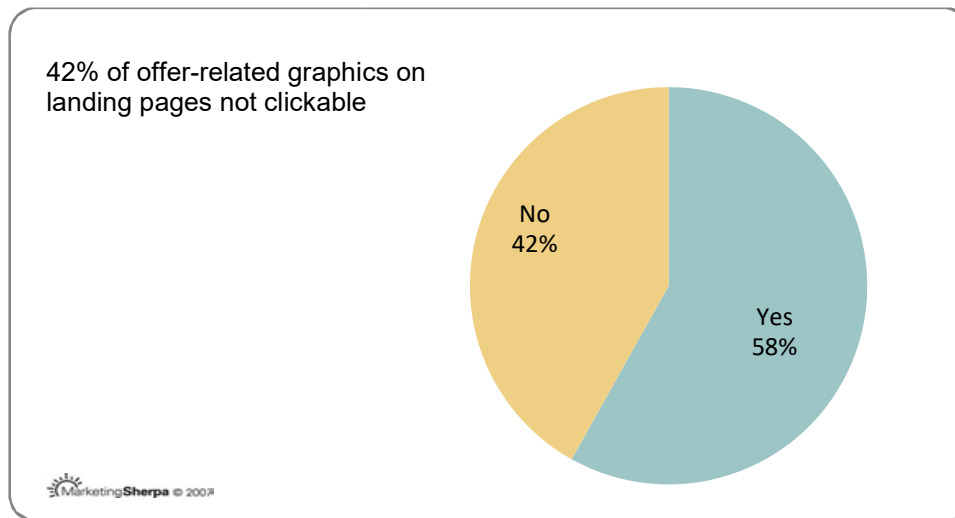
Graphic Elements

Graphics can be a huge distraction or an amazing asset. This depends on the specifics of your product and what attributes you're trying to get across. Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words, but sometimes it takes a thousand words to explain what the heck you're looking at. You'll have to use your best judgment there. One thing you can do that's a no-brainer is to make sure your graphics are clickable.

Ideally, you'll want a click on a graphic to result in something that won't detract from conversion but does result in a fairly intuitive action. A click on a product should result in more information about that product or a bigger shot of the product. This is especially important when the aesthetics of the product are a selling point.

Despite our good advice, we found that 42% of the offer-related graphics on the landing pages we visited were not clickable.

Chart 1.21: Clickable Offer-Related Landing Page Graphics



Base: n=720

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Observational Study, August 2007

Methodology: 920 promotional links from a wide variety of online sources, including search and email messages, and B2B and B2C industries were clicked and information from the landing pages cataloged throughout August 2007. Data are directional only and not meant to be a perfectly representative sample of all landing pages.

Placement of call-to-action buttons

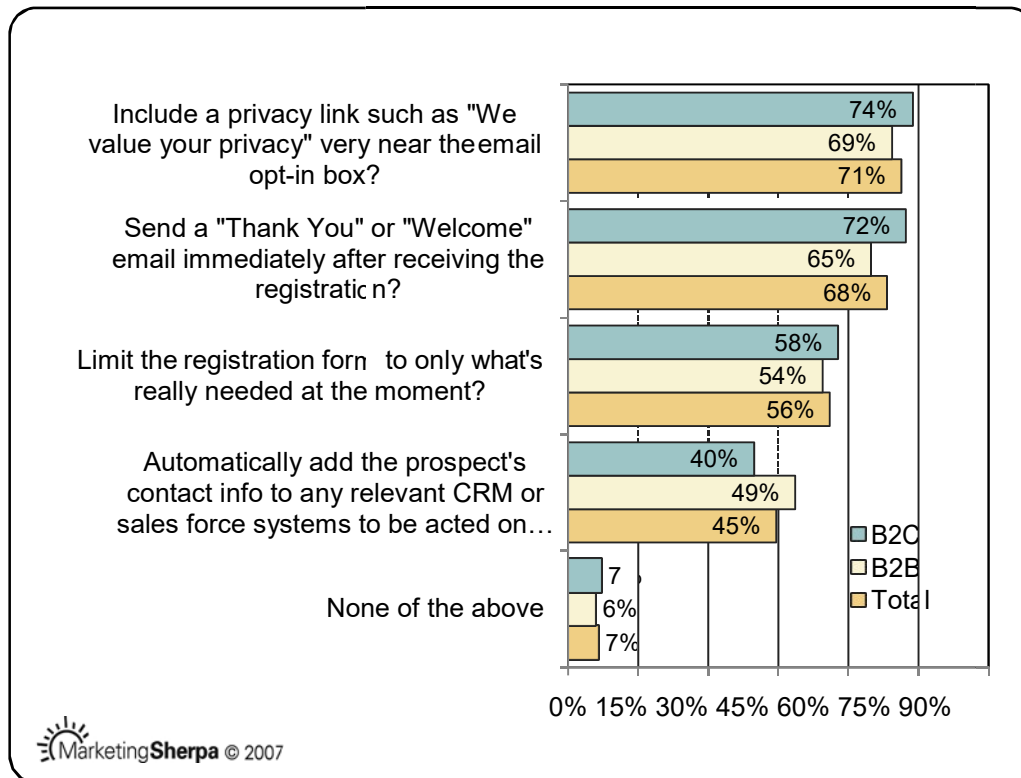
Have you ever been to a department store where after finding something to buy, you couldn't find anyone to buy it from? That feeling is just as annoying on your Web site. Don't be shy with your call-to-action buttons. Don't hide them below the fold or make them subtle. They should, in the best sense, be like aggressive sales people — obvious and exactly where you would expect them when it's time to buy.

Registration forms and mail opt-in requests

Giving up your email address to a strange Web site is like giving out your mobile phone number to a stranger on the street. Maybe you live in a wonderful town where strangers hug each other and the only spam you get comes in a can, but most people don't. Whenever you're asking for someone to give up something as personal as an email address, you need to be very gentle and assure them that no harm will come to their inboxes.

Although less sensitive, asking a ton of other questions in a registration form, especially if they're required, is a good way to lose a potential customer. You should think of this data collection a lot like you would dating; don't expect to go all the way the first time you meet. Every modern-day Casanova knows you play it cool on the first meeting and only ask for an email address, then you slowly work your way up to a "purchase" over time. Making a sale takes trust, and trust takes time.

Chart 1.22: Tactics for Email Opt-In and Registration/Lead Generation Forms



Base: Total Clients n=1605, B2B n=868, B2C n=737

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

What works

We've told you a lot about what we think works, but here's your chance to hear from your peers. Each tactic for improving conversion has been rated on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best, and these marketers that have actually tried these things out in real life. We hope it inspires you.

Chart 1.23: Real-Life Marketing Tactics to Improve Conversion Rates

If you have tried any of the following advanced tactics in the past 12 months, please rate how well they worked.					
Average Rating, 1–5, 5 IS BEST	TOTAL	CLIENT	AGENCY	B2B	B2C
Customer reviews	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.6
Video testimonials	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.3
Video clips or streamed video	3.4	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.3
Bigger pictures, multiple views, change color for products pictured	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.4
Special offers and/or useful hotlink choices on "Thank you" page after conversion	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.3
Personal URLs (PURLs)	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2
Live chat available on request	3.1	3.1	3	3.2	3
Audio testimonials	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.8
Live chat offer pushed to visitor even if they don't request it	2.6	2.8	2.4	2.9	2.7
Pop-up offers targeting page leavers who don't initially convert	2.5	2.6	2.3	2.8	2.5
Avatar "host" on page	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.6
Total Responses:	2,104	1,479	625	760	719

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6 and September 18, 2007.

Chapter 2: Landing Page Design, Layout & Copy Fundamentals

Rule of Thumb: Great landing page design is about leading the eye and the mind on a journey without distractions that ends in conversion.

Note: This chapter is your nuts-and-bolts guide to creating a landing page using proven best practices. Use it as inspiration when you design a page from scratch. It also makes a great review guide for picking areas to work on in your current landing pages.

Don't blindly assume that the specific tactics and creative samples we show you are perfect for your brand. The crazy fact about landing pages is that despite reams of data, Case Studies, and test results, what works best can't always be predicted. Often we hear smart marketers who know all the best practices backwards and forwards exclaim: "I was so surprised by which creative won the test."

Our advice: Start with best practices. At the very least, there's a *lot* of data behind them. Once you've got an officially well-designed page up as your "control," start testing tweaks and alternatives. See Chapter Four for more testing details.

Overview: The Six Steps of Landing Page Design

Excited about making your landing page better? Great.

The good news: A landing page designed for a higher conversion rate probably won't cost you much more than landing pages you're creating now. You can spend a bunch of money, but you don't absolutely need to. We know of many marketers on extremely tight budgets with no spare staff who have extraordinary landing pages.

The bad news: It's more time, thought, and work. This can be a distinct competitive advantage for you. Many marketers don't really want to work all that hard on their landing pages. If you're prepared to roll up your shirtsleeves, the battle is almost won.

Here are the six steps you'll need to go through:

Step #1. Conversion Definition

Before you start creating the landing page, define precisely what conversion activity you need to take place from it. A landing page conversion might be:

- Ecommerce: Adding an item to a shopping cart and beginning the check-out process.
- Lead generation: Filling out a registration form to accept an offer (generally free) with the implicit understanding that this may lead someday to a sale. Offers

might include white papers, Webinars, coupons, price quotes, trials and/or samples.

- Branding/education: Spending a significant amount of time examining and/or interacting with content on the site that the landing page is a gateway for. (In addition to time spent and pages viewed, measurement may also involve a brand awareness and purchase intent study.).
- Relationship: Opting-in to receive communications from the brand/publisher on an ongoing basis. These may be emails, an RSS feed, a print newsletter, etc. A commercial relationship may be implied but not overt.
- Membership: Registering to use the site on an ongoing basis in exchange for either payment, or an implied agreement to view advertising, or to allow one's activity data to be measured.
- Viral outreach: Telling personal and professional contacts about the landing page, perhaps via an email tool, blog links, word-of-mouth, etc.

One big mistake we see marketers make with landing pages is to assume (or hope) a landing page can handle two or three different conversion goals. Most typically, these are branding/education plus lead generation. Marketers try to pack in copy, hotlinks, and other design elements on the page to make it do heavy lifting in several directions. For example, you may include your standard site navigation bars on the landing page, or sales copy unrelated to the specific offer about how wonderful your brand is.

Step #2. Prospect/Demographic Research

Get your mind off yourself – your campaign, your messaging, your creative, your offering – and focus on your prospect's mind.

Some marketers run quick emailed surveys of their current user base to discover which benefit statements and offers hit home. Others call a few customers on the phone. Others conduct fancy focus groups.

At the very least, create a persona-style profile of your perfect converter. You may have more than one of these (most brands have three to five and sometimes up to seven.) Next, review each profile and decide which is the most important market for your brand at this moment. Then construct your landing page for that particular one, and *completely ignore everybody else* (unless you're stuck using a homepage for your landing page, more details below.) You may even want multiple landing pages or campaigns, one for each market, someday.

Don't construct a page to appeal broadly across a variety of "typical" users. It won't appeal to anyone at all, and your conversions will suffer. Visitors have to believe this offer is perfect for their individual needs. They won't take the time to wade through sales copy with benefit statements aimed at other people. If it doesn't apply to them directly and immediately, they will bail from your page faster than you can blink.

You have up to eight seconds to convince visitors this page is for them and them alone. At most they'll read 15 words. If your copy targets multiple demographics, those 15 words will not work.

Step #3. Selecting domains and hosting

You must decide where the landing page should reside. Will it have its own domain? Will each individual you target have their own domain or URL? Will you need many vanity URLs all leading to the same landing page? Is there a chance that anyone will need to type or cut and paste the URL in from another document? Does the URL need to be easy to remember? How about easy to spell if someone hears it out loud?

See our section below on URLs for more advice and details.

The page must be hosted on a server. Many marketers let their agency or a third-party landing page ASP host the page. This is a great solution if your IT department can't handle the job. Key considerations: How long do you expect this landing page to be alive? Campaigns, even email ones, can last far longer than you think and an agency may not leave your page up for long enough. Plus, if you cancel your agency relationship, you may lose the page as well.

Other considerations: Who has the best Web analytics and time to study tracking reports? Who can make fast changes to the page if needed when you learn what works from testing?

Step #4. Graphic Elements, Layout, and Form Design

Now comes the actual wireframing. You'll make a list of all the specific elements that have to be included on the page, and create a black-and-white layout showing where each one will sit initially, and how much space they'll take up.

You need to do this **before** you actually write copy because space and graphic proximity dictate copy.

Your wireframe should show the general size (pixels) and placement of each design element on the page, as well as where the fold is (the spot beyond which most visitors will have to scroll to see more) and where the right side print cut-off is (the outer edge of what can be printed on a piece of 8x10-inch paper in a standard printer.)

Step #5. Copywriting

You'll want to divide copywriting into three steps. The first is your headline because this copy is critical for landing pages. A slight tweak in verbiage can cause conversions to soar or crash.

You can also change headline copy for various prospect demographics while keeping the rest of the copy on the page pretty much the same. The headline should refer directly to the place the visitor came from and/or the ad copy that drove the click.

The second most important headline is your call to action *on* the hotlinked text-line and/or submit button itself. You may want to test matching this with your headline, much like a sweater set. Copy tests here can give you the second-highest response change.

The third most important copy is the body copy. This is all other copy, including subheads, bulleted lists, guarantees, testimonials, explanations and descriptions, etc. According to direct response marketing lore, only 20% of your visitors will read much, if any, of this copy. It still has to be darn good.

You'll probably go through several rounds of body copy edits when you're working on final landing page design. Almost inevitably when your copy is placed into position, it takes up far more space than you expected. The primary question: "Can this be said more concisely, yet as effectively?" Copy can be long, but it should not use 10 words when 5 will do. More specific tips on copywriting for landing pages further on. ...

Step #6. Testing, Measuring, and Tweaking

You should have considered measurements earlier when choosing a host and URLs for the landing page. Now you need to set up a schedule to examine and react to results metrics. These should match your goals. Examples:

- Ecommerce: Sales as a percent of total visitors, sales by traffic source, average sale amount, average lifetime value of new customers (do they buy again later), percent of sales from returning customers vs. newbies, etc.
- Lead generation: Leads as a percent of total visitors, estimated sales value per average lead generated by traffic source, length of sales cycle for average lead, "heat" of average lead (aka readiness to purchase), coupon redemption rate, etc.
- Branding/education: Percent of total visitors who stay longer than 30 seconds, percent over one minute. Average visit time, page views and clickpaths of visitors who stay over one minute. Percent of visitors who return within seven days. Percent of visitors who interact (play game, enter sweeps, post to message board, answer survey, take poll) vs. viewers. Results of brand awareness and purchase intent study, etc.
- Relationship: Opt-ins (or RSS-feed recipients) as a percent of total incoming visitors. Percent of return vs. one-time visitors. Average dollar value of ultimate sales made to consumers in a relationship with you vs. those who are not. Length of lifetime of relationship, etc.

- Membership: Length of active member account lifetime (churn rate), new members as a percent of total visitors, returning former members as a percent of total visitors. If offering a free trial, the percent of paid conversion and lifetime value of the trial based on landing page and traffic source, etc.
- Viral outreach: Emails per visitor generated by the email tool (ecards or tell-a-friend tools), percent of the outgoing emails resulting in friends visiting, viral growth curve (visitors per week charted over time), number of link backs from Blogs, message boards and other viral mentions. Estimated value of the viral reach itself: How does this outreach result in aiding the bottom line in the end, and how does it compare to other traffic sources in value per visitor?

Prospect Research Details

All marketing starts and finishes with the potential customer. If you're starting from scratch with a brand you haven't worked with extensively in the recent past, or if your landing page conversions are dreadful now, then you need to go through two exercises immediately:

1. Prospect Type Comparison & Conversion Chart

First, define the different types of prospects and/or customers who might arrive at a landing page, how they got there, what's the biggest "hump" your conversion marketing has to confront, and what the actual conversion activity has to be.

A prospect's past and current relationship with your brand is the MOST indicative factor you have to forecast future behavior. Regarding your brand, a 34-year-old, middle-class woman with two children in Ohio has far less in common with her best girlfriend down the street than she does with a 61-year-old confirmed bachelor in Miami ... if they have the same knowledge and buying pattern regarding your brand.

For example, high consideration brands should not expect immediate sales to new visitors on the first clickthrough. The goal of that landing page, therefore, might be to gather opt-ins or registrants who you can work to convert further in the relationship. Below you'll see an extremely *simplified* version of a full chart. You may want to turn yours into a full conversion path analysis per prospect-type demographic.

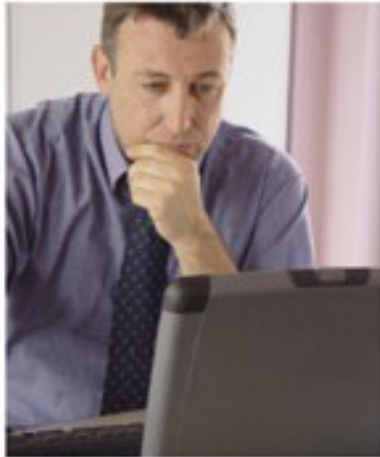
It's well worth the work. First, everyone in management can agree this is the path and goal for the landing pages as they are developed for each media and audience type. You can also see how much money each prospect type may be worth in ROI. For example, a raw newbie who never heard of your brand is the lowest value type on this list. The second lowest type may be a past purchaser from a year or more back who never responded to another effort, etc.

Chart 2.1: Sample Conversion Path by Prospect Type

Type of Person	Arrives via	Biggest conversion hump	Conversion path
Never heard of us	- SEO deeplink - 3rd party media ad	- Trust - Understand brand - USP	1. Opt-in 2. First purchase in 7 visits
Heard of but never visited before	- Homepage seeking solution to problem - Deeplink via SEO - PPC landing page	- Immediately fulfill brand expectations or better - Understand USP fully	1. Opt-in 2. First purchase in 3 visits
New opt-in/registrant	- Thank you page - Welcome email	- Relevancy - Response speed	1. Purchase in 15 days or answer survey 2. 2nd purchase in 30 days
First time buyer	- Emailed hotlink to article or sometimes product/offer page.	- Understand breadth of offerings - Impress w/ service	1. 2nd purchase in 30 days of first 2. Tell friends
Multiple purchases:	-Homepage -House email clicks	-Ego: want their loyalty -Recognized and rewarded	1. Cross-sell/Up-sell 2. Tell friends 3. Re-find after email/ 4. Home address changes
Past one-time buyer	-Emails, mail & phone	-Brand boredom -Prove it to me harder this time -Price	1. Answer survey or download coupon 2. New purchase in 2 visits 3. Tell friends
 MarketingSherpa © 2007			

2. Persona/Profile development

Example Persona: Enterprise CIO



Meet Dale Rogers, CIO

New Jersey-based pharmaceutical company has 180 facilities in more than 20 countries with about 81,000 employees worldwide. Company coming off record earnings year of \$23.3B and profits of \$98.7M

Age: 52

Marital Status: Married 18 years, 1 son

Educational background: BA in Computer engineering, Purdue University; Master's in Business Administration, Rutgers University

Home: Short Hills, NJ

Annual salary: \$124K

About the man: Self-proclaimed workaholic, techie and computer 'geek,' yet his son's video games baffle him. He is quick to add that his house is outfitted with TiVo though (which he can work). Not big on exercise and is dependent on coffee — too many long nights/early mornings as the nature of the business mandates.

Years in the industry: 25

Publications read: Business Week, CIO, Computer World, Forbes, Info Week, Oracle Magazine, PC World

Online newsletters: E-Commerce Times, any and all of the TechWeb pipelines, blogs/message boards stumbled across when performing a Google search to research new products, solutions

Industry/Professional organizations: The Research Board, Conference Board's Council of Information Management Executives

Reports to: CEO

On the current state of IT: It's a pressure cooker — the role of IT is far more strategic than five years ago. It's not just about controlling costs (although that's still a big part of the game) but focusing on the big picture — growing the business, particularly its bottom line — which means it's not just about programming any more — in fact much of that is being outsourced these days, particularly application development and maintenance and Web/application hosting services. However, on that front 10 years from now I don't think anyone will even know what an application is, with the shift to info-centric technologies and software. We are currently streamlining operations, which include all facets from the management of clinical projects to manufacturing to HR and accounting on the business side. It's a huge undertaking; a revamp of the entire company's infrastructure. Remember in an industry like ours a delay in bringing a product (drug) to market can mean \$5 million in lost revenue.

 MarketingSherpa © 2007

Next you'll want to slice your prospect file by niche demographic. This is where the similarities between the Ohio mom and the Miami playboy may fall apart completely.

They may react better to different offers for the same product. For example, the mom may love everything you offer – as long as it's on sale today. The playboy may adore your offerings, too, but only if they are new today.

Plus, the mom and playboy may use very different verbiage (taxonomy) to describe the same exact product. Is it a “trench coat” or a “man's formal raincoat” or a “British overcoat for misty weather”?

They may also prefer a different level of detail. The playboy wants to see if it's in his size and can you FedEx for early morning delivery? The mom wants to know what fabric it's made of and is that fabric dry-clean only? Is the sizing loose enough to fit a full suit or sweater underneath or does she have to buy the next size up? Is there a zip-in, zip-out lining? Can you choose different lining color? Will you gift wrap if she decides to send to her father for the holidays?

The copywriting and media buying team alike will find these personas invaluable as they continue through the landing page process.

Example: Leo Schachter's Web site was geared to support brand sales by educating visitors about why a Leo Schachter diamond is different and to drive those visitors to retail locations. When Marketing Director John Marchese reviewed relevant conversion data, the news wasn't good. Less than 1% of site visitors clicked on the link to “find a retailer.”

Marchese's first step was persona creation. To allow the redesign team to truly see through the eyes of a visitor, these personas were defined not as a group — as you would define a market segment — but as an actual individual – a “character” with a name and personality attributes. The team took three things into account for each persona:

- Demographics: What are the person's attributes?
- Psychographics: What does the person do psychologically as part of their buying-decision process?
- Topographics: How do the demographics and psychographics mesh with similar selling processes within the company's own industry?

To answer these questions, the team conducted traditional market research as well as talked to customer service, retail sales reps and “anyone within the company who has a lot of client interaction, a good sense of who the client is.”

A professional copywriter then crafted a profile for each persona to bring them to life. The profile included a first and last name, jobs, worries, family, needs and desires. Each description is three or more paragraphs long, including faux quotes from the individual written in his or her own “voice.” The profiles were not intended for public consumption; rather, they were the basis around which the redesign would be created. They included:

- David Commonsense, who needs to learn everything about a diamond before making a purchase. He is methodical and logical in all decisions.
- Natalie Golddigger, who is very fashionable, goes to the finest restaurants, and expects the best things in life. She wants to know: “How do I keep up with the Joneses?”
- Kimberly, who is a hopeless romantic dreaming about her future engagement ring.

When the team redesigned the site, creating specific areas designed to appeal to each one of the personas separately, conversions increased to a total 51.4%. That means one out of every two people who visited wound up clicking to find a retail location – nearly unbelievable success!

Next Step: Landing Page Layout and Graphic Design Guidelines

Important: When you start designing a completely new landing page, you need to start with a completely bland screen.

Unfortunately, more than 70% of marketers don’t do this. Instead, they start with the blank middle column of their company’s normal Web site page template. Their blank space – and the incoming visitors’ attention – is cluttered by distracting vertical navigation bars, header tabs, hotlink-heavy footers and, sometimes, hotlinked advertisements for other products.

There are certainly instances in which many of these extraneous elements can improve your conversions rather than hinder them. Except for deeplinked SEO pages and house email campaigns, however, it’s rare. You want to start with best practices first and then test the outside-the-box stuff that could improve response rates.

We understand why cluttered landing pages happen – you may be dependent on an IT or Web department for landing page creation, and they don’t have the tools or the time to give you the blank screen you need to start work with. Do your best and dream of a brighter future. And make sure marketing has a seat at the committee table when the IT department is discussing Web tools and content management systems.

You'll find more details on this no-navigation-bar best practice further in this chapter. In the meantime, let's continue with design basics.

The Internet is a visual medium, and design is often all readers have to go on. In the case of landing pages, the importance of design is paramount, since visitors may have come via routes that bypass the homepage. The landing page may be the only touch they've had with your company. More than any other factor, design can influence their immediate, visceral impression.

You can fit an almost infinite amount and type of content into your landing page through links, long copy, streamed video, etc. For best results, though, you must obey two rules:

Rule #1. Relevancy

All content should be absolutely relevant and focused to converting that visitor.

Rule #2. Clarity

Content must be organized so visitors can figure out easily what to look at, in what order, and how to take the conversion step when they are ready.

Screen Resolution Stats & Examples

Before you design your landing page, you need to understand the basic space restrictions – and they are considerable.

Rule of thumb:

Make sure the critical elements in your creative are visible to almost all visitors without scrolling. In short, keep them inside the upper 300 pixels of the page.

Why? It's the only way you'll be sure that 98% of most visitors can see (and act on) critical elements, even if they are using browser bars and navigation aids that block part of the screen at lower resolutions. Remember that the first screenful of visible content is what visitors see to make their first bail-or-not decision in a few seconds. Your screen must convince them not to bail.

Figure 2.2: What 300 Pixels Look Like at Varying Resolutions



Your Web designer may not worry about scrolling and screen resolutions. In our experience, most designers have giant monitors set up with the highest resolution they can have. It's up to you, the marketer, to raise your hand and say, "Hey, not everyone views our landing page that way!"

As you can see from these stats (based on about a half-million sites' visitors) the majority of surfers officially do use high resolution.

Chart 2.3: Screen Resolution Stats, August 2007

1024x768	31152967	(50%)
1280x1024	16360364	(26%)
800x600	6547473	(10%)
Unknown	4903574	(7%)
1152x864	2107970	(3%)
1600x1200	457273	(0%)
640x480	97396	(0%)

Source: TheCounter

Why do we emphasize the word “officially”? Just because a visitor’s screen is set at a particular resolution doesn’t mean he or she is using their entire screen to view your landing page!

Think about it. How often have you opened only a partial window to see a new Web page? Do you open all the way every time, or do you sometimes just look at a smaller window because you have other things on your desktop at the same time?

Demographics who generally have lower resolution – typically 800x600 – include people under 7 or over 45 (age affects eyesight.)

Chart 2.4: Browser User Stats, August 2007

1. MSIE 6.x	33163701	(51%)
2. MSIE 7.x	12800545	(20%)
3. FireFox	8398844	(13%)
4. Netscape comp.	6598103	(10%)
5. Safari	1964063	(3%)
6. Unknown	767166	(1%)
7. Opera x.x	413243	(1%)
8. MSIE 5.x	409594	(1%)

Source: TheCounter

Here we've mocked up some examples of what a typical etail landing page would look like in various screen resolutions and browsers:

Figure 2.5: Impact of Screen Resolution by Major Browsers – 800 x 600



Firefox for Windows 2000 at 800 x 600



Netscape 7.0 for Windows 2000 at 800 x 600



Internet Explorer 6.0 for XP at 800 x 600

Figure 2.6: Impact of Screen Resolution by Major Browsers – 1024 x 768



Firefox for Windows 2000 at 1024 x 768



Netscape 7.1 for Windows XP at 1024 x 768

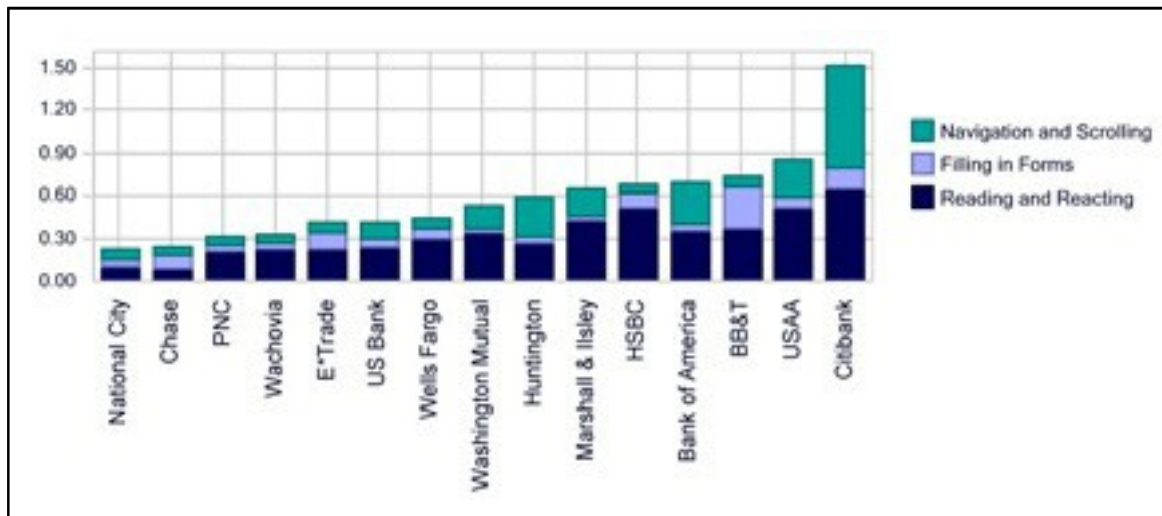


Internet Explorer 6.0 for XP at 1024 x 768

The Fold, Scrolling, and Paging

Rule of thumb: Put enough content above the fold (20-300 words, critical images, conversion click link) so visitors can make a bail/no-bail decision without scrolling or visiting more pages.

Chart 2.7: Online Bill Paying Services: Required Scrolling Compared



Source: Change Sciences

As you can see from the above chart, your page's scrolling requirements can be a significant competitive advantage ... or not.

Warning: Don't make text-copy columns too wide or typeface too small to keep content above the fold. The human eye is happiest reading text in a 10-12 or larger point typeface that's no more than 50-60 characters across (including spaces.) With few exceptions, if your copy is a smaller typeface and/or in wider columns, it won't be read no matter where the fold is.

Yes, it's possible to measure the percent of your landing page visitors who scroll down to view content below the fold. We've heard anecdotal data on such tests from several marketers, including Kelley Blue Book and 11thHourVacations.com. In all cases, the percent of scrollers was lower than you might hope – usually under 50% – even for pages with content that you'd think was fascinating.

We're not advocating, however, that you always keep all content above the fold.

Many of your best prospects (especially if they are women ages 34-45) will scroll their hearts out, carefully reviewing every bit of information on your landing page before they make a conversion decision. They're also most likely to click to additional pages (or on interactive tools) for more information and then to convert.

But your landing page still has to have enough compelling content above the fold to convince them to begin scrolling and/or clicking around. They are making a “bail or read-on” decision based on what’s above the fold – so it better be good.

Plus, your above-the-fold content must also contain enough convincing data to win over short-attention span visitors who want to make an immediate snap conversion decision. Often men and heavy Google users, these folks may never scroll or click to read more. They’ll make their yes/no decision entirely based on what they can see right away, and then convert or move on.

For these fast-moving folks, you must make sure your conversion activities (add- to-cart button, registration forms, etc.) are above the fold.

You can put conversion activities at the bottom of the page to catch scrollers as well... in fact, often the more places the better. Here’s a sample of a long-copy landing page with a conversion offer placed roughly every fold or so. As readers move through the copy, there’s always an offer nearby to catch them when they are ready to convert. (Note: this page has consistently converted 60-67% of visitors to email opt-ins for more than two years now, proving long copy can work well with ample fold consideration.)

Eyetracking tests are very helpful to understand how far typical visitors will look down your page. One of our biggest lessons from eyetracking was that if a highly compelling (i.e.. very relevant) image is broken by the fold, people will often scroll down to see it in its entirety. We’re not saying you should put your hero shot at the bottom of the page, but you might consider a secondary image down there. Perhaps a detail shot or a graphic of a chart?

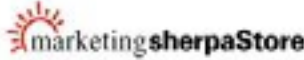
Number of Columns

Rule of thumb: Fewer columns generally outperform more, with one single column often being by far the highest performing design. Some campaigns work best as two-column format, with the right column being reserved for response boxes or buttons. Almost no campaigns work as well when extra columns for extraneous navigation or advertising clutter the page.

MarketingSherpa has conducted two sets of tests specifically around column design.

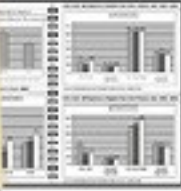
In 2005, after the publication of the first edition of this Landing Page Handbook, our own marketing team altered the format of our bookstore landing pages to eliminate columns and clarify eye flow. Nothing else was changed. At the time our Web designer remarked: ‘You made the page more boring.’ Conversions, paid sales, immediately increased more than 40%.

Sample 2.8: MarketingSherpa Store Landing Page Before



Click for help, or call (877) 895-1717

Your cart > 

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Discover real-life results stats from email newsletters, sales alerts and blasts; plus, usability, design, measurement, and delivery tips. Also includes:

- Trends in opt-in rates
- Spam filtering, bounce rates and deliverability data
- List rental and email newsletter ad campaign stats
- Which email creative tests give worthwhile results

New this year: for the first time ever we've included conversion rate data. Yes, it's broken out by:

- B-to-B vs. B-to-C conversions
- Conversions by type of list (house vs. newsletter vs. rented)
- How conversions vary by goal (free offer vs direct sale).

In total, 167 charts and tables are included. [Click here for a complete list.](#)

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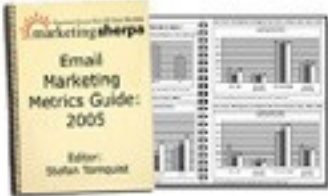
100% [100% Money-Back Guarantee & Shipping Info](#)

Sample 2.9: MarketingSherpa Store Landing Page After



100% Satisfaction Guaranteed!
Questions? Call (877) 895-1717

At last! Real-life numbers to base your email marketing plans on (and compare your results to)...



Email Marketing Metrics Guide 2005: Real-Life Open, Click & Conversion Data

- 167 Charts and Tables
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Find out what 2,293 surveyed marketers revealed about their open rates, clicks, conversions, and 2005 email marketing plans

The *Email Marketing Metrics Guide* features exclusive results data from 2,293 professional marketers surveyed by MarketingSherpa in October 2004. Respondents revealed:

- Real-life email marketing opens, clicks, conversions
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- How their expenditures are changing for 2005
- How they grow their house list

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Save \$107.00 -- get PDF + Print \$197

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In 2007, MarketingSherpa's research team conducted (unauthorized) homepage redesign tests on three major B-to-B technology company sites, including Oracle, IBM and Sun Microsystems. The design which received the best marks via eyetracking-measured reading patterns and comprehension, as well as study participants own comments was the design with fewer columns.

Sample 2.10: Sun Microsystems' Original Homepage



Sample 2.11: Sun Microsystems' Homepage With Fewer Columns



Why do so many marketers use multiple columns?

We've noticed that many marketers are testing two-column or even three-column formats for landing pages these days to work around the fold. That way you can have copy and key images (generally on the left) and conversion activities (generally on the right) both above the fold.

The problem is, more columns equals more confusion. The eye may not be sure where to look. One column is much clearer.

What if you have a list of information to present? This might be offer options, top three benefits, top three features, a category merchandise page with a range of products, etc. Should you present this list of main points vertically in traditional list format, or should you take advantage of the wider horizontal screen and show the list as three columns so people can read "across" to decide?

Designers tend to choose the horizontal option. We believe that's because they are thinking about the fold and space. When tested head to head, in most cases we've researched, the single column vertical list worked better. That's probably why Google's main (organic) search results and Amazon.com's product search results are always in a single-column list. Human eyes are trained to comprehend a list of things in vertical list format.

Consider: have you ever written a grocery list in a horizontal line? Certainly not.

Sample 2.12: CareerBuilder Horizontal-Style Response Options (Test Loser)



Sample 2.13: CareerBuilder Vertical List-Style Response Options (Test Winner)



Number of columns is where landing pages depart from classic Web site design. Your Web site will almost certainly have at least two columns – one for the left vertical navigation bar and one for the central content. Site homepage and major section pages often will have even more columns and entry areas so visitors can choose between a range of navigation options.

Navigation Bars = Mostly Verboten!

Note: of all the rules of thumb and best practices presented in this Report, we suspect the hardest one for marketers to follow will be removing standard site navigation from your landing pages.

Why is this so hard? Two reasons:

Reason #1. Your Web design department automatically sticks navigation on all pages. Your navigation is probably a standard part of their templates or built into the content management system that powers your site. It's more work to take it off than to leave it. However, you'll be needing more landing pages over time. Successful campaigns breed more campaigns. So now's the time to ask them to create a new template for landing page-design projects that don't include navigation bars. You might also ask for it to be super-easy to replicate with alternate vanity URLs and varying headline wording. This

will make your life much easier over the long run as well.

If the Web design department simply can't handle this in-house, then you should consider having landing pages outsourced. Cheap Web developers are plentiful. For roughly \$50 an hour, you should be able to get a freelancer to whip up basic landing pages for you. Or you can use online build-it-yourself landing page ASPs for \$20 a month.

Reason #2. You are hesitant to remove navigation because you secretly hope visitors will want to comb the rest of your site for information and fall in love with your company, perhaps buying more in the long run.

Yank this dream out by the roots. People who do click on other links often don't end up converting at all, because they lose interest or time. By diffusing your message and your conversion path, you lose them altogether.

Remember: You'll have lots of other chances to tell your new customers all about the glories of your organization and other offerings. For example, you can add more info links onto the "thank you" they see after they convert from the landing page. And you can email conversions who opt-in more info.

Consider: Would you stick your annual report into a direct-mail package for the offer you're making on your landing page? Almost certainly not. Adding navigation to the rest of your site is very similar.

Consider: Would you tell an attractive stranger your entire life history when you're trying to get them to agree to a first date? Of course not. So get rid of that navigation bar.

Obvious exceptions to the rule – If you are using a microsite as a landing page, you may want to include some navigation as part of the design. Supposedly, visitors will need to poke around the site as a part of the conversion process.

Also, if you are an eretailer emailing a promotion to active customers with a side-wide discount offering, then you'll need navigation. Or if you are conducting paid search marketing campaigns using your main name or URL as the keyword, then folks will expect to go to a homepage featuring standard navigation.

If you are promoting a particular site department or group of offerings (get 50% all our hosiery today!), you certainly should strip non-related navigational links from the landing page. This is particularly important for clicks from shopping search engines where prospects are fairly far down the sales path by the time they get to your site, and they have links to competitor's sites right there on hand.

Don't distract them with extraneous "and we also sell this" links. Make the sale and then you can tell them about the rest of your offerings in your follow-up.

With landing pages, however, the point is **not** to give visitors much room to wander about on paths of their own devising. Instead, you are trying to convince them to take a specific conversion action. The more columns, the more choices for the eye and mouse to wander, the less likely a conversion may be.

Single-page landing pages (often requiring scrolling) vs. landing pages with links to multiple pages:

Without making copy and graphics impossibly tiny, most marketers can't get all the content they need for top conversions into the small amount of screen space above the fold. And the minute your typeface goes below 10 points (for some demographics that's 12 or 14 points) your conversions will drop because people can't read the page easily.

You're left with the decision of either scrolling down or linking to more pages. Should you put more content below the fold and hope visitors scroll, or should you put some links above the fold and hope they click?

A 2001 Wichita State University usability study showed that people have an easier time scrolling than going to another page. Participants took longer to read passages that were split among multiple pages.

We've seen evidence, however, that different demographics react to scrolling differently. For example, many men may shy away from a long landing page because it "looks like work to read." A cleaner page with a few links to more info may be preferable. At first glance, your landing page feels like a time-suck, so they'll bail quickly.

On the other hand, women shoppers are infamous for believing the more information the better. A long scrolling page may impress them at first glance, proving the page is worth their while because there's ample information for a buying decision.

This is why you may want to test the scrolling vs. linked-pages design issue by putting up one of each page and watching not only the final conversion rate of each, but the type of customer that converts.

3 design tips for one-page landing pages:

1. Repeat the action step you want people to take – the link, form fields, etc. – above and below the fold. If someone is scanning and doesn't go below the fold they should see the action step, and they should see it again if they scroll down to read further.
2. Avoid graphical or navigation elements that may imply the reader has reached the bottom of the page before they have. Horizontal lines, large swathes of white space and rows of hyperlinks tell the eye "you've reached the bottom of the page" even if it's not.

3. Make your graphic elements and copy typeface a bit larger than you might normally do. You're telling the eye that "this is easy despite the length," thus dispelling the impression of hard work tied to a long page.

Example: Among other variations, consumer lead generation marketer PhoneHog tested landing pages requiring links for more information vs. a page that contained everything in one place. The all-in-one was by far the winner for conversions with a 55% higher conversion rate than some of the non-winning pages.

Design tips for landing pages with links to other pages:

1. Ruthlessly eliminate any click links that are irrelevant pages or advertisers, and minimize the typeface of those to privacy and legal information.
2. Make sure links change color after they are clicked by each visitor.
3. Make the area around each link clickable (even if the link itself only has a word or two underlined, or a small click button) so the visitor doesn't have to hit the spot right on with their mouse for it to work.
4. Carefully copywrite your links so someone reading the first three words or so will understand what they'll get from the click. People skimming a list of links rarely read more than a few words per line. Unclear, boring, or duplicative-sounding links won't get clicks.
5. Make your hero shot clickable, with a separate window of information opening so the visitor is not taken away from the main landing page. A surprising number of folks will click on your hero shot. (More on hero shots below.)
6. Don't make visitors click to a conversion form if possible. Clicks should be for more information, not for additional conversion steps. Include your form or the first step of the form on this page. Make this conversion step obviously bigger and graphically different from all other click links on the page.
7. If your page has to appeal to multiple audiences and there's no way you can do a separate landing page for each, then the page should focus on the primary audience. Create a big fat link for the secondary audience to click on to go to a page specifically designed for them. Example: a page with info for kids with a fat link saying "Parents, click here."

8. If linked information is critical to conversion, then consider including several different links to it on the same page in different formats. Some people will click on underlined text, others on graphics, and others on search boxes. You need to be sure all three surfing types are able to arrive at the same place for the next step in the conversion process. Don't worry about duplicative linking. It's reassuring rather than annoying.

Color

Most marketers love to discuss color and spend hours with designers making color decisions. Color debates can go on for weeks and get quite heated. Unfortunately, research shows much of that time and passion is wasted because color does not affect conversions very much.

Color choices appear to only affect conversion significantly in four ways:

#1. Reading comprehension

People's eyes read best when the copy is black against a white background. Period.

Headlines are usually in type so large they are readable in most colors, but if you plan to stray outside the conventional black, blue or red, consider testing it first. Other than that, hotlinked text should be blue until it's clicked and then turns to a purplish hue. Some designers like to get clever with that convention. Again, do what you want, but test it before you depend on it.

A few marketers decide to go with other choices for background and/or type color because they feel branding is more critical to conversion than people actually reading their copy. That's fine, as long as you made that

Flash Intros and Navigation, Oh, Please No!

Flash intros, the rich media stepchildren of HTML splash entry pages, were all the rage for about a year around the turn of the century. Then anyone with Web analytics reports unceremoniously dumped them. Yet, attracted like moths to the flame, a certain breed of Web designers continued to place Flash intros or use Flash for key navigational elements for years to come.

These designers usually worked for ad agencies. We suppose they were using Flash because (a) they were TV addicts who wished YouTube would hurry up and get invented already, and (b) they were showing off their 'Creativity' to potential clients. After all, how impressed will a big-name client be with a plain HTML page that features just concise, factual copy and a big response button?

Most Flash is probably out of place on a landing page. Visitors don't want to horse around mousing over clever graphics trying to figure out where to click or what this whole thing is about. They don't want to wait for your presentation to load or to get around to the tidbit of information they came to the page looking for. Yes, we have lots of data on this.

What can you do if your agency head is a flash addict? Our suggestion: copy a clever call to action we saw on one agency's otherwise too-clever-for-navigation homepage:

"If you're a type A person, click here before you waste anymore precious time."

The resulting page showed in a crispy bulleted list all the facts that a potential client (or in our case researcher) would want to know about the agency. We contacted the agency and asked them what percent of visitors clicked on this link. Turns out 15% of total homepage traffic did. We suspect if the agency had been able to suppress their own IP address and those of their current clients, so as to only measure clicks from visiting newbies and prospects, that percent would have been stratospherically higher.

decision consciously and wittingly. What's even better is if you have your own research data showing your audience prefers colors instead of black type against a white screen. (We can guarantee you if that audience is under 10 or over 45, they do not. No matter what they tell you.)

#2. Button graphics

Button tests do on occasion show significant variances when the button color is changed. However, these have to be pretty basic colors - red, grey and green mostly. (BTW: seven out of 10 times the red will win.) Frankly, after you get the basic color of the button down, tweaking the color slightly won't do diddly for you. You need to test wording, size, shape and positioning instead.

#3. Branding

If your brand has colors already associated with it in the marketplace, you'll want to include those on the landing page so visitors know they are in the right place. You don't need to put them everywhere, however, because that might be distracting. Your logo in the upper left corner of the screen is plenty to establish that this is the right place.

If you are trying to establish the site brand with color, great idea. You don't need us to tell you that businessmen prefer the color blue or that little girls almost everywhere love pink. There's just one trap to avoid if you are a new brand: New brands often use fashionable, trendy colors on their landing pages and sites to convey the brand impression of hip, newness.

The problem is every single new brand tends to use the same exact limited palette of trendy colors. For awhile, we saw hundreds of landing pages with a particular lime green. Then it switched to orange, orange, orange everywhere. Instead of standing out, you become a me-too brand. Plus, trendy colors change. After a year or two, instead of looking trendy, you look dated.

Yes, then you could change your colors to the next big thing in hues. However, doesn't that lose the point of branding? A strong brand takes year after year of sustained messaging to sink in. If you hope your landing page is the first step in a long-term relationship with prospects, pick a color you're convinced will fit your brand for the long term.

#4. Eye corraling

Colors affect the eye. If the eye sees a block of color in a shape and position that on other sites is traditionally used by banner ads (such as much of the right side), that eye skitters away.

If the eye sees a patch of color in another shape or elsewhere on the page, it may be magnetically attracted to it. That may be a problem (or not) because the eye is looking at your color instead of your copy.

If you plan to use color to corral the eye, we strongly suggest you invest in eyetracking tests prior to launch. The cost is minimal and the lessons can be very educational for your designer.

White Space

Rule of thumb: Handle carefully. White space can sometimes depress results, especially it's near the fold. Don't use it because your graphic designer likes it or because it's so very Web 2.0. Use it because it enhances eye flow.

Print ads get better results with wide open areas of white space. Studies of Web design, however, have indicated a potential negative association between empty space and conversion.

The question isn't whether the space is empty, but whether it has meaning. When it's not clear why space is empty, the visitor's mind is distracted. They have come to your page for content, for information, for an offer, not for a vista.

On a Web page, something as simple as an open space – a space that doesn't match the others on the page – can confuse people. They don't know whether it's a design choice, a broken image or a graphic or applet that is still loading.

To gauge how much white space is just enough, get a sense of how people's eyes are flowing when they look at your landing page. Test it with a few users and see what parts of the screen their eyes go to first. The copy should flow in such a way that it moves people's eyes into the places you want them to see, and white space can help create the path to get them there.

Interestingly, anecdotal evidence shows that one particular demographic loves white space on landing pages because they feel it lends clarity. That demographic is heavy Google users. You may want to test a cleaner version of your landing page for Google ads.

Experts also caution that too much clutter can confuse a person. Mark Wachen of Optimost recalls that when a client who liked to pack the landing page removed the search button that was right next to the sign-up button, conversions improved 93%. In our own eyetracking studies, better use of white space between two paragraphs helps the flow for users.

International Design & Graphics

International marketing note: The use of images, especially people, as well as the entire “page clutter” concern, is vastly different between the US and Asia. We have uncovered a great deal of anecdotal evidence that in the Far East, in particular, pages Western Web designers would consider insanely cluttered nearly always win test results.

Don’t assume your American version of “good taste” is good taste worldwide. This also points to a greater depth in Web site globalization. Translating your landing page for other cultures may require far more than translating the words on the page and swapping out racial characteristics on a few model shots.

Typeface Fonts, Point Size and Text Layout

Rules of thumb: Make your textual copy as easy to read as possible. Many visitors will bail on a landing page without reading a single word just because it looks “like work” to read.

Top 5 Rules to Follow for Easy-to-Read Type:

1. Use 10 point or larger font. If you are targeting children under 12 or adults over 45, or you have very long copy, consider a larger size type. Also, if your brand is hoping to appear oh-so-very “Web 2.0,” use extra-large font even for body copy. (Learn about a great resource with more info on Web 2.0-style design in Chapter 5.)
2. Captions, names of form fields, “fine print” copyright and legal and possibly some chart content and tech specs can be smaller.
3. In general, 75% of the landing pages we see out there use font sizes that are too small for comfortable reading. If reading is hard, visitors show slower performance and a drop off in comprehension.
4. No matter what type size, text should never run more than 52-60 characters across the screen. If you make your typeface smaller, your columns must also be narrower. People’s eyes simply can’t read wide columns easily. (That’s why newspapers use narrow columns.)
5. This means you’ll need to tell your Web designer to keep the columns at a fixed width. They shouldn’t expand when someone views the page with a wider browser window.
6. Pick a font that you see used widely online by high-traffic sites. Just like colors online, not all typefaces appear the same (or even are available for display) on all computers. You’ll need to use Web-safe fonts. Our favorite practical resource for typeface choices in Web design is an article by Daniel Will-Harris

at eFuse.com. Go to:

http://www.efuse.com/Design/web_fonts_basics.html#WebSafeFonts

7. With the possible exception of a one-line headline, all your text should be flush left and **not** centered. Very little is harder to read than a series of lines that are centered, no matter how large the typeface.
8. Your headline should be significantly larger in type size and possibly bolder than the rest of the copy on the page. Subheads (if any) should be as close as possible in size to the regular body copy; otherwise, readers are likely to read just the subheads and not the text under them. Use bold for subheads – not larger type sizes.

Commonly Made Online Type Design Mistakes

Sample 2.14: Multi-line Headline With Each Line Centered

Hello, and welcome to my lovely headline, which might impress you tremendously except for the fact that it's centered, so no one can read it.

Sample 2.15: 9 Point or Smaller Verdana in Gray Type

Can you read this typeface? The average person over 40 won't have an easy time in the real world. Yet, it's still one of the most popular font/size combinations online.

Sample 2.16: Column Wider Than 65 Characters Across

The Moonlight sub-woofer has far better sound compared to forty-seven leading competitors, and has been cited in top reviews as "the best". Plus, when paired with a Starlight Tweeter, the sound comparison is profound. Turn your home into a stadium worthy of the Rolling Stones or London Philharmonic (if only you could fit them all in there) today with your purchase of the Moonlight sub-woofer and Starlight Tweeter combo!

Sample 2.17: Body Copy in White Knockout Copy on Black

Why do art directors love white type on a black background so much? Is it because they don't read words on the page so they don't expect anyone else to either? Unfortunately, conversions require more than hip-looking graphics. Ok, sometimes hip graphics work.

Sample 2.18: Bold for Verbal Emphasis (Not Readability)

The Moonlight sub-woofer has far better sound compared to forty-seven leading competitors. Plus, when paired with a Starlight Tweeter, the sound comparison is profound. Turn your home into a stadium worthy of the Rolling Stones or London Philharmonic today with your purchase of the Moonlight sub-woofer and Starlight Tweeter combo!.

Sample 2.19: Body Copy Paragraphs Longer Than 4 1/2 Lines.

White paper Summary: The Internet and email have stimulated huge productivity gains for employees. Workers quickly and easily access volumes of research on the Web and correspond with a mouse click. Use of instant messaging applications-like AOL Instant Messenger, Yahoo! Messenger, MSN Messenger and ICQ-and peer-to-peer applications has grown significantly. Although the benefits of real-time communication offer a productivity benefit to corporate environments, instant messaging and peer-to-peer applications add significant vulnerabilities and risks to an enterprise's security posture. Unfortunately, businesses taking advantage of these tools are increasingly faced with daily onslaughts of spam and unwanted Web traffic. A sharp rise in web threats is the latest twist in cybercriminals' continually evolving efforts to steal information for financial gain. We review the year so far and predict the threat landscape for the second half of 2007. This paper also demystifies the enterprise anti-spam market and its various choices and buzzwords to help you cut through the hype and focus on the basics.

Sample 2.20: Prose That Should Be a Bullet List

Serb Curtains are available in a wide range of styles including country-style with ruffles, fluorescent urban designs, floor-to-ceiling white lace, embroidered floral designs, children's room curtain designs, and winterized curtains with space blanket lining.

-OR-

Serb Curtain Styles:

- Ruffles
- fluorescent urban design
- floor-to-ceiling white lace
- embroidered floral designs
- children's room curtain designs
- winterized curtains with space blanket lining

5 Guidelines on Text for Children and Older Readers

1. For both groups, go with larger point sizes. 14 point seems to be the best compromise between readability and real estate.
2. Both groups also respond somewhat better to serif fonts in terms of comprehension. Older readers report liking sans serif fonts better. Worth testing if they're a key demographic.
3. Children respond well to 'fun' fonts. Note the rise in comprehension and preference for Comic. The higher the number, the better the font's performance with kids.
4. For pages that are oriented toward seniors, avoid using frilly or complex fonts, stick to 14 point size, and keep design distractions to a minimum. A Nielsen/Norman Group study found that the Web was twice as difficult for senior citizens to use.
5. Studies suggest that margins contribute to reading comprehension. For these audiences, use of margins and white space is recommended.

Table 2.21: Kids' Font Reading Comprehension Online

	Times	Courier	Arial	Comic
Easy to read	4.6	4.8	5.1	5.5
Attractiveness	4.5	4.5	4.9	5.1

Source: Wichita State University Usability Study, 2000

Guidelines on Emphasizing Text for Impact

- Don't underline text for emphasis. Underlining has come to communicate that the underlined text is a hyperlink. It's confusing or off-putting for readers to click on static text. For the same reason, stay away from blue text.
- Don't use italics if you can help it. These are very hard to read on a computer screen.
- Use colored, bolded, or "highlighted" text for selective informational highlights, not for verbal emphasis. Many copywriters make the mistake of bolding or coloring words they would put verbal emphasis on if they were reading the copy out loud.

Visitors **never** read every word on your screen, and certainly don't read every word in the order you wrote it. Their eyes are skipping about. Your bolded or colored words will catch their eyes so much that these words may be the first read on the page – or the only read words on the page.

Review the copy you've bolded or highlighted. If those are the only words on the page that someone reads, do they summarize the points you need to get across? Are they enough to cause a conversion or to at least sell the reader on going back and reading more of the regular-font copy?

- Make sure your hotlinks change color when they have been clicked.

How Many Elements Should Be on a Page?

Rule: As many as are absolutely necessary; no more. The difference between confusing a reader and enticing them is a combination of design and, above all, relevance.

A well-designed page can incorporate many different elements, both text and graphical. The landing page exists for a very specific task, however, and every element should focus the user on that task. Extraneous links, text or images only serve to distract the reader.

The key lesson of MarketingSherpa's eyetracking studies is that the placement of page elements can have a dramatic impact on how intensely people read a page and the pattern with which it's viewed. One misplaced photo can drag readers to a part of the page that isn't pertinent. In some cases, they'll never get back to the action you want them to take. Testing and practice are the only foolproof ways to designing the best page possible.

Our advice: Before copywriting or designing a page, first make a list of elements you need to get the conversion. If the element isn't critical to the conversion process, dump it.

Elements might include:

- Logo
- Hero shot, which might be clickable
- Conversion action link or button
- Headline
- Quick offer explanation
- Longer product/service explanation
- Links to more information
- Deadlines
- Forms and descriptive tags next to each field
- Tagline describing what your brand does or stands for
- Security and reassuring elements such as the Better Business Bureau icon
- Testimonials, which might be textual or include photos or audio/video

- Technical specifications
- Guarantees
- Rich media elements (streamed video/audio, Flash)
- Fine print at bottom (copyright, legal)

Move each element around your page, seeing how each affects the others and how the eye might travel between them. In practice, it's a bit like deciding how to arrange furniture in a new room that lots of people with poor eyesight will be racing in and out of.

Small, often unpredictable changes in the way you arrange things can make a huge difference in results.

Rule of thumb: Make sure your graphics, including color choices and hero shot, match any creative leading to them as much as possible. A banner ad would click to a landing page with the same colors and images. Any visual disconnect at this stage can cause a surge in bail-out visitors.

Graphics are extremely powerful in leading the eye through your landing page. They are not there to pretty-up text, but to push actions and indicate pathways.

Tip: Make your dominant images, especially your hero shot, clickable because people tend to click on them. You might want to show a larger and/or alternate version of the image, or more information about the offer in question.

Tip: Graphics used for emphasis, such as color wash (aka screen) behind text and an arrow pointing to a hot topic, usually work as intended. Make sure that the emphasis is not misplaced. Save them for the really important points and *not a sidebar of tangential information*.

Graphics will attract the eye and place emphasis on text within the graphic.

Make sure that the emphasis is necessary and reserved for your main points and the action you want viewers to take.

Hero Shots

A 'hero shot' is a picture or graphic representation of the item being marketed, whether it's a tangible product, the cover of a report, or the photo of an Webinar presenter.

Can you get by without a hero shot? Probably not. In most cases, the page will work better with a grounding image. Yes, even if your widget isn't terribly photogenic, consider adding a photo of it as an element to base the copy around. It may not be pretty, but it's your hero, and it's what the visitors are looking for.

The only marketers who should be testing non-hero shot pages are those selling services. In this case, your logo may have to do the job alone. Or you can try a photo of your building (look, we're real), and/or the team together outside it. Charts, client logos, and award icons can also help. Again, avoid clip art. Using something that any Web visitor can spot as fake isn't the best way to go about selling an intangible service.

Example: Although this landing page offer is for something fairly intangible – your results from taking a professional knowledge quiz – the marketer cleverly created a graphic image for the hero shot that looks valuable enough to be worth filling out the registration form in order to continue with the quiz:

Sample 2.22: The Sales Board Skills Assessment Test

THE SALES BOARD
1-800-232-3485

Sales Training & Sales Skills Certification
Send Page to Colleague Bookmark Us! (Ctrl+D)
See Testimonials & Sales Knowledge Database

Action Selling
Log On Learning Link Log On Free Assessment

1 The Power of Certification • 2 Assess Your Skills • 3 Build a Sales Certification Plan

II. Sales Skill Assessment

Assess selling skills, sales presentation skills, relationship skills and sales strategy.

The Action Selling Sales Skills Assessment is our premier sales tool used for assessing and measuring present knowledge/ability to use the **5 Critical Selling Skills**. This tool will help the student:

- Document present sales skill level
- Discover selling skills that need improvement
- Analyze & compare results with over 300,000 salespeople
- Track growth and development
- Estimate training ROI

To begin, complete the form below and then click **"Take the Sales Skill Assessment"**.

After completing the skills assessment, you may return or log back on to your Free Assessment Student Home Page where you will find your assessment results, training recommendations, ROI reports, comparison charts and a link to "Ask The eCoach" where you may submit sales related questions.
(Note: Fields marked in red not required. Please check spelling.)

Full Company Name
First Name
Last Name
Work Telephone (ex. 7635551212)
Extension
Zip
Country
Work Email Address
Company Role
Salespeople in my Company:
How did you learn about Action Selling?

☒ I want to receive eCoach semi-monthly sales skills newsletter.
View Most Current Issue of our [Sales Skills Newsletter](#)

Please introduce the following person to Action Selling:

Assess Your Sales Skills!

Your Skills Assessment Results

Another example: The marketers at Sales Lead Dogs A/B tested their lead generation landing page with and without the hero shot thumbnail of their PDF offer. Turns out the hero shot was critical in helping the page convert as many leads as possible.

Sample 2.23: Sales Lead Dogs Landing Page

Note: Logos don't tend to substitute for distinct images. People cannot automatically see the benefits of your product by looking at your logo, unless it's highly identifiable with a single product. A logo is **not** a hero shot.

Sample 2.24: Landing Page With Hero Shot

Hero Shot Placement:

In every single design tested in MarketingSherpa's Landing Page Eyetracking Study, the hero shot had at least as much interest as any page element; in most cases, it had the most amount of interest. No matter where the image was (except below the fold) it drew visitors' attention like a magnet.



The photo of the TV is the 'hero shot' of the page.

Tips for creating hero shots:

1. Limit your hero shot to the main product or element of the page. Multiple heroes tend to depress results because visitors want to focus on a single item.
2. Pick a relevant image. Don't stick in clip art, stock photos, enlarged logos, or random graphics just for the sake of having something graphical on the page.

In MarketingSherpa's eyetracking studies, we've seen marked difference in how people viewed images that were powerful and relevant compared to ones that simply caught the eye. Real people always out-perform models from stock footage, even if the photo isn't as "nice."

Sample 2.25: Real People Outperform Stock Footage for Hero Shots



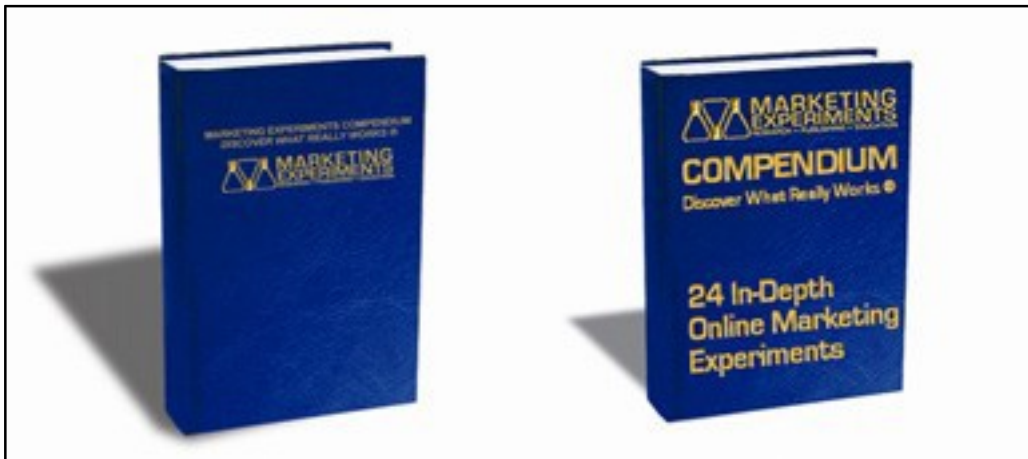
3. Place the hero shot to the left of text if possible. It's very hard for the human eye to read left-side text with a hero shot to the right of it. (Note: That's why you'll notice most cataloguers put big images on the left-hand page, with sales copy and smaller images on the right page.)

4. Don't put copy over or across the hero shot unless the shot is of a book or white paper cover on which you'd expect to see a title. Generally, copy and images don't do well together; the eye has a hard time looking at them mixed together.

5. If your hero shot is a book or report (or white paper) cover, then consider having a special extra-readable thumbnail made with larger than normal cover copy. (We strongly urge everyone offering a white paper to do this.) The problem is, once you shrink down a cover to fit on your landing page, often the title will be fairly hard to read. You need a thumbnail-special version with a huge title.

Here's an example we mocked up for you to see the difference. At left is a typical book cover squished into a thumbnail. At right is the same cover with revised type specifically for thumbnail purposes:

Sample 2.26: MarketingExperiments Test Covers



6. Use captions. Extensive study data in the print world shows the most-read content on space ads is headlines and hero-shot captions. People are more likely to read a picture caption than the bigger-text copy on the page.

If you're not captioning your key graphics, you're wasting a big opportunity. For example, you could reiterate your key sales point. If your hero shot is a head shot of a seminar speaker or author, caption with their name and why they're pictured.

7. Make your hero shot clickable – because people sure will click on it. You don't want to send them entirely off the landing page. Just have a pop box appear with additional content such as a larger version of the image and quick reiteration of your offer.

Example: Stephen Henson, VP Marketing at Kelley Blue Book, told MarketingSherpa he was very surprised when a click analysis of the site revealed about 50% of visitors were clicking on small images of cars to view a pop-up of a larger image. The Kelley Blue Book team immediately began brainstorming ways to “monetize” that larger image pop page.

Note: Want to know where else people are frequently clicking on your landing page that’s not clickable? Most analytics packages won’t tell you that. See Chapter five for a resource.

Using photos of people

Tip: Bad photos of real people work better than clip art every time, especially for testimonials. A slightly imperfect photo feels much more real and believable than a glossy studio shot. Palo Alto Software, among many other marketers we’ve talked with, tested this idea and found slightly imperfect photos of customers giving testimonials worked far better than perfect shots taken by pros.

Here’s a happy customer photo from Palo Alto’s site promoting BusinessPlanPro. It may not be professional photography, but you sure feel like he’s a real guy you can trust.

Sample 2.27: Happy Customer Photo for Palo Alto Software



Key: Avoid photos showing someone's entire body unless you've got a darn good reason – such as promoting apparel. Visitors' eyes will skim downwards, automatically following the line of the body to the feet and whatever's below, rather than reading your important marketing copy elsewhere on the page.

Does sex sell?

Striking data from MarketingSherpa's B-to-B Homepage Study shows that, yes, even serious business executives will look at a photo of an attractive woman on a landing page. They often spend more time looking at the woman than any other element on the page. But, we wondered, did this attention actually help move the conversion needle? Or did it squander prospect attention the marketer wanted to focus on their main value proposition?

A/B test results from a marketer at ProspectZone indicate the latter is true. Results? Replacing an attractive woman with a cheerful male model on a B-to-B lead generation landing page caused a 53% increase in response rates. Eyetracking studies show the increase was not because more people liked the man. Rather, he was less of a distraction than the woman.

Unless you're selling sex itself, you should absolutely A/B test that pretty woman.

Trust Icons & Images

Loads of data and Case Studies prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that placing trust icons on landing pages often make a significant difference in conversions.

Example: When Audible multivariate-tested its homepage (which serves as a landing page for a lot of its offline-referred traffic), placing both TRUSTe and VeriSign icons well above the fold had a 98% influence on RPV.

We have yet to see A/B testing data, however, that proves a particular trust icon pulls better than other icons. Loading up on several can help. Moving them near the place where people might feel the most apprehensive can help. But which particular one is best? We don't think anyone knows for sure.

To our mind, as long as the trust icon looks reasonably familiar and you have it positioned in the right place, it will probably help you raise conversions. How can we be somewhat sure of this? We've seen test results from an online publisher who tested the faux icons here.

Sample 2.28: Test Results for Faux Trust Icons



The eagle on the left has yellow feathers and one on the right has silvery-white feathers. The silver-white increased page conversions by 0.64%, which is about 19% higher than the yellow eagle.

Does that mean you should invent your own trust icon? If it's for speedy shipping, lowest prices, or a money-back guarantee, go ahead and see how you can bump conversions. But we would not suggest replacing a trust logo you pay for with a fake one. It's not honest, and you're no doubt jettisoning valuable services that trust company also performs for you above and beyond the logo. Examples:

Sample 2.29: Trust Icons That Can Improve Conversion Rates



Tip: Unless your brand is a household name, chances are fairly strong that some of your visitors won't have heard of you. Consider using the space to the right of your logo to feature a tagline and accompanying image that explains who you are in the blink of an eye, thus building a foundation for the visitor to be interested in and trust the rest of your message. This is especially critical for sites with acronyms in their brand name. (We've noticed a lot of trade association sites neglect to spell out the meaning of their acronym anywhere on landing pages.)

Example: A trust-building header plus graphic from Kelley Blue Book's homepage:

Sample 2.30: Kelley Blue Book Trust-Building Tagline



Pop-Ups on Landing Pages

Pop-ups and pop-unders (pops which appear after you leave a page) used to work very well for marketers of all types. Pops were so overused, however, that they became a true nuisance akin to email spam. Response rates plummeted due to the annoyance factor and the fact that so many people use pop-blockers these days.

Test results from as recently as early 2007, however, show that pop-ups can still work.

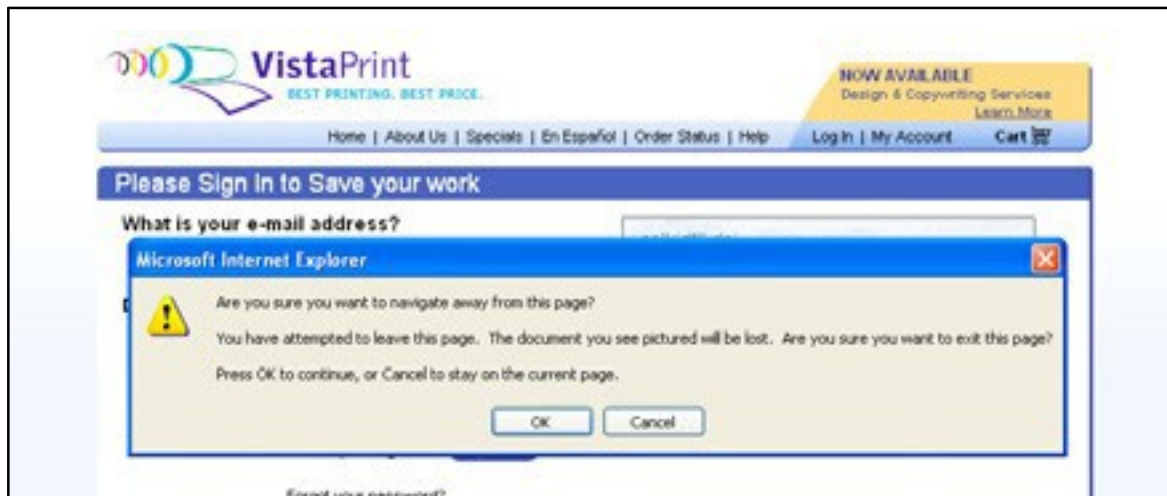
Example: BusinessSummaries.com tested an entry pop (a pop-up that appears when visitors first enter the landing page) offering a 15% discount to visitors who responded within two hours. The campaign raised conversions.

Sample 2.31: BusinessSummaries.com Entry Pop-up



Another example: Testing powerhouse VistaPrint uses utility pops (pop ups that look like gray software utility boxes) to stop visitors from leaving the conversion path when they attempt to go elsewhere in the site such as the “About Us” page.

Sample 2.32: VistaPrint Utility Pop-up



Warning: You can't use pop-ups on a landing page for traffic from Google PPC ads. The company has firmly disallowed this practice by advertisers for several years now.

Audio on Landing Pages

Services selling audio-clip tech to marketers claim adding these interactive buttons to your landing page can increase conversions by as much as 400%. We haven't seen specific evidence of this from enough marketers to take a position except in the case of marketing music.

Some marketers have told us that audio reduced conversion rates in 2006 and 2007 tests. Remarkably, some of the Web sites that sell audio marketing software do not themselves use audio on the landing page. We suspect that means something.

If you think audio will add compelling and convincing content to your page without being a distracting design element, then test it. We have two cautions:

#1. Never play audio without asking first. Very few people are pleased to arrive at a landing page and have unexpected audio blaring at them. The “conversion” action for many may be a frantic search for their volume controls or simply clicking on the back button to escape.

Full-size, color creative samples available at
<http://www.marketingsherpa.com/lph07/toc.html>

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#2. If audio works for you, test the icon and click links carefully. Some examples:

 [Listen to Client Comments](#)



Video on Landing Pages

The video age has arrived online – at least in countries with significant broadband reach. Video’s popularity and “coolness” doesn’t mean adding it will automatically help you raise landing page response rates. We know of several marketers, in fact, who’ve tested video and yanked it unceremoniously when conversions slumped.

Aside from bandwidth issues, video can be too distracting on the landing page. Video content also isn’t always a perfect match for the conversion message. Plus, video is still more work to tweak for varying visitor demographics than swapping out a bit of copy even though it is remarkably easy to produce these days. Do you really want to do a different video for every single one of your major keyword group PPC buys? Lastly, ask yourself: Are you putting up video because qualified visitors will be much more likely to convert if they see it? Or are you putting up video because it’s pretty easy these days and it feels super-neat to you?

Want to try video anyway? We don’t blame you. We do, too.

First, the number one rule of video (as well as audio): Don’t start playing the video when an unsuspecting visitor arrives on the site. Instead put the “play” controls in the visitor’s hands. You’ll reduce abandons, especially from visitors in the workplace who don’t want unexpected noises booming from their computers.

Second, consider putting the play button in the middle of the video screen instead of at the bottom where it was in the past. Visitors tend to click on images instead of captions anyway. Why not allow them to do that?

Sample 2.33: Digital Media Landing Page With Video Play Button in Middle



We have seen video work well in four specific ways for landing pages:

#1. As Seen on TV

Usually works best at the top left of the page. You want to use the exact same video footage that most visitors will have just seen on their real-life TV screens – only shorter. We recommend no longer than 30 seconds and possibly much shorter. The purpose is NOT to sell, but to reassure. Your video tells TV viewers they are in precisely the right place to respond to the offer they saw on TV.

May be especially important if you allow heavy affiliate marketing of your product because the official TV clip shows this is an “authorized” landing page. Consumers can be easily confused when they see loads of search results for what looks like the same product sold in many places.

#2. Real-life testimonials

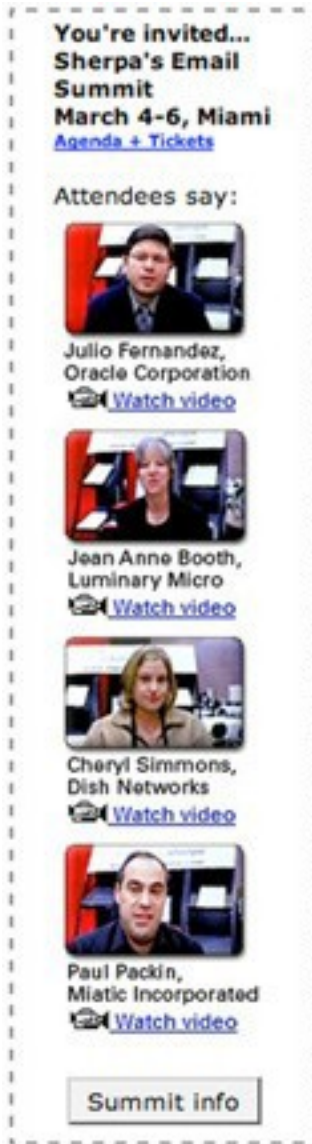
Example: Conference Calls Unlimited mailed 10 of their best customers low-cost digital video recorders and asked them to record a testimonial in their own words. The company then added the videos to the left-side of their homepage, which also acted as their landing page. The photos and recording value was definitely “homemade” in quality, but it felt trustworthy. Visitors implicitly understood these were not actors, but real business professionals.

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In initial tests, 6% of total homepage visitors clicked on the link to view the video testimonial. These visitors tend to be busy executives from medium-sized companies. Their willingness to watch a video indicated that this tactic was appealing.



Inspired by this example, MarketingSherpa tested video testimonials in early 2007 to promote our annual Email Summit.

#3. Viral campaigns

Not every video is going to get a great pass-along rate or go viral. There are way too many videos on the Web for that. Viral marketing is a far riskier tactic than many marketers realize because you effectively don't have control over message distribution. You put the message out there, hope your seeding works, cross your fingers, and pray.

Every year MarketingSherpa publishes a new Viral Hall of Fame, showing what we consider to be the most successful campaigns of the year for both B-to-B and mass consumer marketing. (You can visit the Hall of Fame free via a link on our homepage.)

It's worth noting that despite the video frenzy in online marketing these days, only four of the 10 2007 Viral Marketing Hall of Famers included a video as part of their creative.

Example: Six Degrees Network for Good made the most of a celebrity endorsement from Kevin Bacon by featuring a YouTube video of Kevin talking about the event. However, the video was purposefully placed to the far right side of the screen so the large response hotlinks at the left were far more prominent.

Sample 2.34: Six Degrees Network for Good Video Testimonial



#4. Video watching is the conversion activity

Obviously, if your goal is to educate or entertain visitors with a video, then that video should be on the landing page. Remember not to start the video until the visitor clicks to indicate readiness.

Avatars & Video Spokesmodels on Landing Pages



The Discovery Channel Store is one of the few mainstream ecommerce sites we've known to test adding an avatar or spokesmodel to a landing page. For example, during the week before Mother's Day, they had a five inch-tall video model (a woman who looked "like" a 30-something mother) step out on the homepage to briefly chat about what products made great gifts.

Results? Of the visitors who saw the video, 48% watched it through to the end and 7% clicked through to the landing page for best-selling Mother's Day gifts. The resulting sales weren't huge, but there was enough of a lift that the marketing team has since tested it for other holidays.

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Sample 2.35: Flowers Fast Landing Page With Animated Character



Marketer Bob Rankin at Flowers Fast! A/B tested an animated character with a human voice on a Google AdWords landing page for ads with terms such as “send flowers to hospital.” Results, during the first week of testing, the conversion rate boosted by 50%. In subsequent weeks, that boost subsided to 30%. Rankin is still pretty happy about that.

He notes: “I think that modeling the avatar on a real human face (instead of a more cartoony avatar) and using a real human voice (instead of text to speech) are both helpful, based on feedback from site visitors. My decision to use the talking heads stemmed from reading Cialdini’s ‘Psychology of Influence’ book, which talks about the principle of consistency. If you can get the user to do something, anything, to interact with your site, they are somehow drawn towards going further, rather than clicking away.”

He adds: “I think my avatar works because there is a call to action (Click the play button for Audio Intro) and then she tells them WHY and HOW to send flowers to a friend in the hospital.”

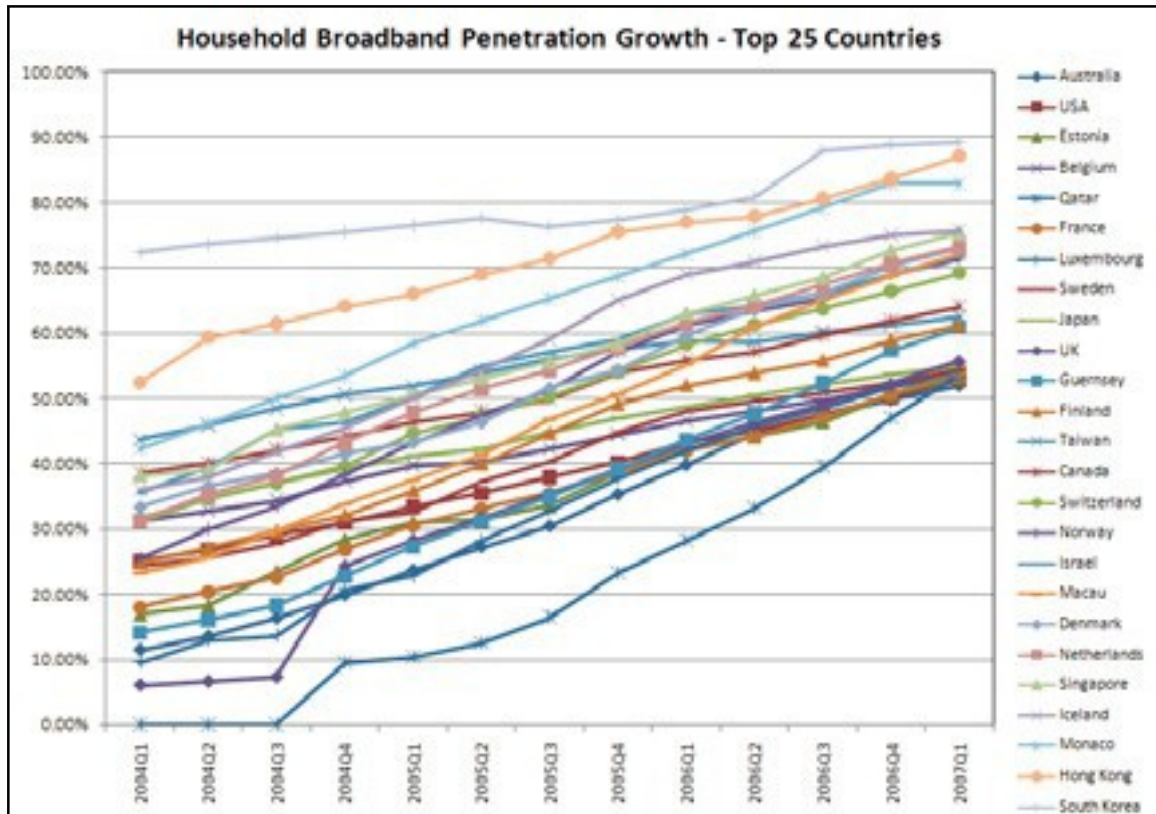
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Load Speed – The Final Graphics Challenge

Chart 2.36: Household Broadband Penetration Growth



Source: PointTopic April 2007

If your Web designer is anything like his or her peers, he or she is a big broadband fan. When you query the Web department about things like “how fast does our landing page load?” their answer may be “Why worry? Everyone gets broadband.”

Actually, if you are marketing in South Korea and, possibly, Hong Kong you don’t have to worry. Pretty much everybody who is a remotely heavy Internet user gets broadband. (On the other hand, you do have to worry because they may be using their mobile phones more than computers. But that’s another story.)

As of 2007, roughly 50% of the US Internet population gets broadband and 80% of heavy users (which includes offices and your webmaster’s home) are on broadband. That still means tens of millions of Americans are not on super-high bandwidth. Plus, anyone who uses a satellite service for Internet access may only have high bandwidth part of the time.

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Our advice? Ask your Web designer to keep one PC in his or her office on dial-up for testing purposes. Plus, whenever they have new landing page designs to show you, ask them for a Web Page Speed Report. The quick and painless service is free online. See Chapter Five for details.

For example, our Web design department was considerably surprised to learn that due to a few too many graphics and a possibly avoidable JavaScript, MarketingSherpa's Bookstore page stats were not as speedy as they expected:

Table 2.37: TimeConnection Rate Download Time

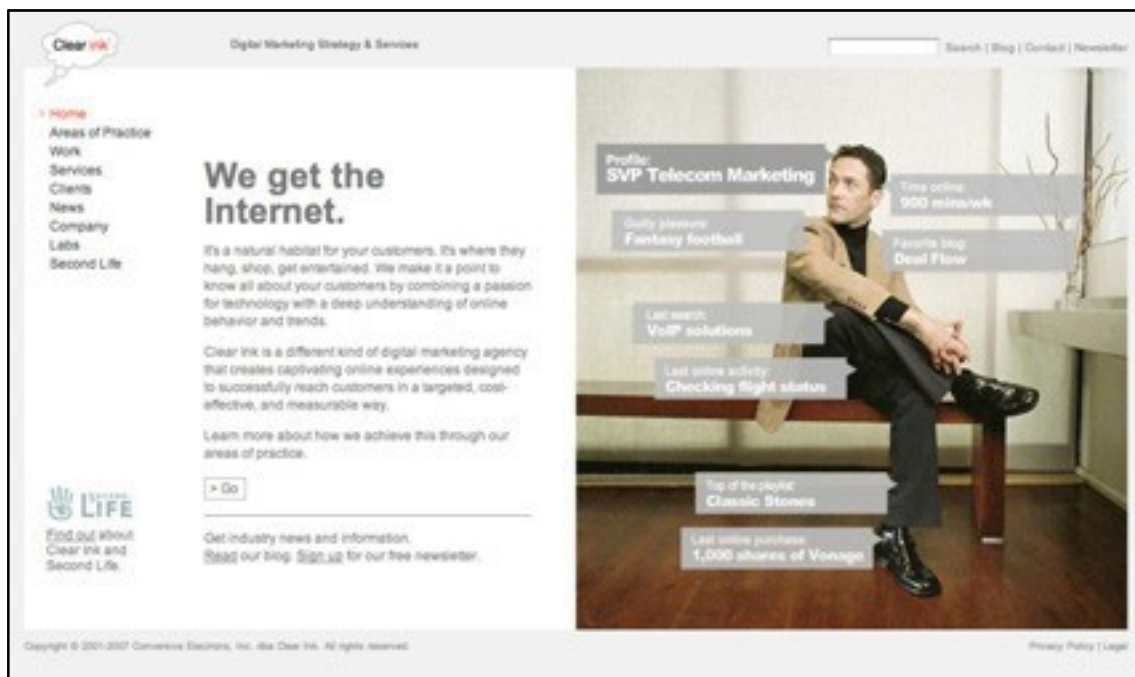
56k	56.32 seconds
ISDN 128k	18.78 seconds
T1 1.44 Mbps	3.64 seconds

Source: SherpaStore Page Download Time August 18, 2007

If you want landing page elements, such as streamed video or other rich media, which can be slow at less than blinding bandwidth speed, you should design around the download time. How? Make sure a useful part of your page – including key copy such as headline, pitch copy and most critical hotlinks – appears super-swiftly even while the user is waiting for the rest of the page to download.

This way they can make (hopefully positive) decisions instead of being annoyed and possibly bailing.

Sample 2.38: ClearInk Landing Pages With Loading Video, and Completely Loaded



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Response Devices on Landing Pages

Adding phone numbers to landing pages

Telephone numbers can help your landing page conversions in two ways:

First, some consumers simply prefer to call in. Perhaps they have questions they need answered, or they want to make sure there's a "real human being" behind the virtual presence.

Second, many consumers simply trust a landing page more if there's a phone number. You show you are willing, ready and able to be contacted. They feel secure even if they never contact you.

Tip: Toll-free lines rarely work outside of the country you establish them in. For example, American toll-free lines only work for calls from the US and Canada. So provide an alternate if you are a multinational marketer.

Example: This nominally three-column landing page gets an average 12-15% conversion rate from search engine traffic, with 10% of conversions coming in on the toll-free phone line. Note how the designer helps smooth left-to-right eye flow so the page feels very simple and clear.

Sample 2.39: Math Made Easy Landing Page

Call toll-free 1-888-MATH-HELP

MATH MADE *Easy*

Looking for some help with algebra?

Many students struggle with algebra through no fault of their own. After all, algebra has its own unique language and set of rules. Nonetheless, the frustration experienced by algebra students can result in a loss of self-confidence.

If your child is struggling with algebra, our Algebra Made Easy video tutorial series can help pave the way to a good grade. Created by a team of leading math educators, Algebra Made Easy features a comprehensive, step-by-step approach that simplifies complex concepts by breaking them up into bite-size pieces, using high quality color illustrations, and providing real-life examples.

The knowledge and sense of achievement that Algebra Made Easy can bring to your child will pay big dividends for years to come. Not only will it help your child earn a good grade in algebra, but it will also lay a critical foundation for future success, including college admissions.

Why not see for yourself?

To receive a free sample of the Algebra Made Easy tutorial, just fill out the form on this page, or call us toll free at 1-888-MATH-HELP.

Request Your Free Sample Today

First Name

Last Name

Phone Number

E-Mail Address

What is the Grade level of the student?

With which subject does the student need help?

Are you the parent or the student?

If you are under 18, please provide the name of one of your parents:

Send

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Offering live chat on your landing page

‘Live support’ is the ability for a visitor to reach a live customer support rep during their live session. It’s been proven to reduce abandonment rates in ecommerce sites such as Eddie Bauer by helping visitors find what they’re looking for and answer their questions, as well as involving them in an active conversation.

Always HIDE click to chat functionality if there’s no one to answer requests at the time. A “sorry operator not in right now” sign on your chat icon just looks lame and may introduce concerns that perhaps you’re not a big enough company or well-staffed enough to do business with.

We’ve seen mixed results, however, for pushed live chat invitations on landing pages – i.e., chat boxes that open automatically or are otherwise “pushed” to the visitor instead of an invite sitting passively on the page. In some marketplaces, this is considered too aggressive and could cost accounts.

Test carefully if you decide to add it. The best timing would be when a prospect’s length of visit and degree of interactivity indicate he or she might need some help.

Example: To get the word out about Kevis Rejuvenation Programs, Marketing Director Drew Noel put 75% of his budget into off-peak radio ads and 25% into paid search ads with Google and Yahoo.

Sample 2.40: Kevis Marketing Live Chat Request Window Opened on Homepage



Every single ad had to pay for itself in incoming converted sales. “We go for direct ROI measurement – always.”

Kevis’ in-house call center was located in the Beverly Hills office and staffed with trained, intelligent, and enthusiastic reps. (Noel notes that actors who work for him between jobs make the best reps.) Conversion rates for incoming calls were fairly high. Obviously, Noel asked his site designers to make the 800 number very prominent on every page of the site. But moving visitors from Web to another channel proved tougher than expected. “Very few people will call the phone number.”

Noel needed to push phone interaction more proactively. He decided to test a live chat campaign on the landing page that was far more aggressive than the typical live chat offer icon most online marketers test.

Instead, the team created a floating DIV overlay (looks like a pop-up but isn’t blocked by most pop blockers) opened chat box that appeared on Kevis’ homepage the instant a visitor arrived.

First the empty chat box appeared, then as though someone live was chatting with you via instant messaging, over the next 30 seconds, the following script scrolled onto the chat screen:

=====

Jessica says: Hi! I'm a LIVE online agent with Kevis. We're conducting a brief two-question survey and, to thank you for your time, you'll receive a free hair loss consultation.

Just let me know you are there.

Jessica says: Just type HI or HELLO in the space below and I'll be right with you.

Jessica says: And if you have any questions, I am happy to help!

Jessica says: Whenever you are ready say 'Hi' or 'Hello'.

Jessica says: Are you still with me?

Jessica says: Just type HI or HELLO in the space below, and I'll be right with you.

=====

Visitors could choose to interact with “Jessica” (staffed by whatever call center rep was available at that moment) or to close the box and surf the site on their own. A second identical chat request box appeared on several of the secondary site pages and “Take the Kevis Survey” was one of the main offers on the homepage.

The goal with visitors who did interact with Jessica was to quickly qualify them as prospects and then move them onto the phone to begin the program customizing process. Reps tried to answer every chat reaction within 2-3 seconds (12 seconds was the absolute maximum wait time).

If the visitor truly wanted to stay on the site instead, the rep could use the chat technology to guide them through the swaths of scientific and technical information deeper in.

On the days and hours when Kevis reps were not available, the chat functionality was erased completely from the visible site.

Results? “I worried about bombarding visitors with this chat box,” notes Noel. However, it's been a big success – so much so that now Noel is revamping his budget for far more direct-to-site search marketing.

Turns out that 15% of site visitors on average will start chatting with Jessica. 28% of these chatters will then, in turn, give Jessica their number so they can speak on the phone. (Consumers in this situation prefer being called to calling.)

Then 12% of these conversations turn into ongoing Kevis program customers – a fairly high close rate.

Visitors who call the 800 number posted on the site or fill out other site forms deeper into the site tend to have an even higher conversion rate – averaging 60%. Noel assumes this is because they have used the site’s information to educate themselves prior to the call. (After all, you can’t fit visuals and clinical trial info into a radio ad.)

This data doesn’t mean, however, that Noel will stop the live chat. He believes the live chat serves the large demographic with short attention spans who want quick info NOW. They might not act without the chat invite.

The phone number and forms deeper in serve the part of the public who want to browse for a longer time before contacting the company. There are far fewer of these people. You need to mingle both in your pipeline for healthy sales.

Call me now offers

Sample 2.41: Sales Builder Landing Page With Call Me Now Box

The image shows a screenshot of a web form titled "Looking for more information? Let us help you!". The form asks "How may we contact you?" and includes input fields for "Name" (filled with "Greg Johnson") and "Phone" (filled with "(206) 853-1925"). To the right of the form is a "Call Me Now" button with a phone icon. Below the form are two buttons: "CALL ME NOW" (with a phone icon) and "Schedule a Call" (with a clock icon). At the bottom left, there is a small disclaimer: "We respect your privacy and will not share your information." At the bottom right, there is a logo for "SalesBuilder".

We’ve heard from plenty of business-to-business marketers that this functionality can be a real winner. Anywhere from 1%-5% of visitors may click this. Why would they ask you to call them instead of just picking up the phone themselves? Because they hope to avoid automated phone system hell. And we can’t blame them.

Best practices in this functionality is to have it generate a small form that asks what number they prefer, as well as what time they’d like to be called “right away,” “in five minutes,” etc.

As with live chat, program your page so that this functionality doesn’t even appear as an option if you are not immediately able to power it (for example, if it’s after hours.)

Buttons: Can You See Your Button From Across the Room?

Usability guru Steve Krug calls it his button test. “When I’m teaching workshops, I use Amazon as an example. You could put the page up on the wall and walk across the room. And you would absolutely be able to see the two buttons that they want you to click on that page. They absolutely pop out at you. If you launch a page like that, you want to watch a few people react to it, because you can often be wrong. The things you think are terribly prominent are not. You have to go back and beef it up somehow.”

Five rules of thumb for button success:

#1. Make it bigger. No, that’s not big enough. Make it bigger again.

Sample 2.42: MarketingExperiments Tested Red Button Art



#2. Test it red vs. utility gray. Test it round. Test it rectangular. Test it oval.

#3. Test the wording on the button as well as the call to action above it. Now test it again. Often wording that directly matches the wording on the headline will win. Often wording that is either more or less aggressive will win (i.e., Buy Now vs. Try it Now.)

#4. Never assume the same button works for all audiences. Both these buttons won tests, but to different audiences.



#5. If it’s ecommerce, don’t get cute. Americans expect to see the word “Cart,” not basket.



Interactive submission boxes

Over the past two years, the trend has been to emphasize the button area by putting an entire box around it. It’s not just a button, it’s an interactive involvement adventure!

Here’s an example of a landing page focused on a submission box from Insurance.com who we feel do an exceptional job of design – proven out by relentless testing and tweaking. Note: This is only one of more than 100 landing pages Insurance.com has in rotation for their PPC campaigns. Each is optimized for a particular keyword group. The team also offers their affiliates a choice of 13 different landing pages.

Sample 2.43: Insurance.com Landing Page With Submission Box

INSURANCE.COM
May The Best Quote Win

Prefer to call for a quote?
Call our licensed agents at 1-800-639-9201

1 **Compare** instant quotes from top companies. 2 **Buy** immediately, online or over the phone. 3 **Save** money by starting your new policy today.

It's simple.

Get Quotes

Do you currently have auto insurance?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Enter zip code:

GO

"Your site saved me \$841 a year and it took only 15 minutes! Thank you!"
J. Joyce | Miami, FL

Here's another example, this time from autobytel.com. Note how a 'progress bar' runs across the very top of the interactive form and how the body copy at the left is headed by a hero shot, presumably of the sorts of reports you can get if you respond.

Sample 2.44: Autobytel.com Landing Page With Progress Bar

autobytel.com

Search for any car **SEARCH**

You are here: [Home](#) > [Buy](#) > [New](#) > New Car Prices

New Car Prices

Get price quotes on new cars, trucks and SUVs

Start your free quote on a new car now!

How this works
If you plan to purchase a vehicle in the next 30 days, please fill out this request and your local Autobytel Accredited Dealer will contact you with auto pricing and delivery information. Serious buyers only, please. If you would like to do more research, please visit our research section.

Begin Your Free Quote Process

SELECT A MAKE
Acura

SELECT A MODEL
MDX

ENTER YOUR ZIP CODE

CONTINUE >>

YOUR PROGRESS ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

Build the Maxima
Request a Brochure
Locate a Dealer

NEWSLETTER
KEEP UP WITH AUTO NEWS

SHOPPING TOOLS
[Auto Insurance Quotes](#)
[Get Auto Financing](#)
[Free Credit Reports](#)
[Vehicle History Reports](#)

ADVERTISEMEN

Naturally, you also need to test the design of these elements thoroughly. For example, can you guess which of these submission boxes got 43% more conversions than the other? (Hint: Plain Jane.)



Note on testing interactive mini-forms: You can never know precisely which question or which question order will work. For example, a wedding photography lead generation site told us adding a check box plus a date to “check for availability” made a significant difference in conversion rates. The site didn’t actually need the information that early in the sales process but left the question up early on because brides adored it.

Another example, marketers testing mini-forms for Audible.com discovered having an email field and country field before the call to action worked better than asking for them afterward. This seemed “completely counterintuitive” to the testing team, but then winning tests so often are.

Entire page as an involvement device

The majority of landing pages simply contain an image, textual copy, and a registration form or ‘add to cart’ button. A significant group of landing pages, however, are built to be wholly interactive experiences.

The marketers using this tactic tend to fall into three camps:

- Dieting sites
- Dating sites
- Consumer lead generation sites, especially for real estate

Key: Instead of asking your visitors to read about you and make a conversion decision, ask them about themselves instead. This type of tactic works best **without** a long introduction. If you ask them to read about you before becoming engaged in the question-answering process, then you’re back to conversion square one again.

And certainly don’t start with a page that describes the survey, or interactive form, and then say “click to get started,” sending them to another page. You’ll lose significant traffic that way.

Here are a variety of samples of this tactic:

Sample 2.45: Classmates.com Interactive Homepage

Sample 2.46: The South Beach Diet.com Interactive Homepage

Sample 2.47: HouseValues.com Interactive Homepage



The image shows the homepage of HouseValues.com. It features a dark blue background with a white central box containing the site's logo and navigation links. The logo reads "HOUSEVALUES.COM" with "YOUR HOME'S MARKET VALUE ONLINE" below it. A welcome message states: "Welcome to HouseValues.com. If you're thinking of selling your home in the next year, this FREE service will help you find your home's current market value and a suggested listing price. [Click here](#) to see a sample report." Below this, a form asks for the user's "ZIP Code/Postal Code:" with a text input field and a "Click here for your FREE report" button. At the bottom of the white box, there are two buttons: "Real Estate Professionals - Click Here" and "Mortgage Professionals - Click Here". The footer of the page includes links for "Read HouseValues | Privacy Policy | Terms of Use" and a copyright notice "©2007 HouseValues".

Sample 2.48: Matchmaker.com Interactive Homepage



The image shows the homepage of Matchmaker.com. It features a white background with a large photo of a smiling couple on the left. To the right of the photo is a registration form with the heading "Join for Free. Find someone special today." The form includes fields for "I am a:" (a dropdown menu), "From:" (a dropdown menu), "Born on:" (a date picker set to January 1, 1907), "Select Username:", "Create Password:", "Re-enter Password:", "E-mail:", and "Re-enter E-mail:". A "Join Now FREE" button is located below the form. Below the button is a checkbox with the text "I have read and agree to the Terms & Conditions and Privacy Policy". At the bottom of the page, there is a link "Take our Site Tour - Already a Member? Log in Here." and a footer with links for "Contact Us | Help | Press | Data Info | Advertising | Affiliates | Privacy Policy | Site Map". The Matchmaker logo and "Powered by eDate.com" are at the very bottom.

Sample 2.49: Profnet.org Interactive Landing Page

PERSONALITY TEST

NOTICE! This profile is used to help business professionals develop stronger business relationships and better networking skills. Persons taking this profile will be added to a mailing list to receive information on how to improve networking skills to increase revenue. Those not wishing to be added to such a list **SHOULD NOT TAKE THIS PROFILE**. Also, a correct and valid email address needs to be provided, so the results can be returned to you. If there is no valid email provided, you will not get your results.

If you have questions about the use of this information, please review our [Privacy Statement](#).

There are four basic personality types that business professionals encounter. Each one needs to be dealt with differently. To see which type you are, take the following test. The questions from 1-20 indicate your strengths, and from 21-40 your weaknesses.

Putting your mouse pointer over any of the following terms will show you a definition for that term

1. ☒ Adventurous ☐ Adaptable ☐ Animated ☐ Analytical
2. ☒ Persistent ☐ Playful ☐ Persuasive ☐ Peaceful
3. ☒ Submissive ☐ Self-sacrificing ☐ Sociable ☐ Strong-willed

Sample 2.50: iunctura Interactive Landing Page

iunctura alium conligium

Helping Executives build Stronger Business Relationships

Executive Opinions of Building Business Relationships Online

The objective of this study is to understand executive opinions about websites as a relationships building tool, including aspects of direct executive communications with customers. Each response will take 10 seconds to complete. All questions are required.

Use your mouse or TAB key to move between fields. Enter to submit prematurely if the ENTER key is pressed.

1. Do you see your company website as a relationship-building tool? *
2. Do you or your company's executives speak directly with customers on a regular basis? *
3. How effective do you feel these communications are? (5 - Very effective, with 1 - Not effective) *
4. Would you like more information about building business relationships? (If Yes, please include full contact information below.) *
5. What is your Executive Role? *

Name: *

Email: *

Company:

Street:

City:

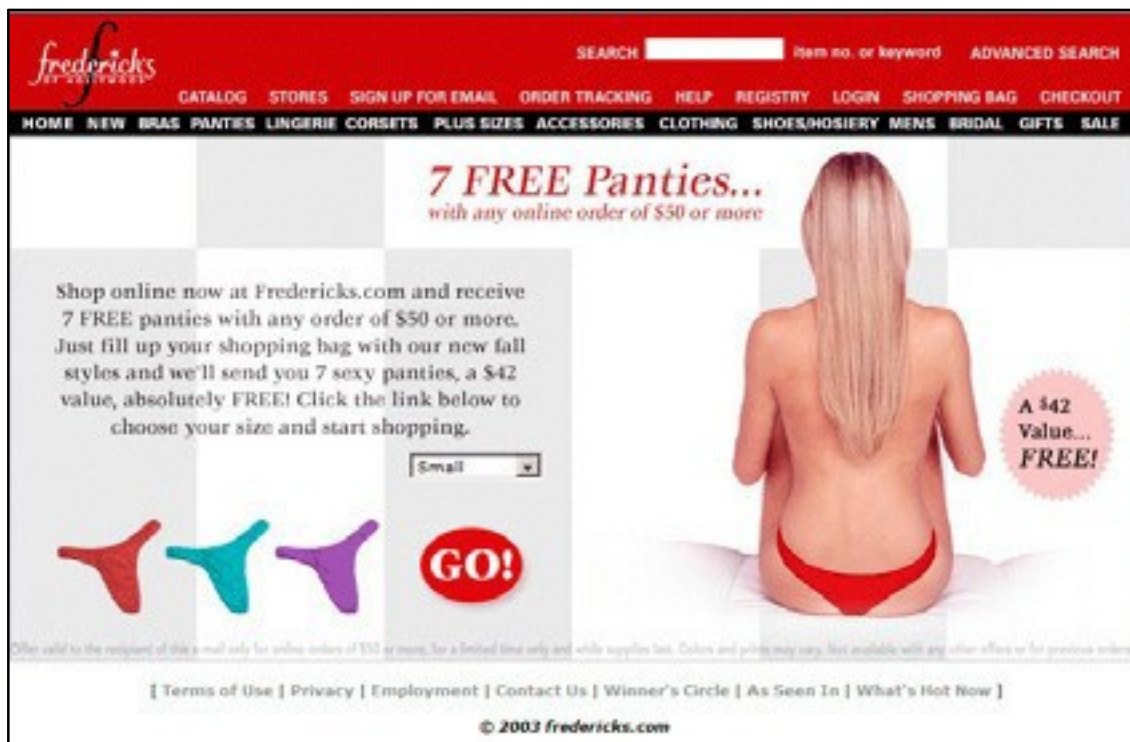
State:

Zip:

One of our favorite interactive pages was conducted by Frederick's of Hollywood during extensive landing page tests for its online ad campaigns. The biggest winner was a clever two-step landing page for a free-gift-with-purchase offer. The first action the visitor was asked to do was to select their panty size and place a free pair as a gift in their shopping cart. Then, after seeing their gift in the cart, they had to move on to shopping for enough items in the rest of the store to qualify to receive the gift.

The sight of that gift sitting in the cart had enough impact to galvanize visitors into shopping the site until they filled their cart with enough real purchases to qualify for it.

Sample 2.51: Frederick's of Hollywood Interactive Landing Page



Sample 2.52: Frederick's of Hollywood Interactive Landing Page, Step Two

frederick's

SEARCH Item no. or keyword ADVANCED SEARCH

CATALOG STORES SIGN UP FOR EMAIL ORDER TRACKING HELP REGISTRY LOGIN SHOPPING BAG CHECKOUT

HOME NEW BRAS PANTIES LINGERIE CORSETS PLUS SIZES ACCESSORIES CLOTHING SHOES/HOSIERY MENS BRIDAL GIFTS SALE

Shopping Bag

Item	Size	Color	Price	Qty	Total	
59999 - Free Panties	Small	Assorted	\$0.00	1	\$0.00	
☒ This size/color in stock						
					REMOVE	

Order Sub-Total: \$0.00

[CONTINUE SHOPPING](#) [CHECKOUT](#)

[[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Employment](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Winner's Circle](#) | [As Seen In](#) | [What's Hot Now](#)]

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Registration Forms That Get Higher Conversions: Design Tips

We've seen countless bad registration forms, especially in B-to-B campaigns. Why? We suspect most marketers think their job is done with the offer copy and creative. They don't think the registration form is "their job." So they ask the Web designer to stick a form in. Designers aren't marketers. The forms they put up are rarely focused on conversion.

Most online forms may be functional. But they aren't pretty, and they're hardly compelling enough for any visitor to want to take the trouble to fill out.

The good news is that your competitors probably have ugly forms, too, (especially if you are in B-to-B marketing) so improving yours can be a distinct competitive advantage. This is especially critical for search engine marketing because searchers are likely to view your competitors' landing pages within seconds of seeing yours. The one with the ugliest form loses the sales lead.

Here's a step-by-step guide to creating forms that get filled out.

Step #1. Number and types of questions

Don't automatically ask for entire name, address, phone, fax, etc, etc, etc. Look at every single field individually and harshly ask yourself: "Do we really need this at this stage in the relationship?"

If the form works, and folks convert at this initial step, you'll have chances to get more information from them later on. Heck, you can even get more information from them on the Thank-you page that immediately follows your form submissions. (According to anecdotal evidence, roughly 40% of submissions may answer a few extra questions at this stage.)

If you want maximum conversions from the landing page, limit your questions severely. Some forms only ask for email address. Some only for name, email, and phone. If you have zip code in the US, you don't need to ask for city and state, and there's almost no reason for asking for fax number.

People will fill out longer forms, and even type in seemingly intrusive information (such as phone number, age, income, etc.), if you give them a very good reason for asking for each item or the reward is overwhelmingly enticing. "Sales rep will call" is not a good reason and, generally, a free white paper is not all that enticing. (Which explains why most B-to-B lead generation landing pages get less than a 10% conversion rate.)

Example: Source Technologies wanted more business prospects to fill out their 'Request Info' page. With the help of Optimost, they conducted multivariable tests on five key elements of the page, including form length. The final winning form improved conversions 36.7%. The biggest impact was from form length – the form went from 15 entry fields in the contact address section to seven entry fields.

Sample 2.53: Source Technologies' Request Info Form, Before & After

The image displays two versions of the Source Technologies website's 'Request Info' form. The left version is the 'Before' state, featuring a long, multi-section form with numerous text input fields, checkboxes, and a list of products on the right. The right version is the 'After' state, which is a streamlined, shorter form with a more modern layout, including a 'Submit' button and a 'Would you like to receive our Monthly Newsletter?' checkbox.

There is one exception to the shorter-form rule: when you want to pre-qualify leads because there's a cost associated with the next stage of handling and qualifying them. In that case, you'll want to narrow your incoming lead funnel by adding questions to the form. Don't just add questions willy-nilly to make it longer, though. You don't want to turn off any highly qualified prospects just to eliminate the less qualified ones!

Again, we ask: Do you really honestly need a street address? Why is fax number important for you? Do you have a rep standing by to dial every phone number, or are you collecting it on the off-chance you'll need it "someday"? Rip out unnecessary questions.

Step #2. Use proven best practices in form design

Every one of your form elements can be tested. We heard of cases where seemingly minor form adjustments had a huge impact on performance. Things as small as using the ZIP code to pre-populate the city and state fields. One designer we spoke to describes her mantra when designing a form: “Everyone is lazy and suspicious, so I build forms that do as much of the work as possible, and keep people informed about what’s going on.”

- Use a small bit of technical savvy to have the cursor floating in the first box of the form field. Also, have the cursor jump to the next field in places where it’s known that a certain number of keystrokes means someone is done. For example, the phone number field or zip code. Also, allow people to tab from one field to the next.
- Provide any help that the user might need to fill out the field. For example, putting a sample date in front of the date field to show the format.
- Match the field to the information it will accept. If it’s too long, users will wonder what they’re missing. Too short and they won’t be sure if it’s accepting their data.
- Number questions only if they go beyond the current real estate to another screen or scroll down the page.
- Make sure the user’s information is saved as they go. They won’t lose their data if they hit the back button or move forward prematurely.
- Clearly indicate which fields are required by bolding the field names and/or putting an asterisk next to them and a note at the top. Also, test putting a yellow “highlighter” in form fields that are required. This works best if the rest of the page has a white background so the yellow stands out. It appears to make forms easier to fill out and can raise conversion rates.
- Avoid drop-down boxes if possible; many people just don’t “get” them. If you must use them because a list of options is too long, re-evaluate whether you really need that long list. (For example, if you have the zip code, you don’t need the state name.)

Drop downs are also prone to errors, because once someone has chosen and the box has closed, they are unlikely to go back and fix an error if they notice it at all. That’s why you have so many Mr.’s getting Mrs.’s salutations. It’s also likely to be a growing problem as the scrolling mouse becomes more popular. Drop-down boxes are difficult to maneuver with a scrolling mouse.

To make them work best, pre-fill the drop down with the most popular answer if that answer is more than 50% of the total. Also, put the most popular answers at the top of a long list. For example, the United States is worth putting at the top of a country list, and

then again next to Uruguay. Finally, in lists with like-sounding entries, like a series of printers, use alternating colors for each entry.

- Try not to use click boxes and radio buttons in the same form. People get confused about how these work differently. Also, when using radio buttons, remember that people are lazy and they'll leave the default on even if it's incorrect or if they don't quite understand the question. Often they are quite surprised later to learn they "answered" a question a certain way. Radio button defaults are passive user tools and likely to be wrong.

For both click boxes and radio buttons, make the text area clickable instead of just the tiny circle or box. Not everyone is ultra precise with their mouse – make it easy for them.

- Don't put form fields into two columns. Several different marketers' multivariate tests have shown forms with the best conversion rate always have a single column of fields. We suspect designers use multiple columns when they are worried about scrolling and the fold. Nevertheless, the results of tests are firm – two column forms are the worse of the two evils.

Sample 2.54: Single Column and Multiple Column Request Forms



This form is organized into two columns. The left column contains the following fields: Country (with links for United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Other), Title (a dropdown menu), First Name, Address, City, Zip/Postal Code, and E-mail Address. The right column contains: Last Name, Apt/Suite/Business, State/Province (a dropdown menu), Home Phone, and Confirm E-mail Address.

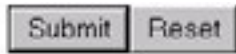


This form is organized into a single column. The fields are: Country (with links for United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Other), Title (a dropdown menu), First Name, Last Name, Address, Apt/Suite/Business, City, State/Province (a dropdown menu), Zip/Postal Code, Home Phone, E-mail Address, and Confirm E-mail Address.

Step #3. Put some thought behind your submission button

Tweaks to the copy and look of your “submit” button can produce significant results. If you want to test a single element of your page (besides headline and form length) we urge you to test submit buttons. The lift in conversion can be that significant.

Biggest mistake to avoid: ADD A “RESET” OR “CLEAR FORM” BUTTON.



This is a function left over from very early forms a decade ago. Some Web designers use it out of habit or laziness when they copy the code from older forms to reuse now.

It’s hard enough to get someone to fill out your form. Do you want to take the risk that they’ll click on the reset button and wipe their answers out? Chances are many won’t retype again.

Tips on collecting email addresses

As with telephone numbers, more and more consumers are leery of giving out their email address these days. No one wants to be spammed.

In fact, Dirt Devil’s ecommerce tests revealed that 38% of consumers will not enter an email if you don’t require it. If you do require it, some of these consumers will abandon the cart altogether, or enter a fake email to get through the form.

If you must request email, here are some guidelines:

#1. Add brief, reassuring text immediately next to the form. A brief statement in small type could read: “We value your privacy” or “Your email is secure” or “Your email will be held in strict confidentiality” or “Your privacy is assured” or “Your email will not be shared or rented.” This statement can link to your privacy policy, or you can add a privacy policy link at the bottom of the page.

Under no circumstances should you omit privacy information from a landing page that requests email.

#2. Don’t make them type it twice. Many marketers copy this from forms widespread about the Internet because they assume if entering an email twice is on everyone’s form, then it must be useful. As this table shows, less than 3% of users type in the wrong email address, and given trends among experienced Internet users, we suspect the rising typo rate is “on purpose” as consumers get fed up with incoming spam.

Table 2.55: Typo Rate of People Completing Registration Forms

YEAR	TYPO RATE (per 100 users)	CHANGE
2002	1.46	
2003	1.71	+ 17%
2004 (through Oct 1)	2.91	+ 70%

Source: FreshAddress, 2002-2004

If you're really concerned about email address perfection, then why not steal an idea from PhoneHog? They added this clever pop-up to their (heavily tested and refined) landing page, and it works gangbusters.

Sample 2.56: PhoneHog Email Control Pop-Up



#3. Give opt-in choices as separate check boxes. If you plan to send more than one type of email (for example, an email newsletter and sales alerts), give users separate boxes for each. We've spoken to marketers offering as many as five separate boxes. They've told us users are quite diligent about selecting precisely which email they want to get.

We've also spoken to marketers who tested offering checkboxes or not and heard email form fill-out can actually increase if there's a preferences checkbox directly below it.

Tips on collecting telephone numbers

Consumers and businesspeople alike hate giving out their phone numbers on forms because it's tantamount to inviting a telemarketing call. And no one enjoys being telemarketed to, even though MarketingSherpa data shows that telemarketing still can work very well for business-to-business.

It's no wonder, therefore, that in the offline direct response world, requiring a phone number on a free offer form is a proven response dampener. Michael Crowdes, Manager Interactive Marketing for the Dirt Devil brand vacuum cleaners, began to wonder if asking for phone numbers was depressing his results online. So he tested making phone number not-required in the company's online shopping cart check-out process.

58% of consumers shopping at the Dirt Devil site promptly began omitting phone numbers from their orders, and the shopping cart abandonment rate dropped.

Lesson learned: People hate putting their phone numbers in online forms, even for a trusted name brand.

If you absolutely must have a phone number at this stage in the process (you can't get it in a later step in the relationship and your sales team is going to leap on the number and make a call), then you should add as much reassuring content on or next to your registration form as possible.

Reassuring content might include testimonials, a Better Business Bureau member icon, privacy and security seals, logos of major media that have written about you or given you awards (the "as seen in" factor), etc.

Example: Interactive marketer Matt Browne, who specializes in campaigns for realtors, tested six variations on a landing page to discover which would get the most conversions, including a phone number from would-be home buyers. The winning page (pictured on next page) got a 16% conversion rate with phone number.

Although Browne's form said that phone number was required, he asked the design team also to allow leads through that didn't fill it out. An additional 12% of page visitors converted to handing over their other contact info without phone.

The reassuring elements that helped achieve this: a photo of the human being your phone number was going to; a formal company logo; brief warm-fuzzy copy; a strictly limited total number of fields to fill out, and a phone number where they could reach the realtor directly if they felt like it.

Sample 2.57: Tucson Real Estate Landing Page

Tucson Real Estate Home For Sellers Contact Me

For Buyers

Anita Budich, Residential Specialist,
Member of the CHAIRMAN'S CLUB
520-940-3320, 800-643-4295 x5433 | anita@abudich.com

[Listings](#)
[Home Search](#)
[Property Request](#)
[Resource Center](#)
[Free Reports](#)
[Prequalify](#)
[Relocation](#)
[For REALTORS®](#)

Home Search

Have a Dream Home in Mind?
Complete the [Property Request](#) form. I'll do the home search for you. Look for an email from me regarding the results.

Want to Search on your Own?
Register below for immediate access to homes for sale in Tucson. If you have any questions or would like to schedule a private showing, please don't hesitate to call me at 520-940-3320.

Name *(required)*:
 E-mail *(required)*:
 Phone *(required)*:

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Tips on Globalizing Registration Forms

National Instruments Corp decided to globalize their email and Web campaigns better to increase profit margins. Kristi Hobbs, eCRM Group Manager, was one of the team leaders of this effort.

To globalize the site, the team had to translate copy into nine languages while also dealing with various cultural situations when it came to having users fill out the online forms. They programmed the forms to adapt to whatever language was chosen in the drill-down menu.

National customs were also taken into consideration. For instance, in the US, people fill out forms first-name first and then last name. In Japan, it's the opposite. The system also generated different formats for Spaniards and Spanish-speaking Mexicans or Mexican-Americans. "It was usually a formatting issue as it pertains to the way phone numbers are constructed differently in different languages and in different countries," Hobbs says.

Sample 2.58: Infoblox's Registration Form

Infoblox

Home | Contact Us | Customer Login | Site Map

Company | Products | Services | Solutions | Partners | Support | Training | News & Events | Library | Language v

LIBRARY

Download Center

- Overview
- Data Sheets
- Case Studies
- White Papers
- Solutions Tech Notes
- Webinars & Demos

Web Resources

White Paper/Application Note

Thanks for your interest in Infoblox's products and solutions. Please complete the following short form in order to access this document.

* Denotes a required field.

PLEASE REGISTER

Email:

Already registered? Enter email address here and click Repeat Visitor to update the form below

First Name*

Last Name*

Company*

Email*

Please select your Region*

Country*

State*

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Double Your Qualified Leads: 4 Steps to a New Registration System

“We ask users to spend a lot of time on forms, yet for 10 years those forms just asked for the same information over and over again. It seems kind of silly when we could be much smarter about that interaction,” says Greg Lanier, Director Marketing Communications, Infoblox Inc.

Like most B-to-B marketers, Lanier’s team depends on registration forms to capture information about prospects who come to the Infoblox Web site to download white papers or register for webinars about their network services equipment.

But using the same form for every visitor created an undifferentiated pile of leads that required further qualification. As a result, the sales and marketing team abandoned many leads collected through the site for lack of information.

Lanier and his team wanted a more sophisticated approach to registration forms. They wanted prospects to reveal relevant information about themselves and their projects to

help the marketing team qualify those leads for the sales team. And they needed to be careful of scaring off anyone by requesting too much information at any given point.

Instead of a generic registration form for all content, Lanier's team developed a series of forms. Each asked different questions based on the type of material users were accessing and that individual's previous interactions with the site. This way the system could build a detailed profile of users over time based on the marketing materials they downloaded and the project-related questions they answered with each subsequent visit.

Working with CRM technology provider Market2Lead, here's how Lanier's team developed and implemented the new system:

Step #1. Identify themes based on specific business needs

To gather good lead qualification data, Lanier and his team needed a process to govern when different registration forms were served to return visitors. They focused on the typical ways prospects moved through the site when requesting information about a specific product line or searching for solutions to a particular business need.

This approach led them to specify five themes a prospect might explore, and then assign each piece of marketing collateral to the right theme.

Those themes corresponded to the company's primary application areas:

- Disaster Recovery
- IP Address Management
- Network Access Control
- DNS/DHCP Infrastructure
- Voice Over IP

The team then identified five pieces of collateral as core content within each theme. For example, if a customer was interested in IP Address Management products, they might look at specific product datasheets, download a white paper on that topic, register for an appropriate webinar, etc.

The goal was to drive users through all five of those marketing pieces, serving up a separate registration form each time to develop a full profile of the client and their project.

Step #2. Develop unique forms for each interaction

Next, Infoblox based their five-form series on two key principals:

- Make each form shorter than the standard registration form they had previously used (a limit of five or six questions).
- Ask new questions each time to collect more detailed information.

The team created questions for each form that built on data already collected (prefilling forms with existing information). They started with non-intrusive questions on the first registration form, and saved more sensitive questions, such as information about project time frame and budget, for later visits. “If I’ve given them five pieces of high-quality material, by that fifth interaction I feel perfectly comfortable asking if they indeed have a project.”

Here’s a breakdown of the forms:

- Form #1. Basic contact information: email, name, company, geographic region, country and state (for routing to the proper sales person).
- Form #2. Additional lead qualification questions: telephone number, job level, title, industry.
- Form #3. Preliminary inquiry about a prospect’s computing environment: Number of computers on their network, solutions or applications that most interest them, and their current vendor/solution for that area.
- Form #4. Project information: timeframe, budget.
- Form #5. Specific questions/comments: a text box to submit queries directly to Infoblox’s sales team.

The system relied on cookies to recognize repeat visitors and assign the right form. If a user disabled cookies, the Web site used a simple authentication system that asked if they had visited the site before and, if so, to enter an email address that would be tied to past visit data.

Step #3. Score leads and merge them with sales database

Next, Lanier and his team tied the registration form system into the company’s Salesforce.com database. When a new visitor registered for marketing collateral, or a returning visitor accessed another piece of content, that lead could be assigned a score and added to the sales database (if appropriate).

Leads were scored as follows:

- A - high quality, inside sales follow up
- B - good quality, inside sales follow up
- C - moderate quality, inside sales follow up as time allows
- D - marketable opt-in lead, no follow up required
- E - purchased/acquired list, non-opted in
- F - junk lead

Scores were determined by the number of interactions, as well as how the prospect answered the questions on each form. For example, even if a prospect got as far as the fifth form but indicated there was no project timeline or budget in place, that lead wouldn't require an immediate follow-up. Instead, it would go into the marketable lead category and would continue to receive appropriate marketing messages based on interest areas and past behavior.

The system also was set up to support suppression rules, such as setting thresholds for when a lead would be populated from the registration system database into the Salesforce.com database – e.g., only sending A, B or C leads.

Step #4. Combine registration information with additional data

Once in the sales database, leads from the registration system were further qualified with any additional information about that prospect, such as webinar attendance, details about where else the visitor clicked while on the Web site or response to email campaigns or phone calls.

A-level leads were flagged for a follow-up call within 24 hours. But inside sales and marketing staff also built contact lists for marketing campaigns or other forms of follow-up. For example, the team could search the database for CEOs in specific industries who have registered for two pieces of marketing collateral.

Results?

Since moving to multiple registration forms, Infoblox's leads per quarter have nearly doubled in each of the past six quarters. "It's really astounding given that our marketing budget has not gone up a corresponding amount," Lanier says.

He attributed the increased quantity of leads to shorter, more user-friendly forms. The higher quantity of leads also has been matched by an increase in quality. The forms allow his team to collect better data about prospects, score them more effectively, and then deliver leads to the most appropriate salespeople. As a result, they reduced the number of abandoned leads (those who never received a follow-up) by 50%.

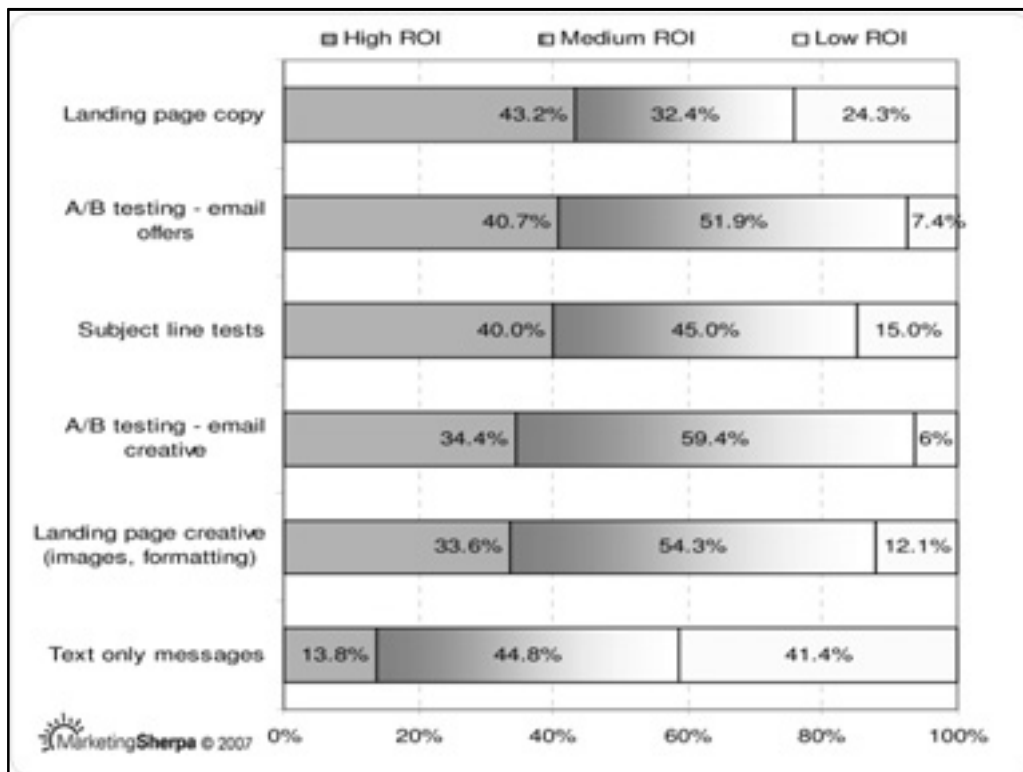
“Before, we just had a big list of names and all the sales team had to go on was whether the accounts were in their territory. Now, they have a whole host of information they can use to have more relevant, interesting, open conversations with people.”

Another benefit of the new system is the ease with which new forms can be developed or existing forms assigned to new sections of the site. The simple, templated system lets the marketing staff put forms wherever they want and launch new programs, such as webinar registration, according to their own deadlines, rather than turning to the IT department for help. “There’s no dance with IT about trying to get it done on time, and to most marketing teams, that’s huge.”

That efficiency is paying dividends: Lanier’s marketing team has increased the number of marketing programs they can generate from between one and two programs per person per week to between three and five programs per person per week.

Copywriting Tips for Landing Pages

Chart 2.59: Email Marketers Rate Testing Effectiveness



The above is just a sample of the wealth of real-life data MarketingSherpa has on file showing that copy is perhaps the single most important element for any landing page. Aside from media-buying decisions, copy is the No. 1 key element that determines conversion.

Example: Sean Tierney of JumpBox Inc. conducted a series of multiple A/B tests to improve conversions for his landing page for PPC clicks.

Sample 2.60: JumpBox's Original Landing Page



Sample 2.61: JumpBox's Winning Landing Page



After testing five different pages, Tierney discovered a winner that gave him a 21.2% conversion rate – nearly double that of the original landing page which had a rate of 11.3%.

When we contacted him to see how the tests went, he told MarketingSherpa, “The biggest thing I learned from those trials was that for all the debate we had over which design was better, ultimately design was completely eclipsed in importance by clarity/brevity of the messaging. Reducing it from six words to four doubled the effectiveness of the page.”

Why is copy so late in this chapter?

As we suggested at the start, it’s best to do market research, select page elements, and create a basic wireframe before you start to write copy. It’s nearly impossible to write compelling copy for a landing page from a blank page. You need to see the space your words will need to work their magic within.

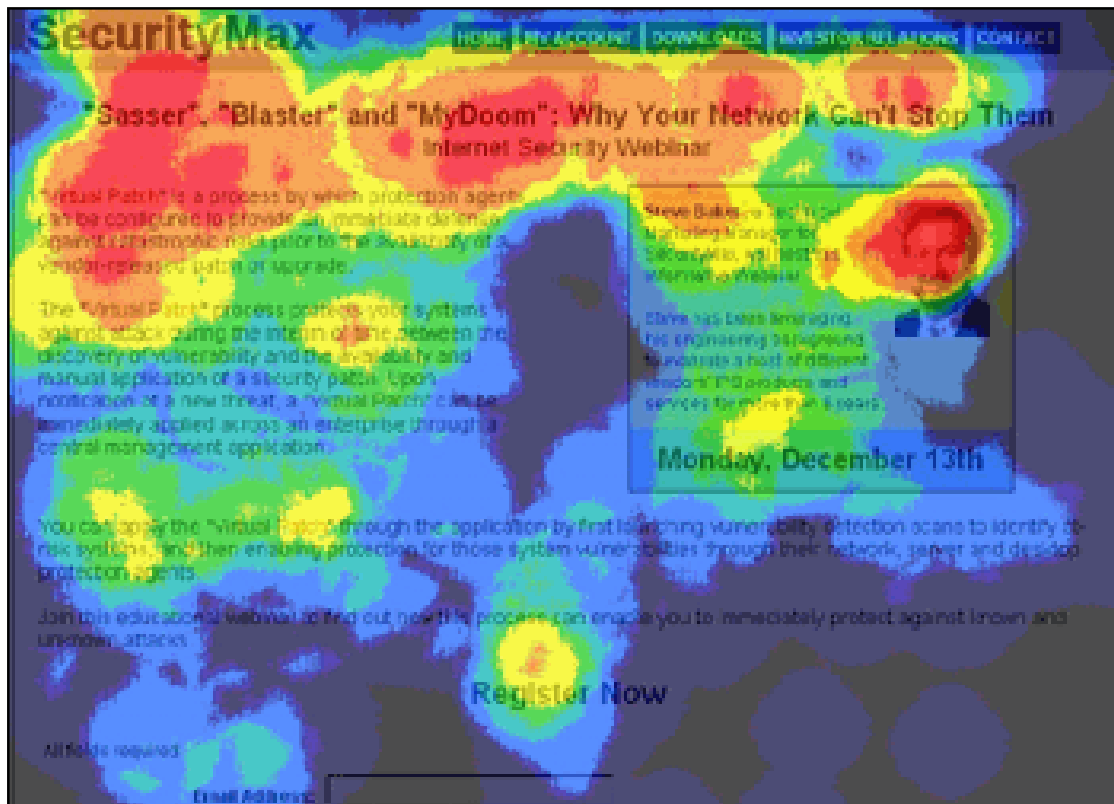
No copy should ever be set in stone. Wording tests often have enormously high impact, especially headline, offer, and button wording. That said, you have to start somewhere.

Rule of Thumb - the science: Usability experts have found that people read about 25% slower on the Web, and their perennial recommendation is to use 50% of the copy that you would use in printed material.

The average American reads about 50 words online in 20 seconds – if they aren’t distracted by other graphical elements.

Those 50 words, however, are rarely read in order. Eyetracking tests prove that people’s eyes flick about a page, reading a few words here, a few words there.

Sample 2.62: Eyetracking Heat Map

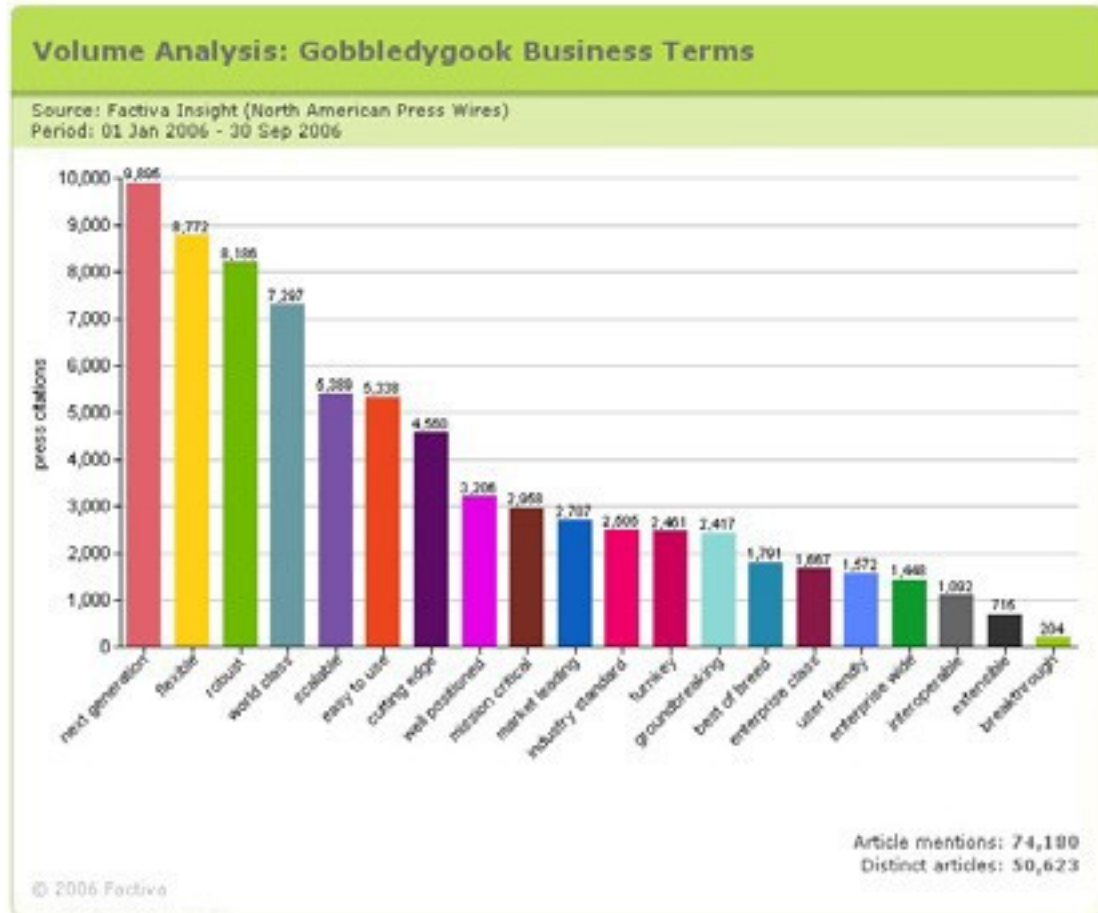


Aside from your headline, the most important words in your copy are the “Golden Triangle” – the top left corner of the body copy of the first one or two paragraphs. This means you **must** know where the line will wrap for body copy so you can control which words you want to appear in that high attention zone. It’s more of a collaboration between copy and design than many writers are used to.

Copy near a human face, and copy near or on a response button is also highly read.

What’s not read? Boring, meaningless verbiage. This chart, courtesy of David Meerman Scott, author of ‘The New Rules of Marketing & PR’ and Factiva from Dow Jones, shows you just how much garbage verbiage was in typical press releases for the first nine months of 2006. Based on unhappy experience, we suspect many of these companies’ Web sites and landing pages contain many of the same words.

Chart 2.63: Analysis of Gobbledygook in Press Releases



Tip: Get a copy of ‘Tested Advertising Methods’ by John Caples and treat it as your copywriting university. It’s especially useful for offer testing and headline ideas.

We’ve reviewed dozens of books on copywriting and there’s almost nothing new under the sun since Caples wrote his classic book way back in 1932. Now in its fifth edition, it’s not been out of print for more than 70 years – this should tell you something. Copies are available for about \$16 everywhere books are sold, including MarketingSherpa’s online bookstore.

#1. Your headline should match the headline someone clicked from (or search engine keyword term a visitor used to find you) as much as possible. Exactly matching verbiage is far better than a close match.

#2. Your body copy should not digress or otherwise go off point. It’s meant to explain the headline and conversion offer. It’s not for talking about the overarching glories of your company and other products and services. If you lose focus, you lose conversions. It’s that simple.

#3. You will inevitably write far longer copy than is needed. We're not saying long copy is bad; it can be extremely effective. But your copy must be tight. No excess words, no extra sentences, no long-winded introductions. That's impossible on the first try. Don't bother. Instead, write everything you'd like to say, and then go back and boil it down, boil it down, boil it down. Don't lose any of the points, just cut excess verbiage.

Many 500-word landing pages that convert badly could be boiled to 100-word landing pages that convert better.

#4. Don't start by saying: "Welcome." It's not 1996 anymore.

#5. Get rid of words such as "we" and "our" in favor of words like "You" and "Your." It's natural to write your first copy round from the perspective of your company – we are great, we do this, we do that – but it just turns off incoming readers. They are selfish; they just want to know about themselves.

#6. People read the first three words of paragraphs and bulleted items ... and then they often stop reading and skip on to the next paragraph and/or bulleted item. Try reading your copy that way. Do you have critical words close enough to the start of sentences so your copy is persuasive without reading on?

#7. People read the tops and bottoms of things before they read the middles (if they bother to read the middles at all.) Your first and last paragraph, and your first and last items on lists will be the most read. Don't bury your most appealing points in the middle; put the least interesting stuff there, instead.

#8. Keep your first paragraph short – no more than one to two lines long. Then alter lengths fairly regularly. Follow a fat paragraph with a one-line one. This makes copy vastly more interesting and accessible to the eye.

#9. No paragraph should be longer than 4-5 lines, ever, ever, ever! Again, this means you need fixed-width columns so you can see exactly how long a paragraph will be to the viewer. You also should write your copy on a page that's set up using the same typeface, font size, and column width as your landing page. That way you're not tempted to put more copy in than will fit.

#10. Test turning prose content into charts. This was another big hit in tests for Palo Alto Software as well as many other marketers who've tried it.

Sample 2.64: Palo Alto Software Landing Page Prose

Prose Copywriting (loser)

Both versions include:
100+ Sample Business Plans
 Our extensive sample plan library will save you time with more than 100 free sample business plans that can be viewed and edited by you.
[Learn More](#)

Import from Quickbooks
 Upload your numbers and accounts and seamlessly bring your balance information from Quickbooks into Business Plan Pro.
[Learn More](#)

SBA Loan Application
 To help you get the financing you need, an SBA loan application and various capital databases are included.
[Learn More](#)

Refined Forecast
 Simply enter your information into the forecast wizard and your plan will be populated in the format that banks, lenders and VCs look for.
[Learn More](#)

Your Unique Plan
 With Business Plan Pro you have complete flexibility to customize your plan to match your unique business.
[Learn More](#)

Your Industry Profile
 Benefit from over 9,000 industry profiles with valuable data to assist with planning for your business.
[Learn More](#)

Table with Checkboxes (winner)

Key Features	PRO	PRO+
More Than 100 Sample Business Plans	✓	✓
Thousands of industry profiles	✓	✓
Complete text editors and automatic updates	✓	✓
Microsoft Excel-like financial tables	✓	✓
Various capital databases and SBA loan application	✓	✓
Advanced Financial Statements		✓
Collaboration Features		✓
User defined tables		✓

Writing for Different Interest Levels

You can assume that almost every audience hitting your landing page can be broken down again by how they like to take in information.

Someone may be doing a highly directed search for your service; they want detailed information, and they'll take the time to read it. On the other hand, most visitors are much more likely to skim bullet points than read in-depth copy. The best way to anticipate the needs of both groups is to write a page that provides layers of information.

Layer 1: The headline

There are some visitors who simply want to confirm that they are in the right place, and that the action they are about to take is what they thought it was. For these people, the headline may be the only thing they read before taking action.

- The headline should boil down the compelling idea that has brought someone to the page.
- Duplicate the headline or main idea from the lead source. If the email said, "How to achieve higher email deliverability," make sure the headline says that too – either verbatim or using most of the same words.
- Avoid metaphor or imagery. Enigmatic writing can be very compelling, but is usually unnecessary in landing page headlines. The visitor is already intrigued. If you have been using a consistent image, then use a subhead or hyphen to explain what it means immediately. For example: "Thinking Inside the Box – New Processors Revolutionize Artificial Intelligence."

As Imran Kahn, E-LOAN's Customer Acquisition Marketing Director, says, "Catchy or clever headlines don't work. State it clearly. If you want a user to open a checking account, say 'Open a checking account.' "

Layer 2: Summary

It's up to you whether the summary is in paragraph form or in bullet points. You should make that decision based on how people interact with the information, not on how you want them to.

- The purpose of the summary is to summarize, not convince. When someone is finished with the summary, they should know if they're in the right place – what the page is offering and what actions can take place from here.
- A reader who has completed the summary should be highly targeted by the time they finish. If they click, it's because they fully understand what clicking means, and they are a member of the target audience.

Layer 3: Major points

As the reader scans the page, they should easily pick out the major points of information. Even if the page is a combination of bullets, sentences and paragraphs, the form should make it clear what is important.

- Highlight your major points, whether by position, bold text, white space,color, font, size or graphical emphasis.
- Major points should be important enough that more information is available about them. If long copy follows the summary, on the landing page or via link, there should be a paragraph or sub-points for each major point.

Layer 4: Detailed copy

Whether you get to this level of detail depends entirely on the campaign specifics. Audience type, offer, promotions, and a host of other variable contribute to the nature of the page. It may not be necessary – it may be counterproductive, in fact – to get into detailed copy on a landing page.

- Your detailed copy should mirror the major points, and it should be obvious to the reader in the first sentence of each paragraph which of the major points it refers to.
- Readers at this level are motivated, and are probably trying to judge your offer or product vs. another. This is a place to differentiate beyond feature and benefit, and provide your company's unique context. What problem did the company want to fix when it started? Why did you develop this product and not another?

- Features are important, but chances are every competitor in the space has similar features, or they say they do. To separate from them, get away from superlatives and give examples of what the product or service can do, and how specific people are benefiting from using it.

Long copy vs. short copy

It's funny that the question of whether to use short or long copy is generally framed as a debate. Copy length depends entirely on the situation – who is reading what, where they're reading it, and why they're bothering.

Often but not always, longer copy tends to work for:

- Hard offers (buy now) for pricey sales – products costing more than \$500.
- Health-and-wealth – offers for products or services related to health or money, such as a stock market tips newsletter.
- Seniors – Consumers over 60 tend to like more information before they purchase. Their eyes are not as comfortable staring at a computer screen as younger people, however, so make sure your point size is larger.
- Readers – if you're marketing a reading-related product (a book, a lengthy newsletter, etc.), longer copy can make the difference.
- Technical products – If a buying decision requires pages of technical specs, then post pages of technical specs.

Sample 2.65: Long-Copy Opt-In Form

The Untourist

The Woman Who Can't be Bribeed

Have You Ever Been Bribeed?

I have, frequently. I'll explain more in a moment, but first a quick introduction. My name is Georgina Adams, and I'm the editor of The Untourist.

My readers get the truth about travel and travelers. A no-holds-barred look at the real world out there. If a place is worth going to, you'll hear about it. If somewhere doesn't live up to expectations, you'll hear about that, too.

Now, I need to be up-front with you—Georgina Adams is an assumed name. This isn't because I'm on the run from police, creditors, immigration officials, or the taxman. It's because I travel incognito for The Untourist.

I don't want any special favors. And if hoteliers and restaurateurs can't see me coming, they can't give me a false impression of their establishment. "Who's Georgina Adams? Oh, nobody special...just another tourist nonentity."

I've traveled the globe for more years than I care to remember. (Adding it up, I've visited more than 60 countries, some many times over.) I've also authored a number of travel books as well as hundreds of travel articles. This isn't to boast, but to explain why I get inundated with offers of what the travel trade calls "hospitality."

You might call it bribery and corruption.

You see, ordinary tourists have nothing like the same experiences as many travel journalists. Once some people in the hospitality business hear my real name, they know I'm high-profile. They assume that like many other writers, I can be bought with "special favors."

Free hotel stays. Free meals. Free everything. On one occasion in a hotel in Greece, my room was stocked with an open bar. Even the champagne was constantly replenished.

The unspoken deal between hosts and many writers and editors is this: in return for free hospitality, their travel publications will give the establishment a glowing review.

Is this fair to the reader? I don't think so.

I hate the travel industry's conspiracy to delude readers that everywhere in the world is perfect...worth seeing...worth spending your hard-earned dollars on.

So, here's my promise to you. Everything you'll hear about in The Untourist won't involve any free "hospitality." You—and the travel trade—may not always like what you'll read, but you can expect complete and unvarnished honesty.

Sign up today to join The Untourist—it's free.

Georgina Adams
The Untourist

Email

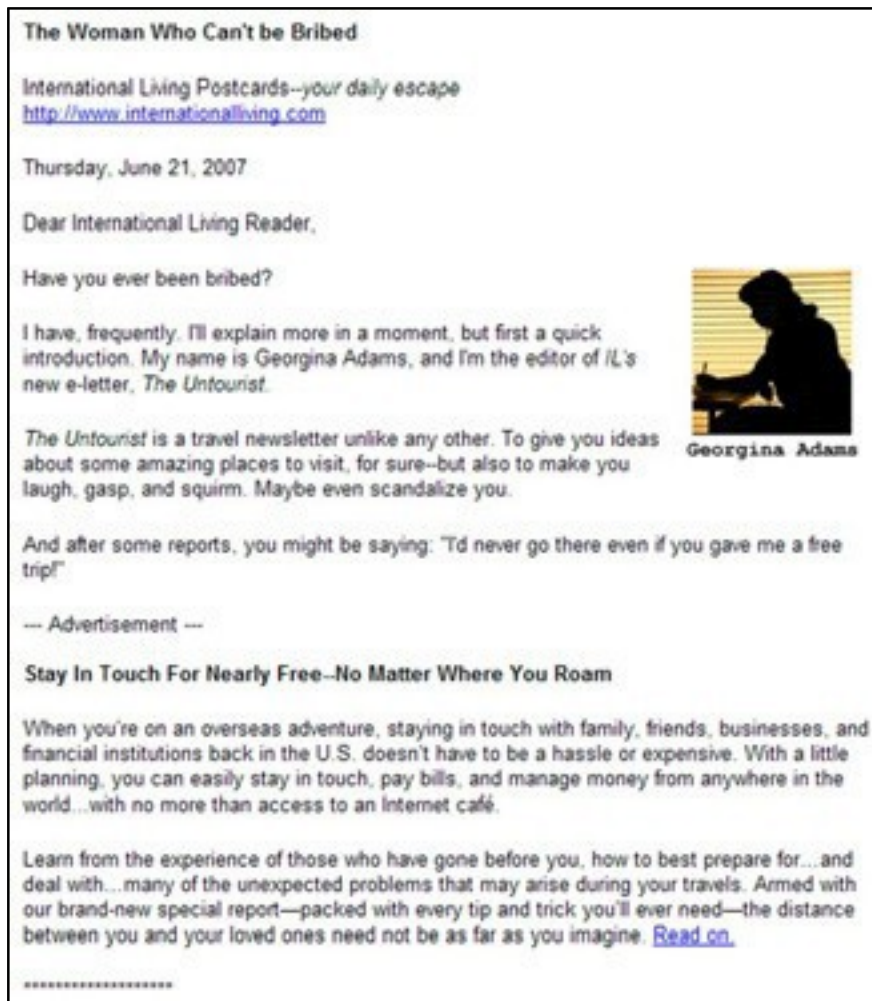
Sign Up

Sign up today to receive International Living's The Untourist...
FREE!

Email

Sign Up

Sample 2.66: Email Campaign



Several MarketingSherpa Case Studies have revealed anecdotal evidence that the shorter the copy the better for free offers. Marketers that tested well-written benefit copy for free white paper downloads and business information offers actually saw their conversion rates leap as soon as they slashed the copy to just a sentence or two.

Why? We suspect that copy length itself sends a signal to many visitors. Long copy may imply that the conversion decision is a *big* one; they need a lot of information to make up their minds. For a free offer, it may just look like too much work, or imply that your registration form carries a bigger commitment than they're willing to OK. Short copy implies that this decision is no big deal so, what the heck, go for it.

On the other hand, the presence of long copy for a paid offering may be extremely reassuring to shoppers, even if they don't read every word before converting. They feel safe that your site really understands the product or service, and their questions will be answered. The types of consumers who like to carefully read labels before making

selections in the grocery store may leave a brief-copy landing page quickly because they can tell at one glance it won't have enough information for their shopping style.

Example: Skype wanted to give enough information and benefits messaging on its homepage, which served as a landing page for word-of-mouth traffic, to help persuade visitors to convert. They and their testing marketing services agency, OTTO Digital, wondered, however, if the fairly short copy should be even shorter. OTTO's Jonathan Mendez explains: "Our hypothesis was that due to the viral and word-of-mouth nature of Skype, the majority of users likely already had determined that they wanted to download prior to landing on the page. We decided to radically simplify the homepage by removing all elements except these five:

1. Brand Logo
2. Global Navigation
3. Headline
4. Call to Action
5. Branded Benefit Imagery"

Results? It turns out radical simplicity gained 5% more customers than the original homepage. Will this also work for your brand? You can only tell by testing.

Sample 2.67: Skype's Control Page (Test Loser)



Sample 2.68: Skype's Micro-Short Copy Page (Test Winner)



Writing to Multiple Segments

As we stated at the very start of this chapter, your campaign may have multiple audiences (aka Segments). In this case, we strongly urge you to create multiple landing pages – one per segment. This is particularly critical for search engine marketing (which is discussed in more depth in the next chapter.)

What if your page absolutely has to appeal to multiple demographics and there's just no way around it? This is where great copywriting can save you. First, remove the images on the page that might unintentionally signal that you're trying to appeal to a limited demographic.

Then carefully include both in a bulleted list and in prose paragraphs (if the page has the latter), a bullet point and a paragraph of copy written specifically for each of your particular demographics. This can be as simple as calling out their names: "Kids click here" or "Parents click here."

You can be more subtle. Focus on verbiage each persona in your file would themselves use to explain what they were looking for on your landing page.

Sample 2.69: Leo Schachter Homepage Targeting 7 Personas



This homepage has specific pieces of copy and navigation designed to catch the attention of no fewer than seven personas, including male and female shoppers.

Key: When trying this approach, always test the order of copy. For example, Bankrate got a 35% improvement in page conversions by changing copy order. The Motley Fool tested the same idea for a 19% jump in conversions.

Copywriting URLs or Domain Names for Landing Pages

Domain names may be one of the most important copywriting decisions you make. Marketers often create vanity URLs for campaigns via search marketing as well as offline media to raise response rates. (Note: Don't try using the URL www.VanityURL.com, though, the marketers at NutriSystems already bought that one.)

A few tips:

Search marketing: Including the search term in the URL can boost clicks and boost landing page conversions because it implies extreme relevancy in a more trusted fashion than search-ad headline copy.

Direct postal mail: Most people stop typing after they get to ".com" and just click enter because (a) most people don't like typing or are lazy and (b) everyone knows a ".com" will get you to a live page on the Web without having to keep typing more stuff.

Radio & TV: Buy every typo and alternate spelling for your URL that you can and have them redirect to the right place. Consider launching special URLs for region “SaltLakeBraSale.com” or by station name “Brasale.wxyz.com.” Also, add a big fat director in the center of your homepage – something that says “Radio listeners click here” both textually and visually – to catch traffic that goes home by mistake.

Print ads: Don’t stick a URL in small type at the very bottom of the ad and call it a direct-response campaign. It’s not. It’s a brand-awareness campaign with a tiny useless URL tacked on. If landing page traffic is the point, then build the ad creative with the URL as the central focus. And make it easy to spell!

Personalized Landing Pages (PURLs)

Personalized landing pages, also called “PURLs,” are called what they are because they are promoted via personal URLs. Example: <http://www.widget.com/BobSmith>.

PURLs are used most often to aid response rates in postal direct mail campaigns, although we’ve seen them in email campaigns as well. They’re very popular right now; organizations ranging from Canon’s printer division to the US Army’s recruiting department have used PURLs with success despite increased campaign costs.

You may see a response lift from any or all of the following factors:

#1. Ego: Who doesn’t like to see their name in print? Only problem, you **MUST** spell each recipient’s name properly including capitalization. This generally requires quite a bit of database clean-up prior to the mailing. We don’t know a single marketer whose database spells every name correct, even if that data was entered by your customers themselves. Guaranteed there are typos, and guaranteed you will be blamed for them.

#2. Form pre-population: Working with the agency Naehas, marketers at Exclusive Resorts tested a PURL campaign with and without form pre-population on the landing page. Results were striking. The empty form got a 36% conversion rate, which is awfully good. The prefilled form got a 55% conversion rate, which is absolutely fantastic.

#3. Segmented copy: Some but not all PURL-marketers use different copy and benefits for different parts of the list. This can work extremely well, as long as you’ve got a good copywriter and you truly do understand your segments. In our experience, fewer marketers can give an unqualified “yes” on both counts.

Dealing With Delayed Conversions

A 2007 ScanAlert research report showed that consumers now delay on average of 34 hours and 19 minutes from the time they first click to an ecommerce site and when they finally buy something there.

Any marketer who measures conversions solely by click to immediate sale, therefore, is blind to the vast majority of his or her success.

The bigger news broken in this report, however, is stunning trend data. Back in 2005, when the study was conducted for the first time, consumers took an average of 19 hours to convert. Over the past two years, that delay time has risen by 80%. So more consumer comfort in shopping online equals *longer* conversion cycles. That's something none of us ever predicted would happen.

The problem seems to be that consumers are comparison-shopping more than buying at the first place they click to. As studies for the past seven years have concurred, price is rarely the biggest deciding factor. Instead, issues such as shipping speed, guarantees, on-site merchandising, merchant name-brand and, of course, site trustworthiness, all play a role.

MarketingSherpa's top six tests you should consider in trying to win the delayed conversion wars are:

#1. Add "About Us" blurbs to every conceivable entry point

Nearly every site page you have now is a landing page for a click (especially if you have fabulous SEO.) By bypassing your homepage, however, consumers also bypass much of the warm-fuzzy content about who you are as a brand.

Merchant brand matters. Have you tried adding an "about us" blurb sidebar or extra copy block to all landing pages? Does the content in it emphasize why people should buy from you rather than someone else offering the exact same item? Do those reasons go beyond price alone? (I sure hope so.)

This is a good place to pop in all that feel-secure info, including various icons of trustworthiness and "as seen in" fame. It's also a great place to put any evidence of tangible offline existence, such as a photo of your flagship store or a real-life customer service person waiting to answer questions.

#2. Grab emails early on – before the shopping cart

This is especially important if you don't have a truly famous household brand name. Don't rely on consumers' memory alone to get them to return to your site.

Instead, consider testing a DHTML overlay offering an email opt-in offer (perhaps a % off coupon for first purchase to be sent via email). Trigger it to appear when first-time visitors add something to their carts, or when they spend more than three minutes examining a particular item.

If you wait to ask for email permission at checkout, you'll miss the opportunity to promote to fleeing shoppers.

#3. Content: Give more product info than the competition does

If you rely on data feeds from manufacturers alone, chances are you don't have enough content on product pages to convert those "in consideration" shoppers. This type of thoughtful shopper is the perfect person to become engrossed in:

- Long copy – as in more than 150 words, better yet, more than 400 words.
- Tech specs, product details and trivia of all kinds.
- Shipping data and in-stock data.
- Reviews – customers, "experts" and press.
- Comparison charts with similar products.

#4. Exclusive here-only bonuses

If you sell something that's truly indistinguishable from items available elsewhere, consider creating a line of "extras" to offer as a free gift with purchase for your top-sellers.

Often, that extra can be nothing more than a PDF eBook on something related to the topic. (Top 100 Tips to Get the Most from Your Digital Camera; 5 Mistakes to Avoid When Buying Gifts for Men; Easy Recipes; 25 Best Web Sites for New Parents; User Handbook for ... etc.)

Depending on your product, the eBook doesn't need to be more than five pages long, as long as it has some entertainment or practical value.

Or you can toss in any extra your fulfillment department will let you come up with that extends your brand without raising shipping costs too much. This could range from an extra single long-stemmed rose to a bag of scented confetti or silly imprinted balloons.

#5. Limited Offer Copy

It's a classic copywriting ploy to raise conversions from consumers who might otherwise delay. Either give a specific deadline (and stick to it.) Or limit the number of possible responses (and stick to it.) If people know they only have until Friday or only the first 100 orders will be accepted, they're more likely to act quickly.

#6. Returning Visitors Get a Different Landing Page

Example: Monster.com cookies all landing page visitors for two weeks. If you return to an offer page during that time (and your cookies haven't been wiped), you might see a different offer from what you saw the first time. For example, an offered discount might be higher this time. General Manager Rathin Sinha says the tactic is "very successful."

Error Handling for Landing Pages

Landing pages seem to break more often than other pages, owing to generally tight production schedules. By examining your error files, you can not only prevent further issues but, in some cases, diagnose issues with how users interact with your landing page forms. Form design guru Caroline Jarrett has identified the types of problem which cause errors, and the meaning of some common errors.

1. Typing errors. People hit the wrong key. Unless the person has a real typing problem, these errors are likely to be confined to the occasional field on the form.
2. Transcription errors. These happen when a person is copying information from one place to another, like reading a number from a credit card and typing it on-screen. Transcription errors are frequently swaps (the user types 4311 instead of 3411)
3. Category errors. These happen when the categories you offer do not match the answer that the user wants to give you. For example, a USA site may insist that I enter the “state” as part of my address (I don’t live in a USA state) or insists that you enter a USA state rather than an Australian one. Category errors can also be out-of-range. For example, a user might truly want to purchase 1,000 of an item where you’re only expecting to sell 10 units at a time.
4. Send errors. These happen when the person presses the ‘send’ or ‘submit’ button either deliberately or inadvertently when only part-way through the form. Your server gets a page with many blank entries.
5. Privacy errors. These happen when the person decides that the question you have asked is inappropriate in context. They leave the field blank but you want it to be completed.

On the whole, we’d expect typing and transcription errors to be confined to a small number of fields on the form. It would be best to show the error close to the problem. You’d expect the field to be partly or fully filled by the user, but not to match your expected input.

Category errors are tricky. The problem here is that your site’s view of your users doesn’t align with their own opinions. It’s also rather hard for your programmers to distinguish between category, typing and transcription errors. The important point is to ensure that your error messages are assistive (“We regret that we’re only able to ship within Australia at the moment”) rather than accusatory (“Invalid state”).

If you get a number of category errors, the first thing to examine is whether you have an unexpected audience that doesn’t fall into the groups you predicted, and an audience with characteristics that don’t fit your form fields (like international visitors being asked for a mandatory ZIP code).

The other thing to look at is whether one of your fields is unclear or asks for something that many people can't answer but feel obligated to try. For example, if a form asks for "Product Code" or "Promo Code" and users don't have one, many people will try to input data even though they don't have it.

Send errors are likely to affect many fields across the form and, in the database, look like a largely blank record. Users should receive an error notification letting them know that their form was submitted blank in case they aren't sure what happened. If you see a high number of send errors, you should examine the placement of your submit button. It may be too easy to accidentally press it when doing something else.

Privacy errors are even trickier than category errors. Depending on the ordering of fields, you may be able to tell that you're getting some privacy errors by the presence of blank or default entries scattered through the form, such as sporadic blank entries in mandatory fields. You can sometimes tell if a privacy error might be likely by examining the data you're getting. If you find that many of your users are called Mickey Mouse and live in an obscure country, then that's an indicator of privacy errors. You can sometimes help your users through these by explaining why the data you're asking for is essential to completing the transaction. "Marketing wants it" is unlikely to be sufficient but "we are required by law X in jurisdiction Y" might be successful (if true).

Sometimes you can improve the privacy error rate by moving questions so that the reason for asking is apparent from the context. Street address is more likely to be entered correctly if you ask for it in the context of 'where do you want this item shipped'. If you suspect that a privacy error might be likely on a field or area of the form, then it may be more convenient to opt for a separate error message. This gives more space for a polite explanation and a link to your privacy and security policy.

Pop-Ups That Chase People Who Leave the Page

This is definitely a feature to test that's easy to implement, and easy to test. When someone clicks off your landing page, it sparks a pop-up focused on returning them to the process. Some successful examples simply announce that the shopper is eligible for the next level of discount.

Others ask them why they're leaving. Not only does this work to re-engage the user, it will provide you with valuable feedback. Depending on the nature of your offer, it may make sense to use a radio button of the most popular answers. However, this is less personal.

Sample 2.70: VistaPrint discount pop-up



After they convert – tips for Thank You pages

Almost every landing page conversion ends in a thank you page, yet they are the most underutilized elements of the campaign.

Thank you page creative is usually nothing more than a simple confirmation that an action has occurred. That's a true waste, when these pages are, by definition, seen by highly qualified prospects or buyers for your products and services. Studies have shown that consumers really pay attention to your thank you page. They are in prime reading and interacting mode at this moment in time. Why not take advantage of it?

Here are some tips:

White Paper Thank Yous

1. If someone has just submitted their information in exchange for a white paper, they are only part of the way towards a relationship with you. Chances are they wanted the white paper, and only submitted their information because they had to.

The thank you page is an opportunity to get closer. Use the space to promote your newsletter or a webinar. Highlight an executive interview or a case study. Tell a specific story to get them engaged. Simply sending them to the homepage may work, but only if your homepage features interesting information. Marketing superlatives about your newest product won't work.

2. As above, this is an excellent place to launch a small applet asking for the user's feedback. You can either mine for marketing info, like their title, or try to engage them. For example, get their vote on a poll that will be featured in your next newsletter. The challenge is to make the interaction interesting for the user. An innovative interaction will stick in their minds. Anything less is just another piece of Internet flotsam.

Registration or Sweepstakes Thank Yous

1. They've registered, but they still haven't converted. In fact, they may not know or care much about your product. The thank you page for the registration process is a prime opportunity to capture their interest beyond the contest.
2. Make the product/offer the primary message of the page. While you're letting people know that the registration process is over, and thanking them, make sure the main campaign goal is front and center.
3. Give them several options for more information, and offer different kinds of information for readers at various levels.

Sample 2.71: Anritsu Thank You Landing Page



This example takes advantage of several best practices. It makes the product the star of the Thank You, and uses a testimonial quote integrated graphically with the Thank You to refocus visitors to the offer. It also offers several different types of information about the product.

Email Opt-in Thank Yous

You can go in several directions with these depending on your brand's primary business model. If your biggest goal is to get more opt-ins, you can use the thank you page to make a direct response offer for additional opt-in opportunities.

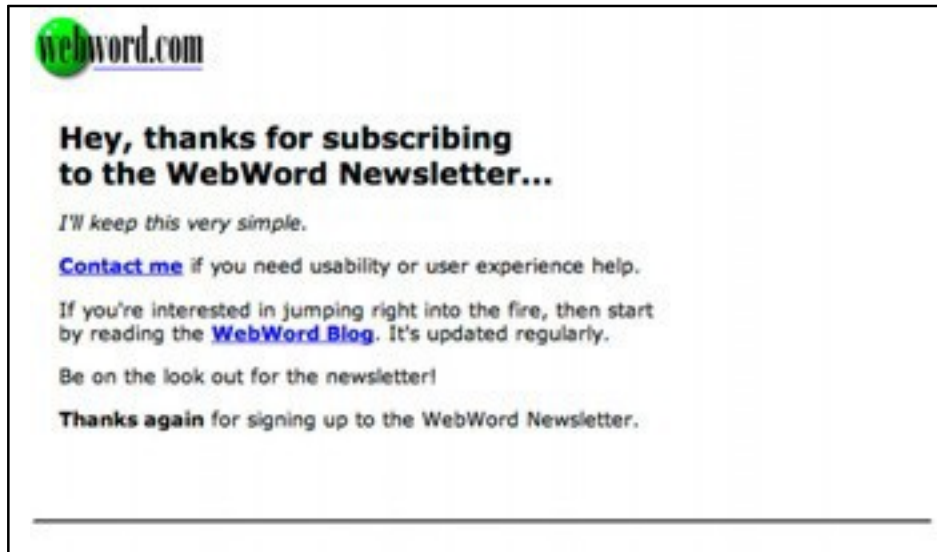
MarketingSherpa uses this tactic for our opt-in thank you page. As of early 2007, our stats showed 39% of all visitors to that thank you page had taken advantage of another offer. The most popular offer on that page gets a 29% acceptance rate, which is great, but not the whole 39%. That means giving folks a choice on that page has helped our overall offer conversions increase by 10 percentage points.

Sample 2.72: MarketingSherpa's Thank You Landing Page

[illegible]

Here's an example of another outstanding simple-yet-powerful Thank You page for email newsletter opt-ins.

Sample 2.73: WebWord.com Newsletter Thank You Page



Warning: Multiple Offers Can Be Dangerous

Multiple Offers are usually the WORST thing you can do on a landing page, so thank you pages are a little unusual. Data shows that on an initial landing page, people want one clear decision to make to convert. If you offer them several options, it makes them stop and think, and some inevitably decide to leave the page.

We've seen only four situations where this may not be true:

#1. Thank you pages (as discussed here.)

#2. Price deal pages: If you offer more than one price, you'll generally depress response unless one of the two is positioned in such a way that it makes the other appear to be incredibly valuable. This tactic can help visitors over the "that sounds like a lot of money" hump. Example: Select \$19.95 per month or \$29.95 per year (value \$239.40!)

#3. Response choices: Sometimes you can raise response rates by offering multiple ways to respond to a single offer. For example, both a toll free 800 number and a big fat submit button are displayed.

#4. Shopping pages where more is more often only works really well if your visitors are (a) already customers and (b) are in enjoyable shopping mode. Ecommerce customers returning to a favorite store when everything is 25% off for the next 24 hours, or romance seekers searching the database for singles like themselves are good examples.

Chapter 3: Advanced Landing Pages: Search, Email, Blogs & More ...

Now that you have the basics down, let's dive into how you can tweak your landing pages for optimum conversions. How you tweak it depends on where the traffic is coming from and if the traffic is business-to-business.

Paid Search Engine Marketing Campaign Landing Pages

Optimizing landing pages took on new fervor in the search marketing world when Google announced its Quality Score, and Yahoo and MSN Search followed with their own versions. We have heard plenty of debate from the SEM world about whether search engines' landing page relevancy scoring is any good for advertisers. (Some think the technology is mostly used to boost the engines' profits, rather than help marketers. To which we respond: it's a capitalist society.)

No matter, we feel this development has helped landing pages as a whole by drawing even more attention to their importance. Landing pages are crucial in paid search marketing as well as all other PPC (pay per click) and CPC (cost per click) ad environments because conversion is the "X Factor" that allows some marketers to outbid the pack for essential keywords.

Here's the easy way to understand the impact of conversion on paid search:

Let's say that your conversion rate is 2% and that allows you to pay \$1 for each click. Chances are that others are competing for the same keyword, which drives up the price of top ranking. At \$1, you're not getting prime positioning and you're getting fewer qualified clicks. If you can raise your conversion rate by 1%, it should allow you to pay \$1.50 per click. This will move your ranking up and increase your qualified visitors.

However, this well-known math doesn't mean all search marketers are using best practices in developing their landing pages. The top three best practices are:

#1. Don't send traffic to your homepage unless it's unbearably optimized as a landing page and the search was conducted specifically for your domain — and maybe not even then.

#2. Place a highly relevant headline or header copy on the page — preferably containing the keyword searched for.

Sample 3.1: Kayak SEM Marketing Campaign Landing Page

Think it's impossible to include a headline that matches the keyword? Here's an example from Kayak where they not only matched our search phrase in Google exactly — they even matched our typo. According to Kayak's testing firm, Offermatica, this single, seemingly simple reinforcement gave a *71% lift in revenue per visitor* on important product lists and brand pages.

Proving this wasn't a fluke, Offermatica also A/B tested the idea for client Musician's Friend. When users searched Google for a term such as Stratocaster Guitar, they landed on a page that matched the keyword and Google's logo near the top. Results? A 48.35% lift in conversion rate compared to the original landing page, plus a higher average order value per customer from that page. No other creative factor was changed.

Sample 3.2: Musician's Friend Landing Page Matches Keyword



#3. Unless your primary conversion activity is enticing traffic to click on third-party advertisements (such as banners and Google AdSense ads), REMOVE such ads from a landing page completely. You'll never get the kind of conversions you're hoping for if you distract consumers who have already microscopic attention spans with alternate destinations. You just won the "destination war" for a few seconds; take full advantage of it!

Additional SEM PPC Tactics to Test

Each of these suggested tactics is based on best practices we've seen played out in multiple campaigns. Just because something is a best practice for one marketer, however, it doesn't mean it will be the surefire winner for another. Always test.

- When possible, segment keywords by "convert wanna-be" vs. "research-seeker."

You can often make an educated guess, based on the phrasing of a search, if the consumer is in research-only mode or if they are ready to convert. Consider creating two versions of your landing page — which may even feature different offers — based on which type of search you estimate the consumer is engaged in.

For example: research mode searches may contain words such as “Reviews,” “Information,” or “News.” They may appreciate a landing page that’s rich in content and may respond best to soft offers to receive yet more content, such as a PDF download or a printed-and-mailed booklet.

On the other hand, convert-wanna-be searchers may contain words such as “Discount,” “Price,” and “Store,” as well as explicit colors, consumer goods brand names, and apparel sizes. They may respond best to promotional offers, limited time discount coupons, and extremely pinpointed pages focusing purely on the product they were searching for. (Yes, to the exclusion of the rest of your stock. They don’t care that you also carry the boots in red; they were searching for the black ones. How quickly can you deliver?)

- Handling broad search terms

If a term is so incredibly broad that you simply can’t tell which type of search the majority of clickers are engaged in, you have several options for optimization. Your decision of which to use should be based on an internal analysis of your brand’s business goals and challenges. What are your conversion needs?

You can ignore the breadth of the term and focus the entire page solely on one single conversion offer to get the best possible conversion from people who are right for that offer. Or you can go wide, offering a range of information and conversion opportunities to more types of people at the risk of losing significant conversions because of a lack of focus.

If your brand is a high consideration product — such as enterprise software selling well into the six-figures, your best bet may be to opt for the latter, perhaps offering a range of free registration enticements to capture leads throughout the range of the sales cycle (ROI

Why You Should Track Delayed Search Campaign Impact: Your Landing Pages May Be Better Than You Think

If you’re cutting your search budget to target only keywords with immediately obvious ROI (i.e., where clicks convert on the first visit), first consider this real-life story that Michael DeHaven, Ecommerce Marketing Manager, CareerBuilder.com, told us:

“We were beginning to cut the majority of our paid search budget because we were struggling to get any ROI at all. Too many employers who clicked didn’t buy on their first visit.”

Before the final SEM budget decision was made, however, DeHaven asked the tech team to create a new longer-term tracking system that combined multiple databases — initial search tracking cookies, ecommerce activities, the site’s registered user database, and the business development and call center’s CRM systems.

Measured results were beyond dramatic.

“For one paid search team, there was maybe \$10,000 in immediate revenues. When we evaluated it after 15 days, it was \$120,000. When we looked at the delayed impact 30 days out, there was about \$1.2 million. Going further out to 45 days, it was over \$3 million. It blew me away when I saw this.”

That one revelation not only changed CareerBuilder.com’s SEM plans, but it also propelled the marketing team to revamp the homepage and email tactics they had in place to convert those delaying employers.

calculators, white papers, trial downloads, a consulting service hotline, etc. (Note: This is one of the very few circumstances in which we would suggest multiple offers.)

- Don't lump varieties of search engine-related clicks into one metrics report

Some data indicate that visitors clicking from different major search engines may not only perform differently but may prefer slightly different landing pages. Consider the information and color-rich environments of Yahoo! and MSN as opposed to the white space of Google. Even if you can't afford to create and test different landing page styles for each, at the least don't have all the data come into one general "SEM report."

Far more important, NEVER assume different *types* of search-related ads will yield the same audience. The three main types are:

#1. Ads run against search results.

#2. Contextual ads — run against supposedly relevant content while someone is NOT searching.

Many marketers are guilty of lumping paid search and contextual ads together. This isn't entirely your fault; until recently, it wasn't easy to separate the two campaigns on the engines' management systems. That has changed, however, and now you should be testing different landing pages vigorously.

The assumption is that contextual ad clickers are at a different place in the sales cycle — they didn't go out looking for you. Your ad was an impulse click. So their psychology may require more of a "hard sell" than the typical search ad click. Conversely, you may find contextual clicks are more likely to be "readers" than search-engine clickers because they were reading when they saw your ad.

#3. Shopping engine ads — often the second click in a conversion-ready search.

These consumers often are in "active shopping mode," more eager to convert than a typical search user. There's a fairly solid chance they may have reached the shopping engine by first searching in a conventional search engine and clicking on a shopping engine's PPC ad there. So your site is, in effect, the third step in their shopping activity.

Shopping clicks are often more expensive to buy than regular search engines, so your landing page conversions are even more critical. In the past, some shopping engines made precise keyword buying hard if not impossible; marketers were paying for general "lumps" of incoming traffic that was tougher to optimize for. This is no longer the case with most shopping engines. You can now select keywords with greater precision and target the best possible landing pages against them.

Shoppers don't go for the cheapest merchant. Instead they go for convenience, safety, assurance, quality, and customer service. To win the conversion, recognize that

shopping -engine shoppers want to be convinced by an eight-second glance at a landing page that has the following:

- ***Precisely*** what they are looking for in stock now, not a bunch of other stuff
- Safety, security, and trustworthiness
- More exceptional customer service than competitors do
- Can ship quickly and cost effectively
- Is not a fly-by-night operation
- Fully understands the product being sold (more details than competitors)
- Is easy to order from

Sample 3.3: Car Toys SEM Landing Page

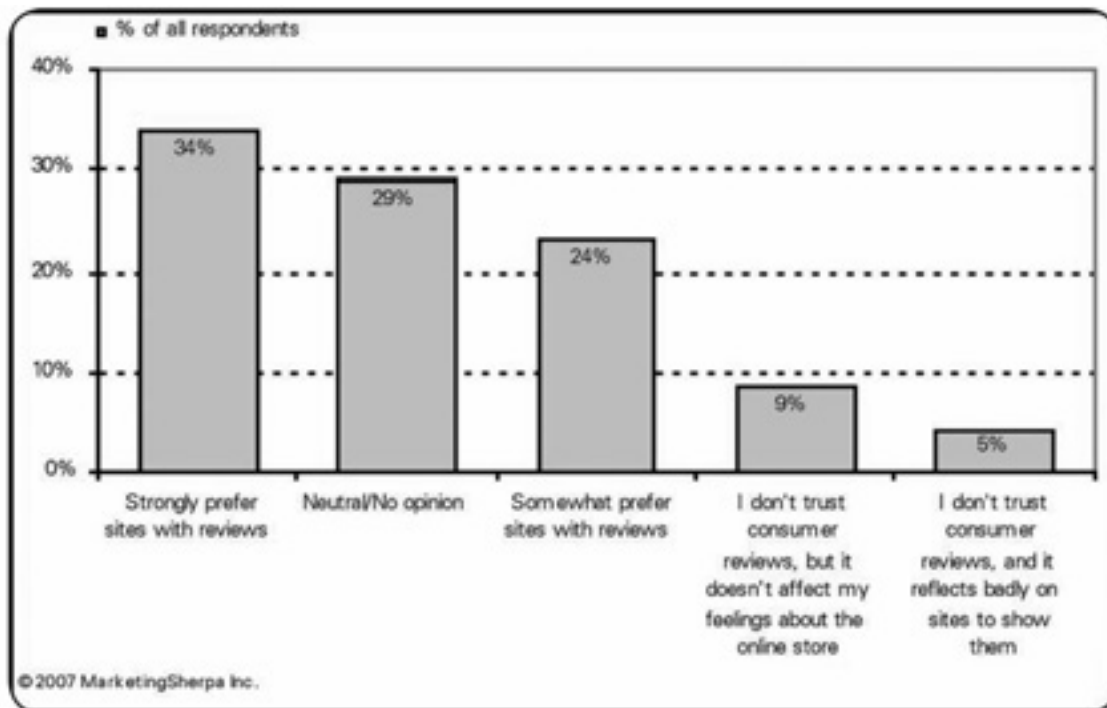


Example: Because of the locations of its offline store chain, Car Toys is a well-known ecommerce brand in some parts of the United States, and almost completely unheard of elsewhere.

Ecommerce Director Glen Hamilton had his Web designers create a separate landing page for every SKU on the site he was advertising on shopping search engines. It featured a segment of copy entitled “The Car Toys Advantage” to explain the site’s positioning to first-time shoppers. Plus, he added a big orange “Price Guard” button offering a low price guarantee. As a result, online sales leaped 500%.

- Reviews nearly always help conversions

Chart 3.4: Consumers Prefer Sites With Customer Reviews



Source: MarketingSherpa and Prospectiv, Online Shopping and Email Relationships, January 2007

Methodology: A survey was fielded to members of the Eversave.com customer panel on Feb. 2, 2007, and closed on Feb. 5, 2007, after receiving 698 responses.

As you can see from the chart, the majority of consumers we surveyed prefer sites with peer-written product reviews: 58% “strongly” or “somewhat” prefer sites that include reviews, while only 14% don’t trust them.

* After PETCO added reviews online, top-rated products were converting at a 49% higher clip; shoppers using the ratings section of the site for navigation spent 63% more than shoppers using other navigation column hotlinks; shoppers who read reviews and shopped via ratings’ navigational hotlinks had an average order size 40% higher than that of the average shopper.

* The president of AWinestore.com told us that adding customer reviews was one of the critical factors that helped his ecommerce sales leap 80% in a single year. (The industry average is 20% growth.)

* Libida.com, an ecommerce site for women, considers reviews so critical to conversions that it inserts fliers into all fulfillment packages that offer reviewers \$25 off their next order (even if the reviews they write are negative).

You don’t need to be an ecommerce marketer to take advantage of the review factor. If you’re selling to consumers offline, use the Web to collect real-life reviews for

repurposing offline. If you're a B-to-B demand-generation marketer, consider adding reviews to your white paper and/or Webinar offers. The psychology is the same — fans love to write them, and prospects love to read them.

Everyone can steal an idea from Amazon.com's book pages — review away!

Sample 3.5: PETCO SEM Landing Page With Reviews



Macy's Tests Revamping Search Landing Pages

When Darren Stoll, Director Marketing Analytics, Macys.com, conducted a page-by-page analysis of the site's conversions in 2006, he discovered SEM landing pages weren't as well optimized as the team had hoped. "We had to ask, 'Is that the page we are fundamentally trying to drive the customer to?' And the answer in a lot of cases was, 'No.' "

Perhaps that's why . . .

- 42% of visitors left immediately after landing on the first page
- 38% abandoned once they proceeded to the second page
- 40% left after going to a third page

The team decided to run three sets of tests:

Test #1. Alter category pages depending on type of keywords used

-Those querying with terms indicating a newness to the online brand, such as "Macy's shoes," were taken to a landing page where they could easily access shoe information and explore the rest of what the site offered.

- Those who arrived after more specific searches, such as "Calvin Klein shoes," saw a landing page with the brand's selections, prices, and links to other selections.

Test #2. Test different landing pages for different search engines

Stoll's analysis showed that Macys.com search clicks acted differently depending upon what search engine they arrived from. So the team began testing different landing pages for their most expensive keyword buys, such as "bed and bath" at Google, Yahoo! and AOL.

Test #3. Fine-tune the navigation bar

Stoll and his team also determined that the left-hand navigation across the site was contributing to abandonment because of too many choices. Consumers engaged in search activity want to see you have exactly what they are looking for — not everything you have.

The design team also wanted to move the major categories above the fold. To do that, they reduced each department's left-hand navigation by 30% —deleting as many as nine categories.

For example, in the men's department, they:

- Combined similar categories, such as Polos & Tees.

- Removed categories that were basically duplicates, such as Shirts Casual and Shirts Dress into the more-encompassing Shirts.
- Removed bottom-performing categories, such as Hoodies & Sweatshirts.
- Alphabetized the order of all classification categories.

Results of all three tests? “We are doing a better job of landing them in a place that enables the final purchase but also, in some cases, introduces them to the online brand,” says Stoll.

Better landing pages have raised conversion rates as much as 17% in the Men’s Department. 21% of their customers are able to locate their desired products when they land on category pages.

By tweaking the navigation bars, the design team reduced what they consider to be time-wasting activity by 30% per user. Getting all of the categories above the fold contributed heavily to the performance increase.

“We are setting better expectations in terms of what we have in that category,” Stoll notes. “The improvements have been spectacular.”

Sample 3.6: Macy’s SEM Landing Page for Calvin Klein Shoes



Warning: Search engine spider traffic is not always a good thing

If you are running campaigns with landing pages that appear to be nearly identical either to each other or to existing pages on your site, we urge you to check with an optimization expert to make sure you're not going to get in trouble. Some search engines (Google most notably) may think you're posting "mirror" pages on purpose to fool their spiders into giving you higher rankings. Any duplicitous action like this can hurt your organic rankings.

Many marketers ask their landing page team to add code to the pages that tells the spiders not to index these particular pages. The protocols for excluding or allowing spiders are simple and available on many developers' sites, as well as search engine resources. In a nutshell, there is a file called robots.txt that spiders look for in your root directory. Once they find the file, they check to find characters that include or exclude files, file types, and folders.

To universally allow spiders:

```
User-agent: *  
Disallow:
```

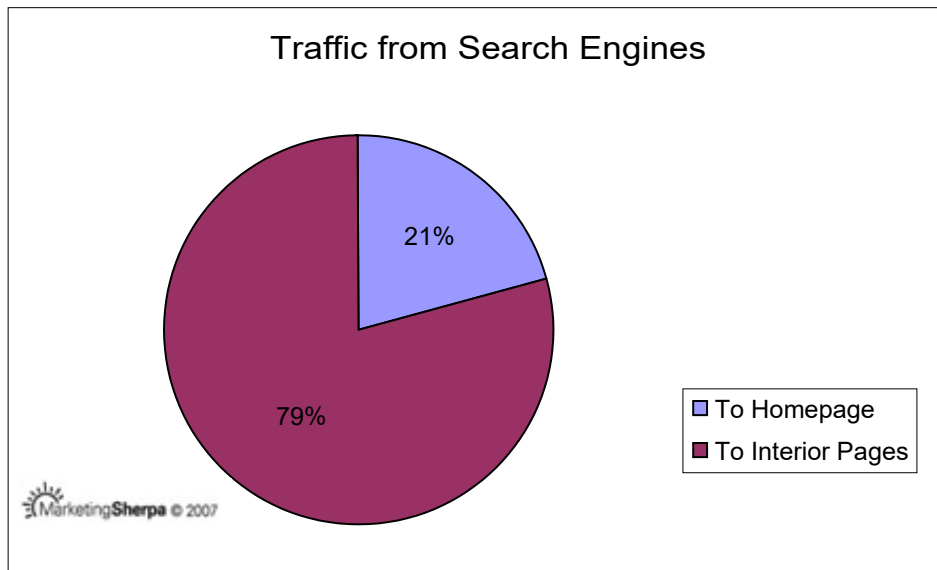
This one keeps all spiders out:

```
User-agent: *  
Disallow: /
```

Landing Pages for Organic Search Campaigns

If your site is properly optimized, every page is now a landing page. Check your stats. What percent of your incoming traffic from organic (aka natural) search engines listings goes to your homepage? Chances are the vast majority went to an internal page instead.

Chart 3.7: Organic Search Traffic to MarketingSherpa.com 2007



Before we delve into how to turn your secondary pages into better landing pages for conversion purposes, we must note that this doesn't mean your homepage isn't still important. Two types of search-related traffic are still hitting your homepage, and it has to perform to please all of them:

Type #1. Our mothers (and probably yours, too)

When they want to go to a Web site, our mothers type the URL into a major search engine instead of into their browser window. (We suspect they may not know how to use the browser at all.) According to search-engine stats, millions of searches every week are conducted this way. The consumer could have gone direct but didn't. Instead, they click on the first organic listing. Hopefully, it's your homepage.

To help this crowd who certainly already know who you are — they were looking for you, after all, the best homepage is one that serves as a site map with all the most useful links and/or response tools conveniently above the fold. For this reason, homepage design that gives a huge portion of the top and middle screen over to static promotional content (which roughly 80% of B-to-B Web sites from larger companies do) doesn't work well. These users want to find what they are looking for, not admire your latest space ad or tagline.

Type #2. Landing page visitors who want to know more about you

These people are most often brand new to your site and/or who stumbled in via search. The landing page either doesn't answer their key questions completely or it doesn't instill enough trust. Either way, instead of converting there and then, the visitors click on your logo (or other nav device) to surface up to your homepage quickly to check out who you really are.

Web usability expert Steve Krug calls this activity the “up periscope,” like when a submarine underwater pops up a periscope to get its bearings.

To please this crowd, your homepage should have clear trust-building and “what we do/who we are” elevator pitch content well above the fold. This basic factual information is *more important* than your latest promotion or a pretty graphic image. It should be concise, buzzword-free, and without acronyms. It should include information such as geography and types of clients served, and specializations.

In addition, consider adding wording and/or hotlinks to your main navigation bar that match the keywords that drive the majority of visitors to your site. Probably a very few keywords are responsible for big lumps of your organic traffic. Once they get to your homepage, you want to give them a hotlink trail to find their way back to the reason they came to your site in the first place. (Some people don't use the back button.)

How do you know if your homepage design is working? Easy. Use Web analytics to do path analysis for these two particular types of visitors. Is your homepage their site exit page? If so, you've got a problem.

Three Ways to Turn Deep Pages Into Landing Pages

Tip #1. Sprinkle on plenty of offers

Example: Software marketers at Mysis EMR added a clickable list of response options to the far right column of *every page* of the product's search engine optimized microsite. No matter where people entered the site, a variety of conversion offers were right in front of them. Here's the static right column that appeared on more than 100 optimized pages that received traffic:

Sample 3.8: Mysis EMR SEO Microsite Options Page



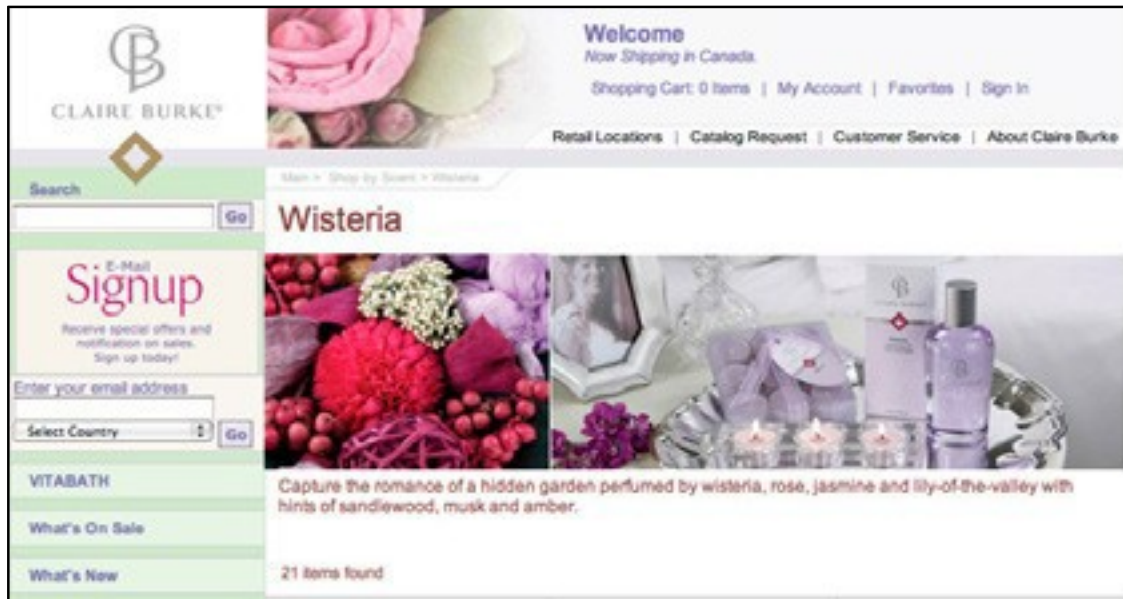
Another example: AbeBooks.com knew that visitors who land on non-product-specific pages are less likely to purchase immediately. So they turned the main conversion activity of these pages into an email opt-in gathering exercise. They sprinkled opt-in offers in every possible nook and cranny.

Sample 3.9: AbeBooks Landing Page With Opt-in Offers



One more example: Every single page of the Claire Burke Web site has an email request form; hotlinks for catalog request, retail locations, and customer service, and a search box all well above the fold.

Sample 3.10: Claire Burke SEM Landing Page With Request Form



Tip #2. Include hotlinks to plenty more directly relevant pages on your site

Chances are good these visitors are in prime “information-seeking mode.” The more highly relevant information you can provide to their search, the more likely they are to stay on your site until they either convert or remember your URL well enough to visit again.

Example: Clickability’s imWARE ran a 90-day test with an online publisher to see if they could get more page views from search visitors who arrived deep into the site. Their tactic: Adding a “Most Popular List” of related articles at the end of every article caused average page views to improve by 30%.

CBS is one of the best online publishers whose design is aimed at getting every deep click from search to continue clicking and clicking. Here are two example pages, both chosen from the same day’s headlines on Google News:

Sample 3.11: CBS Deep Click Landing Pages



Tip #3. Test

It's funny to think, but probably 1,000 PPC search landing page tests are conducted for every organic search landing page test. Understandably, marketers feel that if they have to pay per click they may as well make the most of their investment. However, MarketingSherpa data show organic traffic can convert as well or better than PPC traffic for many sites. If you're not optimizing organic landing pages, you're leaving money on the table. Just because the traffic is "free" doesn't mean you should turn your nose up at it.

Inspirational Story: Print Subscription Marketer Tests Organic Landing Page Revamp

"We were very happy with our traffic, but we were never very happy with our conversion rates," says John Brady, referring to organic search metrics for Business & Legal Reports (BLR) before 2006. A few took subscription trials or bought something, "but most just seemed to disappear."

Brady changed the goal of the search-facing site to growing his list — generating email opt-ins, with registered leads first and foremost. He could sell them on the back end after that. With that in mind, what page tweaks would work best to convert search traffic into lists for further marketing? Brady identified the three search terms that generated the highest traffic for their largest sub-site, <http://HR.BLR.com>, then tracked all conversions generated by that site's SEO control pages for three weeks. Then they served only the test landing pages and tracked all conversions generated by the same three search terms.

The organic test pages differed from the organic control pages in five ways:

#1. Compelling headline copy

This included a stronger benefit pegged more closely to the key words that generated the visit. ("Confused about how cell phone laws might affect your employees?" vs. the control's "Cell Phone Laws.")

#2. Drastically shorter copy

Although the test page's main copy was not appreciably shortened, subheads were eliminated, as was copy offering specific advice (e.g., what policies to set regarding employees' use of cell phones on the job).

The advice paragraphs were replaced with copy promoting BLR's human resources library database and tools as a one-stop informational resource.

#3. Fewer navigation options

Extraneous links, such as ones leading into “additional sources,” BLR’s catalog offerings, a site tour and an online help service, were eliminated so that the only options were to register for the free trial subscription or leave the site.

“When we removed those other links, we made sure that we also tied the pages together for improved navigation,” Brady points out.

#4. Embedded registration form

The control organic entry pages had a “Free Trial” button/two-step process (in a reverse of this aspect of the paid search tests), so the test SEO landing pages featured an embedded registration form.

#5. Sales copy above the order form

Removal of the extraneous link areas made room for a box above the embedded order form. It featured bulleted sales copy customized to relate closely to the chosen key words.

Results: To Brady’s delight, the SEO entry pages free-trial sign-up response rates leapt by 150%. The control landing pages’ format generated a response rate of 1%, while the test landing pages’ format saw a 2.5% response rate.

Brady credits the more focused sell approach for the jump in the free-trial conversion rate. “In the successful landing page version, no one wanders around. They either act on this page or they don’t act at all.”

The new template was rolled out across BLR’s four sub-sites beginning in June 2006, along with an expansion of the targeted search terms. Paid conversion rates are still being monitored and analyzed. So far, they look the same or better than those for the control landing pages.

Sample 3.12: BLR SEO Landing Page Styles, Old & New

Old

BLR **HR.BLR.com**
State HR Answers & Tools Online!

Cell Phone Laws
Cell Phone Laws and Policies

More employees than ever are using cellular phones as they carry out their jobs. Cell phones keep off-site or traveling staffers connected to their workplaces and their clients. However, these convenient pocket phones raise serious issues concerning safety, security, and privacy, which necessitate clear policies and legislation to avoid trouble. Here's what your company needs to know about cell phone laws and policies.

Emerging Cell Phone Laws

Cell phone laws focus on the effects of increasing mobile phone use by drivers on highway accident statistics. Studies have found that the use of cell phones contribute to driver distraction and accidents.

There are no federal cell phone laws that prohibit drivers from using mobile phones while driving, but some states have taken action to reduce cell phone-related automobile accidents. Some state cell phone laws prohibit the use of handheld devices while operating a motor vehicle, but they allow the use of hands-free devices. Twenty-four states and the District of Columbia have cell phone laws concerning wireless phone use in the car. States with cell phone laws that prohibit the use of hand-held mobile phones by drivers while the vehicle is in motion include New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

Cell Phones Raise Liability Issues

What are some of the liability concerns cell phones raise for your company? If one of your employees has an auto accident and harms someone while making a work-related cell phone call, your company as well as the employee may be found liable. Several lawsuits have been filed against employers as well as the employees themselves who allegedly have harmed someone because they were simultaneously driving and engaging in a business call on a cell phone.

Check state and local cell phone laws and instruct your company's employees in writing not to use cell phones while driving. Your written cell phone policy should instruct employees that if they receive a cell phone call while operating a motor vehicle, they should let voice mail answer it and/or call back when they can stop at a safe area.

If employees must use cell phones while in their cars, they should use a hands-free phone, keep their eyes on the road at all times, and avoid complex or stressful conversations. While hands-free phones are not required in many states with cell phone laws, they are considered safer than hand-held cell phones. Your company cell phone policy should also instruct employees to dial only while the car isn't moving, use speed dialing, and never look up phone numbers while driving.

Additional Resources

- Cell Phone Laws Resources

From Our Catalog

- Smartphones
- HR.BLR.com - Online State HR Answers

Didn't find what you were looking for? Visit our [Search](#)

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Confused about how cell phone laws might affect your employees?

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HR.BLR.com is also the most complete source for practical human resources advice and plain-English compliance analysis available anywhere. No matter what the HR topic - from termination to sample evaluation forms - you'll find hands-on help you can count on.

Help is on the way

As the laws in different states on human resources get more difficult and complex, keeping current can spell the difference between success and disaster for your business. The HR.BLR.com editorial staff monitors a host of private and government sources to keep you up-to-date on all the important human resource developments.

The HR Library has more helpful cell phone resources like these:

State cell phone laws

Cell phone safety tips

* Excludes HR Libraries for Federal and U.S. States. Call 1-800-454-0404 to add additional states.
** Your trial includes a free monthly HR topic. To get this valuable information, you must respond to the confirmation e-mail you will receive shortly.

[Cell Phone Laws](#) | [Travel Policy](#) | [Smartphones](#) | [HR.BLR.com](#)

Need more help on Cell Phone Laws?

Practical answers to your company's federal and state labor law compliance questions on Cell Phone Laws are just 2 minutes away!

- Tools** - 100+ downloadable job descriptions, forms/policies, checklists, spreads, and training materials make HR easier
- State HR Compliance Library** - Plain English analysis on every key HR topic - answers for 50 states!
- Salary Data** - HR.BLR.com now includes Salary Data Reports, user-friendly salary data on over 1,400 jobs - free for 100 HR clients!
- InstantHR Consulting™** - Type in your question and get an instant answer!
- Weekly HR Column** - Award-winning newsletter keeps you in the know!

Try HR.BLR.com Free for 14 Days!

State Library:

First Name:

Last Name:

Job Title:

Company:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Phone:

Email:

Company Size:

Industry:

Optimizing for Search Engine News-Driven Traffic

Of U.S. Internet users, 39% go to search engine news areas, such as Yahoo! News and Google News. If users are under 36, search news sites may be their *primary* news source — before all other news media. And if your press release is submitted through traditional wire services such as PR Newswire or BusinessWire, your release will be mingled in with headlines for people who search news for specific topics as though it were “regular” news.

Since word got out about Southwest Airline’s 2004 test of hotlinked press releases, which drove millions in tickets sales, more and more marketers have been running optimized press release campaigns in addition to more routine search marketing. What sort of landing page should you use for the hotlinks in a press release?

Key: Even if the purpose of your release is to get your marketing information into the hands of Yahoo! News and Google News, readers who happen to be your end prospects don’t know that and think it’s a real release. You’ll defeat the purpose if you send clicks to a landing page that is overtly marketing or sales-oriented. On the other hand, you’ll defeat the purpose if the page you send clicks to is your online PR center for the actual press.

Here’s an example of a marketer who invented a way out of this conundrum. Assisted by optimized press release specialists SEO PR, the Marketing Director for Symmetricom created an information-rich landing page that continued the story that the press release had begun with plenty of factual detail.

However, she added a contact form on the left column of the landing page just in case any qualified prospects were among the clickthroughs. They were. This optimized press generated 8 leads — one of which was for an estimated \$200 million order. It also wasn’t from one of the “usual suspects” that the sales force was already talking to. It was for a new application that no one knew was being developed. And it was a new lead from an unknown prospect. You can’t do better than that.

Sample 3.13: Symmetricom Press Release and Matching Landing Page

PRWeb
PUBLIC RELEASE
NEWS WIRE

Symmetricom Wins \$3.4 Million in Funding for Chip Scale Atomic Clock

Microsystems Technology Office (MTO) of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) awards funding to develop ultra-miniature atomic clock.

San Jose, CA (PRWeb/News) August 23, 2005 – **Symmetricom, Inc.** (NASDAQ: SYMM), a worldwide leader in precise **time and frequency products** and services, today announced that it has been awarded funding for Phase III of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) Chip Scale **Atomic Clock (CSAC)** program. The CSAC development will produce miniature, low power atomic clocks for precision timing applications in hand-held battery-powered instrumentation for use by military personnel.

Under the award, valued at \$3.4 million, **Symmetricom** will develop miniature low power **atomic clocks** based on its proprietary coherent population trapping (CPT) atomic interrogation technology and microelectromechanical systems (MEMS) fabrication techniques. **Symmetricom** is teamed with The Charles Stark Draper Laboratory in Cambridge Massachusetts and Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico in the CSAC development. The CSAC work leverages **Symmetricom's** extensive expertise as the world's largest and most diverse producer of **atomic clocks**.

Tom Stopp, CEO of **Symmetricom** commented, "I am delighted to acknowledge the accomplishments of our technical team at **Symmetricom**. They have successfully met the DARPA milestones in Phase I and II and have now been selected to carry the CSAC development to completion. The size and power reductions will be critical elements to moving portable precision timing into the hands of US soldiers."

Atomic clocks provide enhanced accuracy, stability, and timing precision compared to **quartz based** technologies. However, the size and power consumption of existing **atomic clock** technologies exceeds that of **quartz based** clocks by several hundred fold, which has heretofore prevented the deployment of atomic timing in portable applications. Existing miniature **atomic clocks**, for example, occupy a volume similar to a deck of playing cards and consume power comparable to a notebook computer. In Phase-II of the DARPA CSAC program, **Symmetricom** demonstrated a miniature atomic clock, ten times smaller and lower in power than any existing technology. In Phase-III, **Symmetricom** will further reduce the size and power by an additional tenfold. This work will reduce the size and power of the CSAC to a level comparable to low power quartz clocks while improving accuracy and stability by a factor of 10 to 100. The objectives are to reduce the CSAC to a size comparable to a sugar cube while operating on the power of a AA battery.

Press Release

Symmetricom Timing, Test and Measurement Division

Home | Symmetricom Home | Download Library | Site Map | Contact Us

PRODUCTS

Select A Product Line

PRODUCTS **INFORMATION CENTER** **NEWS & EVENTS** **CUSTOMER SUPPORT** **ABOUT US** **COMMUNITY CENTER** **GET A QUOTE**

Contact Us
To obtain further information on Symmetricom CSAC technology please fill out the form below.
* Indicates required field.

First Name: *

Last Name: *

E-mail: *

Company: *

Address: *

City: *

State/Province: *

Zip: *

Country: *

Work Phone: *

Fax: *

Comments: *

Please tell us how you would like to be contacted:
☐ Add to mailing list
☐ Contact me directly

The Chip-Scale Atomic Clock

Our armed forces depend on precise time for reliable and secure communications, positioning, and navigation. For over 30 years, **Symmetricom** has been supplying modular and ruggedized atomic clock solutions that have met our military's mobile needs. However, with the increased power of information and communication, there is an emerging need for more portable, battery-powered instruments. Since 2002, in collaboration with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), **Symmetricom** has been developing a Chip-Scale Atomic Clock (CSAC) one-hundred times smaller and lower power than any existing atomic clock technology. **Symmetricom** is proud to support the extension of precise timing through what is regarded as the "last mile" of the military communications network. These advances in atomic clock technology will increase the safety, security, and capability of each and every foot soldier.

In the commercial marketplace, the low cost and high performance timing signals provided by CSAC will enable a new generation of high-bandwidth devices for accurate and secure communications, positioning, and timing. Applications include secure portable communications, personal navigation, robotics, online gaming, and more.

For further technical information about **Symmetricom** CSAC technology, please [click here](#).

For information regarding the pricing and availability of **Symmetricom** CSAC technology, prototype evaluation, or to join our mailing list, please contact info@symmetricom.com.

The DARPA CSAC Program

The DARPA Chip-Scale Atomic Clock (CSAC) program began with a workshop at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in March 2001. Following the workshop, DARPA initiated a competitive call for proposals to demonstrate the feasibility of a CSAC. **Symmetricom**, leading a development team which includes The Charles Stark Draper Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories, was awarded a Phase I contract, in May 2002, to investigate, theoretically and experimentally, the feasibility of very small ("chip scale") atomic clocks.

In 2002 and 2003, the **Symmetricom**-led team published a series of papers and filed several patent applications on the fundamental physics and technology of chip-scale atomic clocks. In late 2003, the team completed the Phase-I DARPA milestones and demonstrated a laboratory-scale atomic clock, based on CSAC components, which exceeded DARPA's ultimate performance objectives by nearly an order of magnitude.

In January 2004, **Symmetricom** advanced to Phase-II of the DARPA contract, to develop prototype chip-scale physics packages and low-power clock electronics. The principal goal of the Phase II program was to develop an operational laboratory prototype with compliant short-term frequency stability. In April 2005, **Symmetricom** demonstrated a 10 cc, 200 mW Miniature Atomic Clock (MAC) which surpassed DARPA's stability objectives (see, [The World's Smallest Atomic Clock](#), below).

In August 2005, **Symmetricom** advanced to Phase-III of the DARPA CSAC program with two main objectives. In Phase-III, the **Symmetricom**-led team will continue to evolve the CSAC technology to a smaller size and lower power, and to demonstrate a laboratory prototype of a 1 cc, 30 mW atomic clock. At the same time **Symmetricom** will continue to refine the Miniature Atomic Clock (MAC), developed in Phase-II and to make a number of prototype MACs available to systems integrators for proof-of-concept insertion demonstrations.

The World's Smallest Atomic Clock

In Phase-II of the DARPA program, the **Symmetricom**-led ("SAC") team demonstrated a

Landing Page

Email Campaign Landing Pages

The most important factor in landing page success, as it is with search marketing campaigns, is matching creative — especially headline, offer, and hero shot (if applicable) — to the place the person clicked on. In a perfect email world, the creative progression is:

- Subject line entices open.
- Email content clearly matches subject line (especially words in headline).
- Landing page content clearly matches email content.

Email is a BAD place to use your thesaurus. Whenever possible, your copywriter should use the exact same wording for each successive headline in the open -> click -> conversion process.

This doesn't mean, however, that your landing page has to match your email content length. You'll need to test it. Email creative as a whole has gotten shorter over the past few years. This is because the main purpose of the email itself is to *get the click*. The sole purpose of the email landing page is to *convert the click*. You need a different sort of creative for each activity — even though the headlines and major graphics should be nearly identical for the purposes of reassurance.

Data show us typical email recipients spend only a handful of seconds examining an opened email before they make the click-or-delete decision. Many, especially in the work setting but increasingly at home as well, view the opened mail entirely within the confines of a small (perhaps 3"x2") preview pane. This explains why the so-called postcard-style broadcast campaign creative is increasingly popular. The smaller format forces the marketer to quickly and clearly explain why the recipient should click.

Just because your email format may be smaller or more concise, however, doesn't mean your landing page should be tiny. In fact, landing page copy length and content depth depends nearly entirely on other factors. For instance, what does the prospect need to see to be compelled to convert? As the preceding chapter explained, sometimes that's very long body copy and sometimes that's no body copy at all.

Example: When she was launching a new product in March 2007, Julie Lohmeier, VP Marketing, Zacks.com, tested a variety of short and long emails and landing pages. The winning combination, which worked four times better than the worst, was a short postcard-style email linking to a very long landing page. Caution: We're not saying this will be the winning combination for anyone else. We are saying, "Test length." Don't blindly assume the length that works best to get the email click is also the length that works best to convert it on the landing page.

Sample 3.14: Zacks Postcard-Style Email Campaign Landing Page



Email



Landing Page

Change Your Homepage to Match Major Broadcast Offers to Your House File

Emails to your house list are highly likely to result in a lot more traffic to your homepage — even though you link to a landing page in the creative. That's because of two factors:

- HTML hotlinks being disabled in recipient's inboxes.
- Delayed conversion: people who go directly to your site some time after being prompted by your email.

So, if you are sending to a house list, be sure to adjust your homepage if it makes sense to feature special offers or links to help these visitors convert better.

Example: Plus-size apparel retailer Kiyonna changes the central image on its homepage to closely match the hero shot and offer featured in special email sales alerts. Their average email click-to-conversion rate for a house list mailing landing is 3-14% depending on the offer. Here's a sample of an email campaign and accompanying homepage that got unusually high conversion rates:

Sample 3.15: Kiyonna "Denim" Email Broadcast & Matching Homepage



Sample 3.16: Kiyonna “Denim” Email Broadcast Landing Page



Deeplinking vs. Special Email Landing Pages

For the most part, outgoing email campaigns are so quick and easy to put together and such a regular part of many marketers' daily routines that marketers fall down on the landing page end. If you're whipping out a weekly sales alert, you may not have a matching time and funds budget to whip out a weekly landing page for it.

Marketers simply deeplink to an existing page on their sites. But this almost certainly means the page will contain standard navigational bars as well as other extraneous content, such as immediate cross-sells. Unfortunately, content and hotlinks that aren't directly related to the exact conversion path at hand can distract attention, causing lowered conversions.

If you're limited to pages your site already contains, it's also a lot harder for you to test out new types of offers or for you to segment your design to create different landing pages for the same offer to different personas, etc. That's why it's important for you to be able to build landing pages on the fly. You may want to hire an inexpensive freelance designer to work a few hours a week or perhaps pay for programming to add templates to your site's current content management system so you can create new landing pages in a few minutes without knowing any HTML at all.

Eretailers can have their content management systems adjusted to create two versions of every product page on the site in an automated fashion as well — one for regular site surfers; one for campaign traffic.

Sample 3.17: MarketingSherpa Product Pages, 2 Versions



MarketingSherpa Home Browse by Topic/Brand Shopfronts

Search:

Content by:

NEW MARCH 2007! Practical ecommerce data to help you improve shopper-to-buyer conversions

Ecommerce Benchmark Guide 2007

All new Guide features:

- 98% new content
- 223 charts & tables
- 1,913 ecommerce marketers own data
- Survey results from heatmaps 2,449 online shoppers
- New eyetracking incl. Best Buy, Circuit City & Wal-Mart

Bonus: Order now to get PDF instant download + Printed copy together - two for the price of one!

Do you want to improve your e-commerce conversions? Grab a copy of MarketingSherpa's new Ecommerce Benchmark Guide 2007 to help you:

- Raise shopper-to-buyer conversions, as well as buyer lifetime
- Lower shopping cart abandon
- Improve search engine marketing ROI, despite rising costs
- Perk up email opens, clicks and conversions
- Compare your marketing stats to your peers
- Get marketing test and site revamp ideas approved by management

Here's where MarketingSherpa gets its comprehensive ecommerce marketing data from:

#1. 2007 MarketingSherpa Surveys and Audits of Your Peers - America's Top Ecommerce Marketers

Our thanks to the 1,913 ecommerce marketers who took our fairly extensive survey this January, revealing their real-life budgeting strategies, traffic-driving tactics and conversion data. This is the world's largest survey ever of ecommerce marketers. And, the resulting data is phenomenal.

In addition, our research team conducted an audit of 250 US

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Product Details

Pages: 204 pp

Charts: 223 charts and tables, 5 heat maps

Pub Date: Mar 2007

Publisher: MarketingSherpa

Editor: Stefan Tanquist

ISBN: 076-1-932262-04

Item ID: 429921



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Ecommerce Benchmark Guide 2007

All new Guide features:

- 98% new content
- 223 charts & tables
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- New eyetracking incl. Best Buy, Circuit City & Wal-Mart

Bonus: Order now to get PDF instant download + Printed copy together - two for the price of one!

Do you want to improve your e-commerce conversions? Grab a copy of MarketingSherpa's new Ecommerce Benchmark Guide 2007 to help you:

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In addition, our research team conducted an audit of 250 US ecommerce sites, including the largest ones as well as the more entrepreneurial ones. We signed up for your email, used your customer service tools and reviewed your home page features to see what the norm is for 2007. Plus, given how critical search marketing is for driving ecommerce traffic, we examined your

Order Here Risk-Free

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About MarketingSherpa

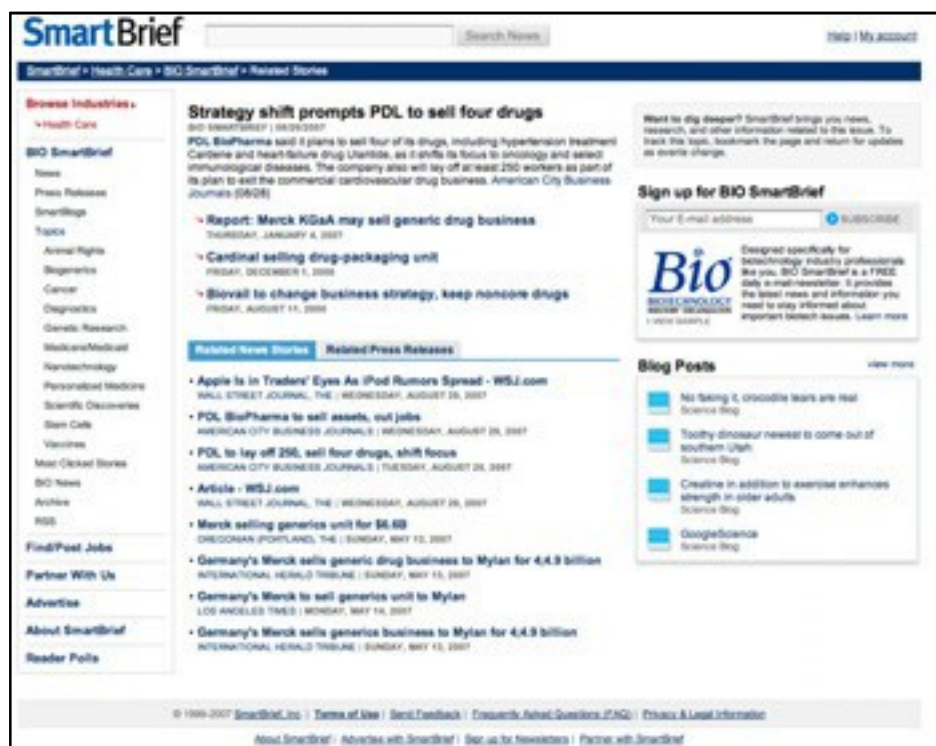
How to Get “Better Visits” from Email Newsletter Subscribers

Your conversion goal from newsletter readers may not be an immediate sale; instead, your goal may be prospect education, brand involvement, or simply as many pageviews as possible. No matter; there are ways you can increase conversions for these goals for these clicks as well. First of all, determine your goal and *measure against it*. (Many marketers can tell you their newsletter open rates; very few can tell you average newsletter click page views.....)

Next, test ideas to encourage that conversion activity of choice. Here are two real-life examples to inspire you:

Example: If you click through on a link on a SmartBrief newsletter, you’ll land on a page with a long list of enticing additional direct-related hotlinks.

Sample 3.18: SmartBrief Newsletter Page With Hotlinks



Another example: MarketingSherpa gave Olympus marketers an award for Best Email Newsletter 2007. One of the many reasons they won against more than 100 other entries was their newsletter landing pages. While email landing pages shared top major navigation links with the main Olympus site, they didn’t have distracting detailed navigation bars, promotional banners or other standard Web site template features. The page format was clearly built to engage that newsletter click as much as possible.

Sample 3.19: Olympus Email Newsletter Landing Page with Question Form

OLYMPUS

About Us | News & Events | Contact Us | My Profile

Enter Search Word(s)

Learn ▶ Products ▶ Support ▶ Sponsorships ▶ Olympus Store

Home ▶ Ask Oly

Ask Oly: Ask a tech question, Oly has the answer.

Question: Why is there a lag between when I press the shutter button and when the picture is taken?



This question addresses shutter lag, a topic that is often a concern among consumers who make the switch from film photography to digital photography. Shutter lag refers to the delay between the time when a camera's shutter button is pressed and when the camera actually captures an image.

Many factors contribute to shutter lag, but the most significant is auto focus. Auto focus is a great feature that can help you capture clear images in a variety of shooting situations with a minimum of fuss. However, it increases shutter lag because the focus is only sought and obtained after the shutter.

Newer digital cameras feature advanced auto focus systems that have greatly reduced shutter lag. You can shave even more time off the shutter lag on your digital camera by taking auto focus out of the equation.

If your camera has a Manual Focus mode, try it. If it does not, you can still alleviate the shutter lag by pre-focusing via the Focus Lock function. To use Focus Lock, simply press the shutter button halfway down once you have composed a shot. The lens will move into position, and the camera will focus. When you press the shutter button completely down to take the shot, the camera will not have to focus, resulting in an appreciable decrease in shutter lag for that shot.

Models that have MyMode are capable of saving the current settings as a custom-shooting mode and making it the camera's default shooting mode. In this way, you could disable auto focus by forcing the camera to work in Manual Focus mode. (You can always re-enable auto focus from the camera's menus.) MyMode is convenient because its settings are retained even after the camera is powered off. After creating and saving your settings one time, just turn the mode dial to MyMode whenever you want to use them, and you're ready to go.

Manually focusing the camera, or pre-focusing via Focus Lock, will bring the shutter lag down to a speed comparable to that of SLR cameras. Just keep in mind that other factors influence shutter lag. Generally, any function that can be pre-set is one less function that the camera must configure during image capture.

A rule of thumb for minimizing shutter lag is this: Don't shoot in Full Auto mode. Instead, switch to a shooting mode that lets you pre-set functions. Aperture Priority and Shutter Priority modes give some control to the photographer. Manual mode gives the photographer the most control. Try using these modes more regularly, and watch your shutter lag diminish.

[◀ See last issue's question - What's the difference between Type H and Type M iD Picture Cards?](#)

Do you have a question for Oly?

Submit your question using the form below and we may feature it in our next edition!

Name:

Email:

Question:

Please note: Questions submitted to Oly **will not** receive individual responses. If you have a specific tech support issue for which you need immediate assistance, please contact our technical support group by sending an email to distec@cs.olympus.com, or by calling 1-888-55-DIGITAL.

Did you find this information useful? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Which Camera is Right for Me? | Free Photo Lessons | Archived Products | Rebates & Promotions

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WARRANTY

Each article and feature included a visitor rating bar. Plus, most included response devices to get readers more involved. Readers were very actively invited to submit their own photos, their own stories, their own ideas in response to each item.

Note: Instead of being given a hotlink to “contact us” or a generic email address, email visitors were given a useful form to fill out and submit on the spot.

Landing Pages for Outside Email Lists

If your campaign is going to an outside list, you’ll get the best clickthroughs from lists with strong brands. Recipients look forward to email from this list. You should consider tweaking your landing page to convert these clicks better.

It doesn’t take a lot of work. At the very least, put the name of the list (“Welcome Widget Newsletter readers!”) at the top left corner of the page, in between your site logo and your headline.

Example: Although this landing page has some imperfections (the navigation bars should be stripped off, the copy could be a bit shorter and/or bulleted, and there’s no privacy info next to the request for email), ServiceWare’s Director of Marketing Andy McNutt got a great 30% conversion rate from it.

We suspect two factors came into play. First, he added that simple greeting line at the top, “Welcome ZDNet,” to coordinate with the email list he’d marketed to. Second, he didn’t force people to type a street address.

Sample 3.20: ServiceWare Outside Email List Landing Page





[About](#) [Products](#) [Services](#) [Case Studies](#) [Partners](#) [News & Events](#) [International](#) [Support](#)
[Home](#) [Site Map](#) [Request Info](#)

[Overview](#)
[ServiceWare Enterprise](#)
[ServiceWare Express](#)
[Brochures & Datasheets](#)
[White Papers](#)
[FAQs](#)
[Request a Demo](#)

Welcome ZDNet Reader

Thank you for your interest in ServiceWare's white paper "Ten Principles for Knowledge Management Success."

Knowledge Management is an evolving discipline that can be affected by new technologies and best practices, but there are some things that we do know for sure. There is a systematic approach to successfully implementing knowledge management and if you analyze what you are trying to accomplish, map out a strategy, garner support from the organization and have a way to measure it, then you are much more likely to be successful.



If you are considering a KM initiative in your call center or help desk — or you are looking into problem resolution applications to improve agent productivity, make sure to download this free white paper and learn the important lessons about KM before you kick-off your implementation.

Please complete this short form so we can find out a little bit about who is reading our publications. Required fields appear in blue. **Note:** We will not sell or rent your information to any other company. View our [privacy policy](#) for details.

First Name	Last Name
Job Title	Company
E-Mail	Area Code, Phone Number & Ext.

About Your Company

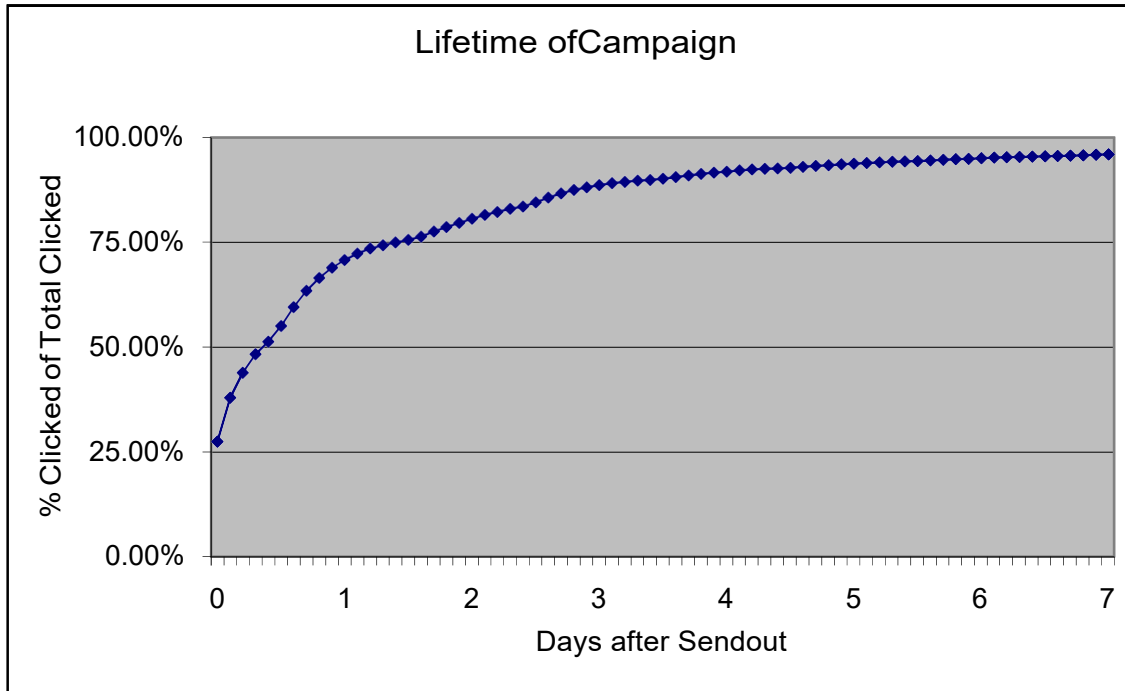
Approx. # of support centers:	Approx. # of support agents:
# of Company Employees	
Your City	Your State/Province (If in U.S./Canada)
Your Country	CRM / Help Desk Systems:

If you experience any problems submitting this form, please e-mail webmaster@serviceware.com

Extend Landing Page Lifetime

One key: When you do create a landing page for an email campaign, leave it live for much longer than you think.

Chart 3.21: Typical Email Broadcast Campaign Lifetime

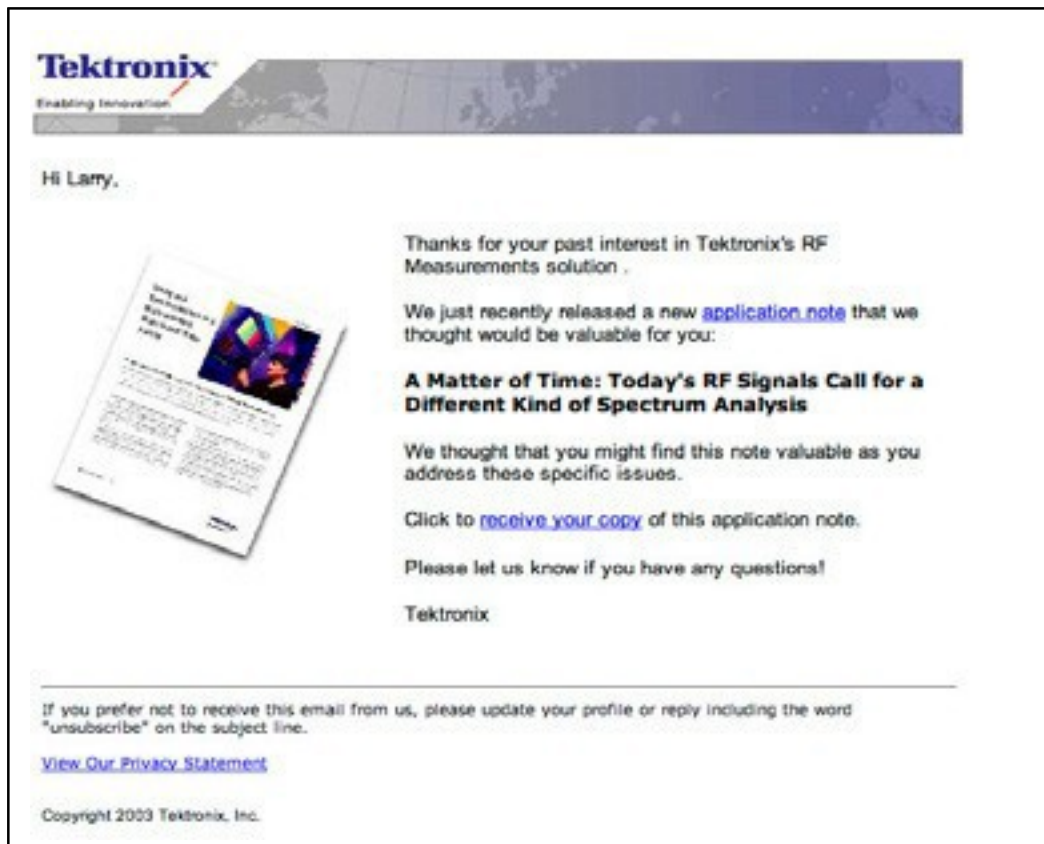


Source: Echomail

The clicks from email campaigns typically fall off very quickly, with campaigns achieving 90% of their clicks in the first 3 days, but there continue to be clicks weeks or months later.

Some people will save your email “for later” and you never know how much later that might be. This is *especially* true for information-rich email newsletters. Leave your creative live for years if possible.

Sample 3.22: Tektronix Interactive Landing Page Replacement



We originally profiled this landing page in our first edition when it was an interactive survey-style landing page. Incredibly when we clicked through on the old link two years later for this edition, the team had a replacement landing page in place to catch errant clicks although the old offer was no longer valid. Well done!

Advertising in Third-Party Email Newsletters

If you run ads in other publishers' newsletters, be sure to leave your landing page open for a few weeks, if not longer, to catch those straggling clicks. We have evidence to support the suggestion that the late stragglers might be extremely high quality — much like “long tail” search marketing responders.

The best performing email ad creative, however, often features a reason to “Click Now!” in the offer. Perhaps a deadline or some other limitation. Does this mean you should null the landing page the minute the deadline or limit has passed? Absolutely not. Instead, ask the design department to create a post-deadline version to be automatically launched in place of the old landing page. This could acknowledge the old deadline at the top briefly and then give an alternate offer for the same product or service:

- Sorry folks, our 8/31 discount deadline is over ... but you can still get new Fleece Jackets at outstanding prices!
- Sorry, our live 8/31 Webinar on Top 10 Biotech Stocks is over, but you can access a canned version of the complete event here — free.

Warning: Your Email Landing Pages May Be Blocked by Filters

Sample 3.23: MarketingSherpa Email Landing Page Blocked Message



Are your email landing pages being filtered? More companies are using content-sensing blocks to keep employees from surfing inappropriate sites. At home, filtering is also gaining ground. In the fall of 2006, AOL made its children-safe surfing filter available to all online users.

While both types of filters make sense, the problem is that just like email filters keeping out spam, landing page/Web site filters aren't perfect. Your innocent, legitimate page may be blocked by mistake.

We know. This week, one of MarketingSherpa's landing pages — a free sign-up form for a search marketing teleconference we're holding shortly — was blocked as "Tasteless."

AOL's Parental Controls system is available for free. This gives age-based access options, specific controls on instant messaging and chat, online timers, as well as email reports for parents about their children's Web activities. In these systems, parents can sometimes lock out everything from reputed ecommerce stores to sites with inappropriate content.

In the workplace, companies set time periods for when access is permitted and use filters to oversee employee Internet usage, block availability to pornography, gambling, and video games, etc.

Some of the vendors in the space that filter employee productivity include 8e6 Technologies, Secure Computing Corp, SurfControl, and Websense Inc.

Note: These are not traditional email filters. Email filters block messages that are deciphered as spam for a whole slew of reasons that anyone with an inbox already knows. Generally, instead of looking at the email message itself, these filters look at the landing page the click is being directed to. If the filters sense that language or other aspects might be unsavory or unwanted, they stop the email user from landing on the page *even though the user is trying to click through.* And the email marketer will never know it.

“On the Web site side, you won’t necessarily know when you are being blocked,” says John Marshall, CEO, ClickTracks. “In terms of finding out whether or not you are getting blocked, the only thing you can do is investigate behind the scenes and [cope]. There’s no absolute sure-fire way existing right now that can show that traffic to your site is being filtered.”

Email landing pages and Web sites can end up getting filtered for a number of reasons. Your Web hosting service may have had clients in a pseudo-underground business such as pornography or gambling, marking some of its IP addresses as suspect and triggering the filter.

For example, because of the fluidity of the Internet world, it’s entirely possible that you can inherit an IP address from a closed pornography business without knowing it.

High-bandwidth features can also get you flagged at workplace computers since most businesses want to make the most of their Internet pipeline. So try to use a low bandwidth link when incorporating multimedia aspects like video product demos or podcasts in your email. If you don’t, recipients might not be able to experience what is likely the best part of your sales pitch.

Coping With Web Filters

The filtering firms have a Web page that allows marketers to check the way filters categorize their Web site. Typically, filter vendors update their databases daily and use people — not just algorithms — to review content to make an earnest attempt from impeding legitimate marketers.

If you find that your site has been erroneously flagged, contact the vendor to get the situation remedied. “I’ve seen our team take care of that kind of situation within hours,” says Websense Inc.’s Eric Polyn.

Vendors definitely have a stake in steering clear of best-practice businesses. “No one wants to get the rap that their product is blocking access to legitimate sites,” says Paul Henry, VP Technology and Strategic Accounts at Secure Computing Corp. “That’s even worse than not blocking the bad sites.”

Four more tips:

- Tip #1. Educate your customer service and “reply to” address monitoring teams so they know who to immediately contact when someone complains that your site has been blocked.
- Tip #2. Move to a dedicated server at your hosting company if you’re not already on one.
- Tip #3. Check your current host against blacklisted companies.
- Tip #4. Get your hosting contract rewritten so you have an out clause in case you’re blacklisted because of a problem on their end.

Landing Pages to Generate More Email Opt-Ins

Although heavy email marketers test everything from their subject lines to landing pages frequently, many rarely if ever test email opt-in promotions. In fact, the only companies we know of that routinely test email opt-in pages are primarily those who use list growth as the cornerstone of their business — email publishers themselves.

This is extremely unfortunate, because list growth is critical to all email marketers. We’re not saying you should have a huge list — quality matters far more than quantity. We’re saying you should constantly be making your best effort to attract the right sorts of opt-ins to your file. The good news is, any email opt-in tests you do will pay off quickly. MarketingSherpa data show new opt-ins (people who have joined your list in 30 days or fewer) are far more likely to convert to your other offers.

The other good news is, tweaking your email opt-in request forms can yield significant results — 50%-100% improvements in opt-in rates are not unusual. Some creative factors to test:

- Short copy vs. long copy.
- Benefit-oriented headline vs. plain vanilla “subscribe.”
- Including a hotlink to a sample issue (in a pop-up-on-demand window).
- Mentioning frequency
- Reader testimonials.
- Calling the email something that sounds more valuable “Sales Alert,” “Journal,” etc.
- Hero shot of a typical issue.
- Multiple opt-in offers on a Web page.

Example: With help from Optimost, online library Questia tested multiple versions of eight specific parts of the creative on its opt-in landing page. Tests included lighter vs. darker background; trying out a hero shot image; copywriting the submit button differently; adding the word “Please” to the email field instructions.

The winning page increased opt-in conversions by 112.9% and, we’re happy to note, adding the word “Please” was one of the factors that helped.

Sample 3.24: Questia Control Email Opt-in Landing Page



Sample 3.25: Questia Winning Email Opt-in Landing Page



Business-to-Business Offer Landing Pages

If you are a B-to-B marketer generating leads online, be sure to review the section in Chapter Two about registration forms as well as this section. Here are eight specific tips for B-to-B registration forms:

Tip #1. Don't forget the hero shot. For a white paper, that would be a cover thumbnail (see our rules in Chapter Two on this topic.) For a Webinar, it would be a photo of the speaker. Both work better with a small caption reiterating your offer. Assume some people will click on them (some people always click on images) and decide if you'd like a message to appear layered over the page reiterating your offer with an arrow pointing at the response form.

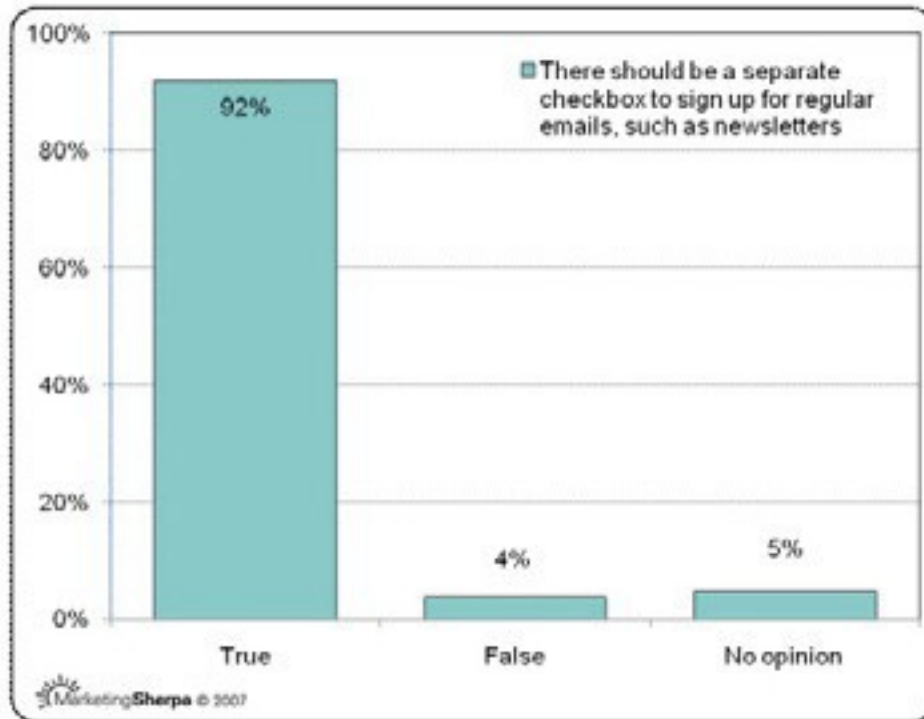
Tip #2. Keep copy focused solely on your offer; don't give in to the temptation to talk also about the company or your products and services. This is NOT the place for brand education. You've got plenty of time in your fulfillment piece (white paper, webinar, email newsletter, catalog, etc.) to do more education. Right now you have to land the lead. PERIOD.

The good news is MarketingSherpa studies show prospects respond to information offers based mainly on the title of that offer and how useful or interesting it seems. The brand name behind the offer is far less important. So, if your white paper (or other information offer) seems useful enough, they will happily fill out a well-designed registration form even if they never heard of your company before.

Tip #3. If you ask for an email address (which most marketers do), be sure to not only include a brief reassuring phrase about your privacy policy, but give visitors a good reason why you need the email. "You'll be emailed your personal passcode for the Webinar" or "You'll get your white paper download link via email" are both acceptable.

However, if you intend to do something more with that email address — such as send an ongoing email newsletter — best practices dictate that you add a separate checkbox to the form asking for specific permission. "Please check here if you'd like to get Widget Weekly Newsletter, packed with useful widget engineering tips."

Chart 3.26: Should Separate Checkbox Be Included to Sign up for Newsletters?



According to a MarketingSherpa study conducted in partnership with KnowledgeStorm in early 2007, 92% of surveyed business executives said they preferred a separate checkbox for email newsletters on a registration page. Another 34% said they don't assume that they'll hear from a vendor by email after registering, and that group isn't likely to welcome the surprise when messages start appearing in their email.

Tip #4. Consider NOT asking for phone number. According to the same study, only 38% of business executives would willingly give out their correct phone numbers on a registration form. The rest either abandon the form or simply fake a number which then costs you money when you have to double-check lead validity. Our suggestion: strongly consider either removing or making phone number requests non-required fields.

Fact is, you have plenty of other avenues to get phone numbers, ranging from database append services to your intern checking numbers via JigSaw.com. Also, if your marketing database is remotely up to snuff, chances are you have a phone number — at least a main number — on file for that organization already. Even if you market to fairly small organizations, these days in B-to-B you're marketing to a committee. So several members may have already given you that data via other media (such as trade show contacts.)

Tip #5. Job function vs. job title. Job titles can range enormously company by company. This is true both for position level (in some companies a "Director" is a god-like figure,

at others he or she is in middle management) and for job function (an IT title might be “Head of Web” in one firm, but at another that title might be in the marketing, graphics, or Web departments.)

That’s why marketing database experts advise to ask for job function instead of job title.

Tip #6. Pre-populate form fields for already-registered prospects and customers. There’s very little excuse for making a prospect or customer who already filled out a registration form in the past fill out another one. We’ve seen loads of Case Study evidence that pre-populated forms can help raise conversion rates *enormously*. So why have a registration form at all for this traffic? Sometimes you probably should not. (See our sidebar on “Set the White Paper Free” below.)

If you think your campaign may go viral, including a form can help you because current prospects may pass their hotlink to colleagues. When the colleagues see the pre-populated form, often they’ll take a moment to correct the info for themselves, and now you have a new name in your database!

If you want more information about names in your database, you can add a few new questions to the pre-populated form. Prospects are in a “head-nodding mood” when they see these because they’ve just been saying a mental “yes” to all the pre-filled fields. They are more likely to give you answers to the new questions . . . as long as you don’t include too many and they are not too intrusive.

If you have reason to suspect a particular prospect has changed its contact details or if your email has hard-bounced or postal mail has been returned, you can use a pre-populated field to ask: “Is this information that we have on file for you still correct?”

Prepopulation requires back-end integration with the customer database. You can either connect back to the central database each time a person enters a password, or you can import the data into a local datamart attached to the form. A datamart is a small, select database as opposed to a data warehouse which covers an entire business or sector. Using a datamart will speed up the processing time by not having to dial into the server for every pull. Then the information can be down-loaded to the central database daily or as necessary.

Tip #7. Offer a print version of white papers and marcom (marketing communications).

Sample 3.27: SEM Campaign Landing Page for the Term “Ethernet”

B&B electronics
MANUFACTURING COMPANY

Account info Shopping cart Search

Home Products Partners Support Tech Notes News About B&B Contact

Home > Contact > Catalog Request Form

"The B&B catalog is to me now what the Sears catalog was to me when I was 8 and Christmas was approaching. It's more than just a wish book though as I have made use of your excellent products many times. (Ha! Mom and Dad so you didn't want to get me the Metal Snoot 'N' Shell, now I can afford my own Ethernet to Serial converter! Take that! Keep 'em coming. I think I'm going to enjoy your rants."

... William Prada, M.S.
Principal Software Architect
Prada Engineering Automation
Saint Paul MN

[Sign up](#) to receive our econnections email newsletter to enjoy Mike's rants for yourself.

Small, Economical, and Easy to Configure, Modbus Ethernet Serial Servers

Ethernet enable Modbus serial ports on industrial equipment with Modbus Ethernet serial servers. These servers enable smooth connectivity, translating Modbus/TCP to Modbus/ASCII/RTU protocols. This allows devices such as PLCs to communicate with sensors, meters, instruments and similar devices.

May We Send You a Free B&B Catalog?

Complete the form below to receive the free, full color, 108 page, 2006 B&B Electronics catalog of Interface Converters and Data Acquisition and Control Products. Your catalog will be on its way to you via First Class mail within 24 hours.

European, Middle Eastern and African Customers:
[Request our European edition full-line product catalog.](#)

[Take a Virtual Catalog Tour](#)
[PDF Version](#)

* Required Fields

*First Name: *Last Name:

*Email: Company:

*Address 1: Address 2:

*City, *State: *Zip:

Country:

Phone: Fax:

Thanks to the convenience and low cost of the Web, B-to-B marketers have changed over from print to electronic format for most marketing materials. You're happy because you're saving money, materials are easier to update (no old brochures are moldering in warehouses), and you can get prospects' information super-swiftly.

Just because you're happy doesn't mean your prospects always are. Many people *like* print! Some even prefer it. In fact, in a 2007 MarketingSherpa survey, 44% of executives said they would choose to receive a print version of a white paper if the option were available. It's likely a high portion of these execs were decision-makers with significant authority because people who prefer print are often a bit older.

MarketingSherpa has conducted three Case Studies on B-to-B marketers who tested adding a checkbox to registration forms for information offers. Each of these marketers had hoped no one would check it because they'd save money that way. However, in all three cases, the marketer was deluged with requests for that print copy.

We suspect in the long run those marketers will do better than their competitors who refuse to invest in print. Why? Because as every consumer multichannel retailer knows, the more channels you use to connect with a customer, the larger the account becomes. You're trying to build a "real" business relationship. Why rely only on the virtual world until you hand the lead to sales?

Tip #8. Translate your international landing pages.

Sample 3.28: IBM Chinese Email Landing Page

The screenshot shows the IBM developerWorks Live! Briefings page in Chinese. The main heading is "SCA / SDO : 驱动下一代 SOA". The content includes an introduction to Service Component Architecture (SCA) and Service Data Objects (SDO), followed by a numbered list of key points. The right sidebar contains a "相关链接" (Related Links) section and a "编辑推荐" (Editor's Pick) section.

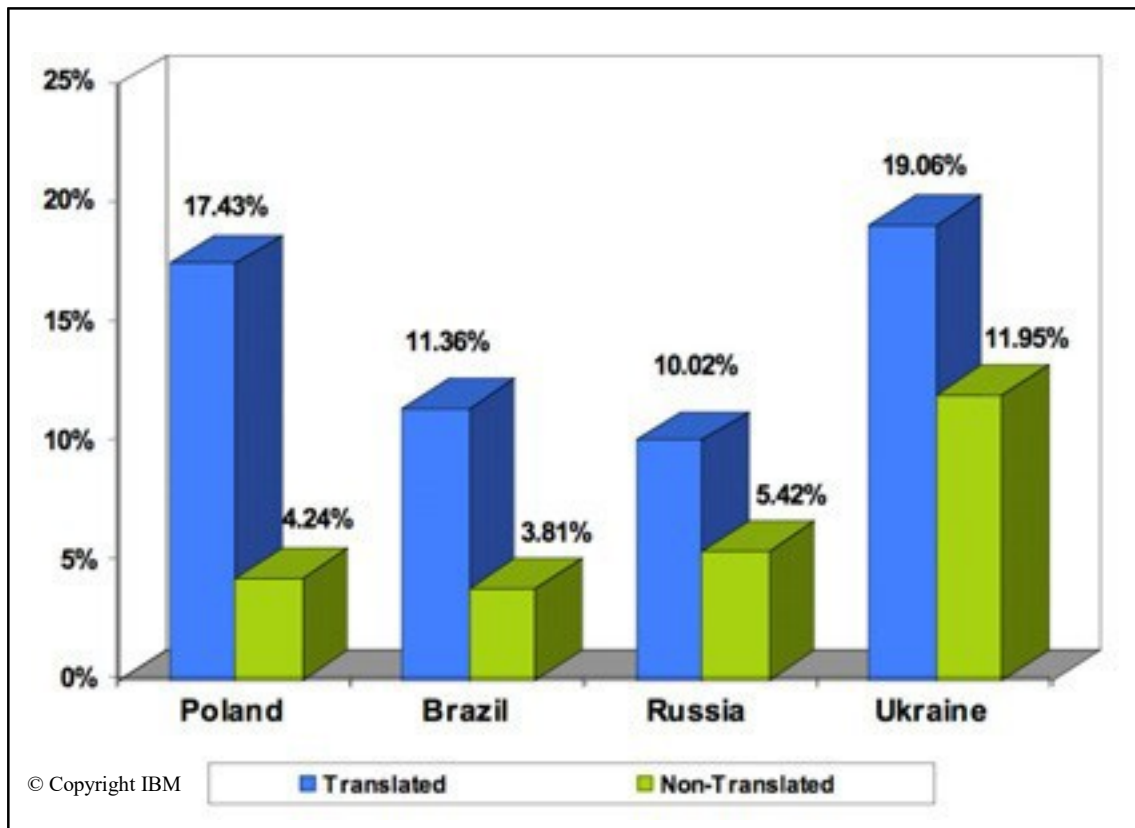
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- Java SCA 调用模式
- SCA 应用程序开发
- 在 SCA 中使用 Hibernate 框架实现数据持久层
- 从 Spring 案例入手谈 SCA 的创建和调用
- 深入了解 SCA
- 使用 SDO 和 JDBC DAS 应用国内服务的体系结构
- SDO 2.0 简介
- SCA 与 SDO 简介
- 服务数据对象简介
- 多媒体课堂: SCA 介绍
- 多媒体课堂: SCA 深入编程

Chart 3.29: Translated vs. Non-Translated Emails



Source: Pam Jacobs, IBM

Just because you're pretty sure everyone in business overseas speaks some English doesn't mean your landing pages should be in English. This is especially true of the campaign you attract prospects with — such as search, direct postal mail, or email — is translated. Don't expect a good response rate from people receiving an offer in their own language who then click to see a landing page in English. It's both rude and jarring.

Also, don't rely on software or U.S.-based staff for translation services. They can do a first pass, but always ask local in-country staff to run an eye over the page prior to launch. They will nearly always suggest changes, sometimes significant ones.

What about people who do want to read English? Easy, just add a small hotlink at the top right corner of the landing page to the English-language version.

Webinar Landing Pages: Inspirational CaseStudy

Sample 3.30: Webinar Registration Landing Pages, Old & New

Old Webinar Registration Landing Page

OMNITURE®
PRODUCTS | SERVICES | RESOURCES | EDUCATION | PARTNERS | COMPANY | CONTACT

THE LEADER IN WEB ANALYTICS & ONLINE BUSINESS OPTIMIZATION

→ CLIENT LOGIN

Contact

- Contact Information
- > Request Information
- Send Us E-mail
- Corporate Map
- Learn More

1.877.722.7088
REQUEST A DEMO

Request Information from Omniture

Please provide us with the following information.

First Name:

Last Name:

E-mail:

Phone:

Country:

State/Province:

Company:

Web site:

Department:

Job Title:

Optional Information

Questions and/or Comments:

☐ YES, I want a SiteCatalyst™ Demonstration

SUBMIT

Interested in Learning Even More?

Have a specific question? Looking for a demonstration? Interested in attending a Webinar? Find out everything you ever wanted to know about SiteCatalyst™

> I learn more about SiteCatalyst

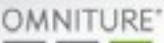
Cadillac CHEVROLET

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Your Language:

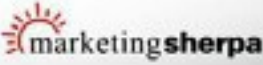
Products
Services
Resources
Education
Partners
Company
Contact
Site Map

New Webinar Registration Landing Page




NEW ECOMMERCE PRESENTATION:
Metrics & Consumer Trends

FREE REGISTRATION



Register now for: "New Ecommerce Marketing Research - Metrics & Consumer Trends"

Wednesday, May 17
2-3 pm ET / 11 am-Noon PT

Presented by:

- Anne Holland, Publisher, MarketingSherpa
- Stefan Tornquist, Research Director, MarketingSherpa
- Mikel Chertudi, Director Online Marketing, Omniture

Find out what 1,101 e-commerce marketers revealed to MarketingSherpa about response and retail metrics for consumer products, services and more.

Plus, hear highlights of MarketingSherpa's independent study of 1,200 online consumers, their shopping habits and online spending.

You will learn:

1. How the big guns in e-retail sell: New Eyetracking studies of ecommerce pages reveal what works for sites like Dell, Amazon and others
2. Response and retail metrics for consumer products and services
3. New data on consumer online spending and use of online shopping tools

Invite your entire team to attend
— attendance for this teleconference is free!

Please register now:

1. Sign-up by entering your information to the right. Your privacy is assured - we'll "only" use your address to send materials related to this teleconference.
2. Check your email in-box the day of the event for your Official PowerPoint Presentation PDF, plus the teleconference phone number and passcode.
3. Call in on Wednesday, May 17th at 2 pm ET/ 11am PT. Yes, you may use a speakerphone and invite others in your organization to join you!
4. Do you have any questions on Search Marketing you'd like answered at the teleconference? Submit them to the right.

Please provide us with the following information.

First Name:

Last Name:

E-mail:

Phone:

Country:

State/Province:

Company:

Web site:

Department:

Job Title:

[Click here to provide more information, allowing us to be more efficient with your request.](#)

SUBMIT

We Value Your Privacy
Your information provided above is solely used in the process of providing you information as requested. We do not and will not sell your information to any other party. [View our Privacy Policy.](#)

When Mikel Chertudi started his new job as Director Online Marketing, Omniture, he was under pressure to prove himself by generating lots of new qualified business leads during his first 100 days “in office.”

Chertudi immediately began heavy A/B testing for every aspect of the lead generation process, including heavy emphasis on landing pages. His first landing page template (pictured here) looked like a site page — with the header and top navigation links you’d expect on any page of the company’s corporate site.

The headline was very brief, simply explaining this was the form to fill out to get whatever offer had been advertised. “Sign up for webinar” or “Download white paper,” etc. Plus, there was a stock photo headshot of a happy executive and alternative contact info for visitors who wished to phone or email rather than fill out the form.

Not content with response rates, Chertudi tested each element of that page to discover what would move the needle to convert more visitors to registered users. He tested:

- Removing navigation links
- Replacing the company site page “header” with a logo
- Replacing stock art images with thumbnails directly related to the offer
- Removing alternative contact information
- Adding more copy detailing the offer
- Simplifying layout by reducing the columns from three to two

Last but not least, Chertudi also ran tests on the actual registration form fields to determine how much and which types of information he could ask prospects for . . . before they hit their form pain threshold and abandoned the form rather than fill it out.

Results: Chertudi hit his lead generation goals well before deadline. His landing page test results prove that if you are sending prospects to a landing page that looks like a typical page on your site with a registration form . . . STOP and test something else immediately.

For his tests, prospects were significantly more likely (more than 100%!) to respond to a landing page that looked like it was 100% landing page — isolated from other pages on your site. In fact, the prospects didn’t expect the landing page to be “part” of Omniture’s site (even if they were clicking on a banner ad inside that site). Instead, they strongly expected a landing page to be “a part” of the banner or other ad creative that they had just clicked on.

This lesson has BIG implications. You need to develop and test your offer landing pages in isolation from your site, yet in tandem with your ad creative. It’s the reverse of what most people do these days.

Chertudi's other landing page lessons were that fewer columns work better. Plus, relevant, specific images of the offer improve results over generic images. And extraneous links, phone numbers, and email addresses reduced response to the form.

(Note: If you need to drive phone traffic, you may want to ignore that finding while making sure that your advertised number leads directly to a live person who'll convert the lead immediately. General office numbers and voice mail or phone trees probably should be abolished for landing pages.)

And, while short copy works better on banner ads that get super-short attention (the shorter copy tested 14% better), business prospects may prefer far more detailed copy on landing pages. (Again, this is the precise reverse of what we see most B-2-B marketers doing in email and other ads. They give longer copy up front and almost none on the landing page. You should test reversing this for better results.)

Lastly, Chertudi discovered to his delight that as long as you keep a registration form fairly short (he now asks for brief contact info plus three questions), you can add questions without hurting response.

Although he does not ask for street address or fax number (we assume both tested badly without enough upside usefulness to keep them), he does ask for job title, department, and Web URL. These three questions "don't depress responses at all."

White Paper Landing Pages: Inspirational Case Study

Nowhere are short copy tests vs. long copy more useful than for white paper landing pages. After all, the sort of demographic that likes to read white papers probably likes to READ. This isn't always true, but certainly worth testing.

White paper consultant Michael Stelzner decided to test this long copy approach in 2007. In his own words, "The strategy involves taking the first few pages of your white paper and formatting it like an article that extends below the bottom of the screen. Once the reader has scrolled down and been hooked by your content, you require registration to access the rest of the paper."

Stelzner's results:

- Conversions: 17% completed the form at the bottom of the page.
- Newsletter registrants: 63% of those converting opted into the newsletter as well.

MarketingSherpa's comment: We suggest you put a summary at the top of the page explaining what the white paper is about in no more than 4 lines. In fact, a bullet point summary might work best. Then instead of writing more marketing copy (or indeed any marketing copy), simply start the content of the white paper as Stelzner tested. Critical: Naturally this tactic won't work if your white paper is badly written, especially if the intro is too broad or filled with pompous buzzwords.

Sample 3.31: Long Copy White Paper Landing Page

The screenshot shows a landing page for 'white Papers' by Michael Stelzner. The page is designed to look like a long document, with text and images that scroll down. The main content area includes a title 'How to Write a White Paper - A White Paper on White Papers', a sub-header 'By Michael A. Stelzner', and several paragraphs of text. There are also images of white papers and a small video player. At the bottom, there is a registration form with fields for Name, Email, and Password, and a 'Sign Up' button. The form also includes a checkbox for 'I agree to the Terms & Conditions' and a link to 'View Privacy Policy'.

Set the White Paper Free

Although requiring visitors to hand over contact data in exchange for a white paper is very much industry-standard practice, we urge you to consider testing another approach. Both Red Hat and MarketingSherpa have tested this approach with strong results.

Study data indicate that white paper recipients tend to pass your white paper along virally to a number of colleagues, fellow committee members, and even their bosses. So each white paper you can get into active circulation can have extended reach. This is especially helpful for marketers trying to penetrate the Fortune 1000.

If you put a registration form on your white paper offer landing page, you strangle that potential viral reach from the very start. On average, only 11% of white paper offer landing page visitors will fill out the form and convert to get the paper. The rest are underwhelmed by your page, and leave. Perhaps some of them weren't qualified leads. Perhaps many of them were. And they left empty-handed.

Another plus for giving out the PDF without a barrier page is that you don't necessarily require a landing page at all. Instead you can email a direct PDF link to prospects, or include the direct to PDF link on online advertising. If your Web or IT department has a hard time getting a new landing page launched in a speedy fashion, or you feel your current landing page design is significantly lacking, sending out a direct PDF link can work around both issues.

How can you measure campaign success if the white paper is downloaded directly without any registration? You can start by measuring total downloads, as well as response rate by ad or list that the offer is sent to. In addition, make sure the fine print in the "footer" of each page includes a hotlink to your main site, along with other contact information. Plus, be sure to offer more valuable information on the last page of the white paper. If the paper is good enough, and the prospects are qualified enough, they will either call or click to learn more. Naturally, higher-value offers such as a trial sample or personalized ROI report would require some form of registration.

Sample 3.32: Third Party MarketingSherpa PDF Download White Paper Email



Dear Colleague,

We thought you would appreciate a copy of **MarketingSherpa's Search Marketing 2007 Research Executive Summary**. Here is a direct link to the PDF for you with our compliments:
http://www.MARKETINGSHERPA.com/exs/SearchGuideSumm_9288.pdf

Your PDF includes a Google eyetracking heatmap (in full color) showing how search users' eyes flicker over a typical results page. You'll see what people really look at

In addition, seven additional new data charts are featured in this Executive Summary, including useful stats on:

- Click fraud
- Public relations and search marketing
- Consumer loyalty by search engine (Google vs Yahoo, MSN, and Ask)
- Pay per click trends
- How SEM compares to email and direct mail ROI

There is no registration required to view these charts and the Google eyetracking heatmap, nor any fee. Simply click on the PDF download hotlink and this MarketingSherpa Executive Summary is yours for the taking.
http://www.MARKETINGSHERPA.com/exs/SearchGuideSumm_9288.pdf

We hope you find it as useful as we have, and hope to see you at the [Killer Search Marketing](#) conference in May.

Kind Regards

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Blogs, Podcasts, and Video

If you want to know about Web 2.0 design-style to make your landing page look hip and with-it, see Chapter Five for a fantastic free online resource. In the meantime, here are some suggestions for better conversions from basic tactics.

Improving Blog Conversions

For many bloggers, your blog is an *ipso facto* landing page. Here is our advice for some of the main types of conversion activities you may be hoping for:

1. RSS Feed Sign-Ups



Although many bloggers watch their RSS subscription numbers easily, few we know of ever measure the percent of visitors who actually sign up. If your goal is to get more RSS feed users, first you must measure conversion stats. Only then can you know if subsequent tests succeeded. When we heard Jonathan Mendez, author of ‘Optimize and Prophesize’ blog, was measuring his RSS sign-up stats, we asked him for results.

- Over a period of 100 days in 2007 Mendez’s blog received:
- 376 new RSS subscribers
- 94% subscribed on first visit
- 97% (of the 94%) viewed a single page only
- 74% of the subs are from links from other blogs
- 26% mainly from search engine organic listings

Mendez says: “What I’ve seen is that I get a quality link it brings a bunch of traffic to a specific article or page, and people subscribe based on liking that piece of content. The overall content or engagement is less of a factor. So for me the key for getting subs is

interestingly the same as SEO. Make great content. Hope for high value links that bring in quality traffic.”

Mendez goes on to say: “There is obvious relevance for the user upon landing in social media since they would not have clicked without an expectation. Factors of trust and authority are imbedded into the user flow based on the nature of the ‘social’ referral. This is different from most user experiences on commercial landing pages. Also, the role ‘influencers’ in blogs (and other social media) are a key success factor. While not new (think of message boards), this is emerging in social media sites, too, since the power of influencers is not only getting subs to the blogs they link to, but if there are ads present they are driving up the CPMs on their pages. Interestingly (or obviously), it’s big brands that want those media buys.”

MarketingSherpa’s advice: if your blog is focused on one particular topic, you’ll probably get better sign-ups. If you tend to go off topic, and one particular off-topic posting gets a lot of traffic, don’t expect many sign-ups. If you tend to write on a couple of very different subjects, we suggest you run two different blogs, one per topic. You’ll probably get more inbound links and more RSS sign-ups.

Also, consider testing the location of your RSS invitation graphics. Most bloggers stick the graphics in a corner and forget about them. At the very least, consider adding them to both the top and bottom of the page, so wherever potential subscribers are, they can convert when they feel the impulse.

2. Email subscription sign-ups

Sample 3.33: Email Subscription Sign-up Form for Blog

A screenshot of an email subscription sign-up form. At the top, it says "GET NEW POSTS VIA EMAIL:" in a bold, serif font. Below this is a text input field with the placeholder text "Enter your email address:". Under the input field is a rounded rectangular button with the word "Subscribe" in a bold, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the form, it says "Delivered by FeedBurner" in a smaller font, with "FeedBurner" in a blue, sans-serif font.

In the past, email subscription opt-in offers were fairly rare in the blog world, mainly because few bloggers had easy access to a broadcast email services provider. In 2007, however, Feedburner started offering a free email sign-up system for all bloggers who want to use it. You can place the opt-in box anywhere on your blog template (again we’d suggest two places, top and bottom of the page).

Why not rely on RSS alone? The fact is, many people either don't know what RSS is or rarely check their RSS inboxes. Email is still the communication channel of choice for the overwhelming majority of Internet users around the world.

#3. Direct contact

Want blog readers to reach out and contact you? If you're hoping for more comments on a posting, we've found repeatedly that the best way to get more comments is simply to ask for them. At the end of a posting, ask the readers: "What do you think?" or "Do you agree or disagree?" or "Has this ever happened to you?" etc. etc. Key, don't use the same language every time. Nobody wants to reply to a machine; they want to write to a human.

Also, not every post was made for commenting. Inevitably some will get a lot and many will get none. Review the posts that get an unusually high number of comments on your blog and on blogs on the same topic elsewhere. Can you draw any conclusions from what worked and what didn't?

If you want blog readers to contact you directly, via email or other method, the very best method again is to invite them to contact you at the end of every post. That way if they only read one post, they have your contact info. Easiest way: Build in your contact information as part of your automated signature that appears next to each post.

Example, Florida Realtor and real estate blogger John Mudd includes this hotlinked signature line at the end of every single post on his blog:

John Mudd

"Mr Real Estate"

Contact John To Get a FREE Customized List of Homes or
Condos Fitting What You're Seeking and Get New Listings
Emailed To You Daily!

This may seem a little over-the-top self promotional to many, but it works for Mudd. 1% of his total blog visitors turn into qualified leads, often boomers from the North who are interested in fairly expensive property. One blog lead alone resulted in a \$1.2 million condo sale.

What if you luck out and a high traffic blogger or Web site recommends your blog, sending a flood of traffic your way one day? How can you make the most of this tidal wave of readers, most of whom will never come back again?

We suggest you copy an idea from Jonathan Bailey, author of the Plagiarism Today blog. When he heard MarketingSherpa was about to publish an interview with him that included a hotlink to his blog, he posted a special note on his blog homepage to make the most of the traffic. It included a hotlinked “Contact Me” line, as well as a request for visitors to join his RSS feed:

Sample 3.34: Plagiarism Today Blog With Hotlink



#4. Viral blog pass-alongs

If you want people to tell friends about your blog, bear in mind they are more likely to talk about a particular posting than the blog as a whole. Here's an example of one of several free applications you can add to every posting to encourage more pass-alongs.

Sample 3.35: List of Free Applications to Attach to Blog



Should you add a “Digg” icon as well? In our experience, unless you tend to get a lot of Digg users on your blog already, this doesn’t help much. Why? Because too often every posting has a big zero next to the Digg icon which makes new visitors feel like your blog might be a loser.

#5. Google AdSense earnings

Note: As we mentioned earlier, don’t clutter any landing page (including your blog) with ads for offers that aren’t the main offer of the page. You’ll almost certainly depress response significantly from your main offer. Many bloggers toss in AdSense or other blog network ads as a “what the heck” move. Resist this impulse unless either of the following is true:

- Your blog is not being operated for business purposes, so its conversion activities are not a big deal for you.
- Your primary business model is making money from these ads.

If the latter is true, here are seven specific tactics Joel Comm, New York Times bestselling author of *The AdSense Code*, recommended to MarketingSherpa readers to treat your blog as a landing page to convert more readers to AdSense clickers:

a. Stick with text ads.

Anecdotally, the much-trumpeted image ads don't get the response rates of text-only ads. And if you're getting a cut of sales based on response rate, that's the endgame.

b. Put the ads as close to your content as possible.

People are reading your page to see the content, so anything close to or contained within the content generally will do better than anything elsewhere on the page.

c. Don't rely on standard banner placement or ad sizes

Web surfers have trained themselves to ignore 468x60s placed in regular banner-ads-go-here spots. Want more clicks? Move your AdSense ads out of that traditional format. We know publishers who have tested locations all over the page (including at the very bottom) with great results. "We tripled our Google ad revenues from last year just by moving some ads around little by little to see what works best," says Janet Attard, Publisher of BusinessKnowHow.com.

d. Test multiple ads.

As we noted above, you can stick in multiple ads per page. If this is critical revenue to you and the extra ads won't dilute your brand or hurt user experience, test it.

e. Consider "white" borders.

Classic ads online have lines boxing them off from the other content on the page. However, you might test a "white" border, which for a white page would effectively render the border invisible. No border means no block to stop the eye.

f. Match borders to your site colors.

Another option: Use a border color that matches your site's palette as closely as possible. The ads look more "at home" and often get better clicks.

#6. Blog visitors reading more pages.

Stick a big giant link at the bottom of all your blog pages (in the template that's often the footer) that says, "Click here for past posts," or something like that. We're stunned by the number of bloggers who don't do this.

Podcast Landing Pages

We assume the goal for your podcast landing page is to get more people to:

- Listen to an actual podcast and, perhaps,
- Subscribe to new episodes either via iTunes or, perhaps, an email notification service.

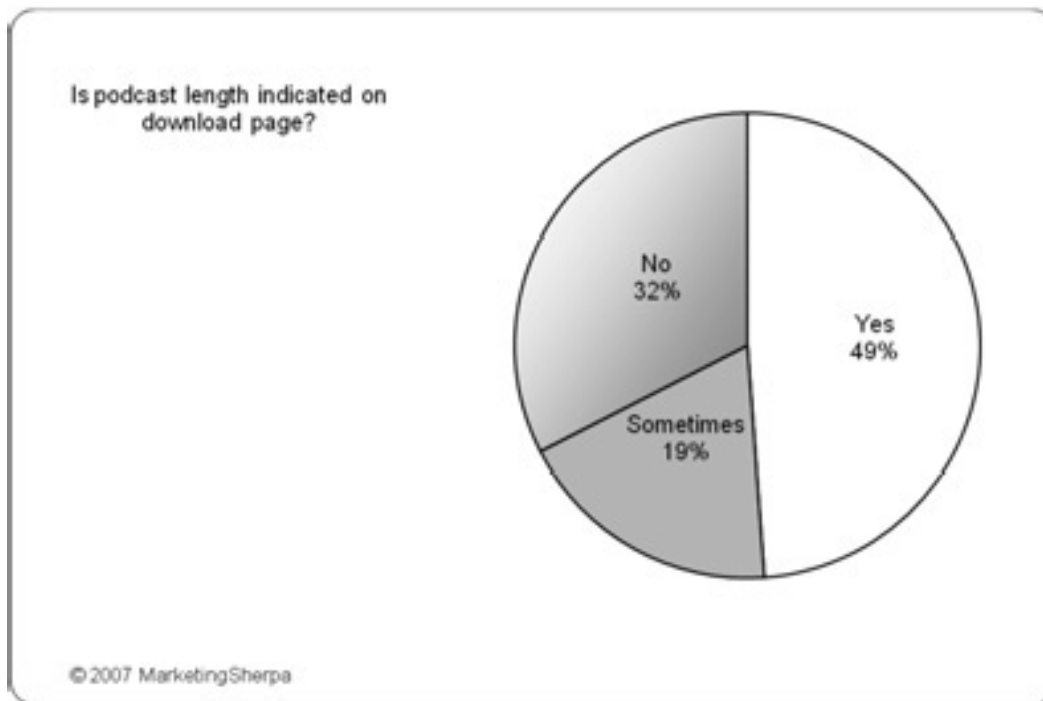
Here's a sample of a podcast download landing page that does a great job for both conversion goals:

Sample 3.36: Podcast Download Landing Page



The most important factor for getting people to listen in the first place is to tell people what to expect, especially length. Unfortunately, as you can see from this chart ,not everyone does this.

Chart 3.37: Fewer than Half of Download Pages Inform Listeners of Podcast Length



If you're hoping people will sign up to be alerted when new episodes are ready, consider including an "Add to iTunes" icon on your landing page next to each episode. We've seen two different ones in use but don't have any data on which is more compelling:



[Add to iTunes](#)

We also strongly suspect that you will increase sign-ups if you offer an email notification service for new episodes.

Direct Response Television Landing Pages

Direct response television marketers are famous for heavy testing and measurement. If you see a particular Web layout used by most of them, you can be sure that layout has been tested ad nauseam and won.

Here are two formats that have been tested like crazy

Sample 3.38: Netflix Direct Response TV Landing Page

NETFLIX Buy / Redeem Gift | Member Sign In

Welcome | How It Works | Browse Selection | **Start Your FREE Trial** | Free Trial Info

Have a special offer? Enter Code:

Sign up today and try Netflix for FREE!

- Free shipping - Both ways
- Classics to new releases to TV series
- Cancel anytime
- Watch movies instantly on your PC

\$4.99 / month

Start here

Email Address
Example: Only@aol.com

Create a Password

Re-type Password
4-50 characters (case sensitive)

Enter Zip Code

Secure Server

We value your privacy. Netflix will not sell or rent your email address to third parties.

How Netflix Works:

- 1** Over 85,000 Titles
Create your list of movies online
- 2** Free Delivery in about 3 business days
We rush you DVDs from your list
- 3** NO LATE FEES
Keep each movie as long as you want
- 4** Prepaid return envelopes
Return a movie to get a new one from your list

Want to learn more?
[FREE Trial offer details](#)
[Browse our selection of movies](#)
[Learn more about Netflix](#)

Questions?
Call 1-800-715-2135
24 hours a day

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3 movies for \$8 based on 2 DVDs by mail on the \$4.99 a month plan, and 3 instant viewing movies where 3rd movie is started before reaching 6 hours of total instant viewing time and 3rd movie played to completion

Sample 3.39: Finishing Touch Direct Response TV Landing Page



FINISHINGTouch powered by: livemercial player **NEW!** **REMOVES HAIR INSTANTLY & PAINLESSLY**

\$60 VALUE NOW ONLY \$14.99 plus s&h

\$60 VALUE • INCLUDES

- FREE** lighted mirror
- FREE** hair wrap
- FREE** eyebrow comb
- FREE** carrying case

The Micro Technology Erases Hair Cleanly and Discreetly

Uses 1 "AAA" Battery not included

30 DAY MONEY BACK GUARANTEE!

CLICK HERE TO BUY NOW!

ORDER RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW!
and receive a lighted 5X magnification mirror • eyebrow comb attachment carrying case and quick-dry hair wrap **\$60 VALUE ABSOLUTELY FREE!**

* First Name: * Email Address:
(used for order confirmation)

* Last Name: Phone: - -
(used for order confirmation)

* Address 1: ☒ Billing Address is same as shipping.

Address 2:

* City: * State: * Zip:

Continue

VeriSign Secure Site
click to verify

Powered by LIVESERIAL • The Interactive Commercial, [Click Here!](#)

Design notes:

Focus of the page is about converting *now* rather than offering extended information about the product. The headline talks about ordering. Remember, by the time consumers have gotten off their couch and gone to the computer to get this product, they're very likely well informed and nearly "sold."

If your commercial is long-form and heavily educational, you may be able to sell directly on the landing page as this example does.

Otherwise, your page goal should be soft offer sign-up forms. For example, a free DVD and info packet for a high consideration item such as a bed or financial product. Or you may offer a sweepstakes and encourage opt-ins so you can email the resulting opt-ins multiple educational messages over a period of time.

This doesn't mean you can't have plenty of educational information on your site about your offering; the more the merrier both from a marketing and search engine perspective! However, don't clutter your landing page with all that information. Focus on the easy, compelling conversion message. You can educate your prospects once you've got them registered.

Order form is on the landing page. You don't have to click anywhere else to get started.

Links for other traffic (such as current customers) may need to be present but they are minimized to keep 90% of the page focus on converting the newbie.

Radio Campaign Landing Pages

GoToMyPC has found radio to be a powerful tool for generating online leads. To succeed, it requires the right landing page treatment.

1. Pre-landing page entryway

Using what they had learned from landing page tests, the team invented an entryway page that served as a door to the formal trial offer landing page. Instead of going directly to the landing page, radio listeners first saw this entry page.

Radio listeners were asked to enter their promo code, either the station ID or show host's first name, and then to click on a huge "CONTINUE" button. There was no extraneous copy, product descriptions, links, or unnecessary graphics beyond a friendly photo of a radio.

GoToMyPC's creative team came up with extra-special offers to entice radio listeners past the hump of the entry page. For example, a radio host might exhort listeners to "Just enter your name and you'll get a 45-day free trial instead of just 30 days!"

2. Customizing landing page per radio station

Depending on which code they'd put in at the entry page, visitors arrived at a landing page based on the best of GoToMyPC's tests plus a little note about the radio station.

For example, radio listeners who entered “Jeff” as their promo code on the entry page got a landing page with the headline, “Welcome Jeff Levy Listeners!” Plus, it featured a photo of Jeff himself next to an old-fashioned radio mike with the quote, “I love GoToMyPC!”

If the radio station was running canned ads throughout the day, instead of live host unscripted promos, the landing page was adjusted to have a headline such as “Welcome WBNC Listeners!”

3. Allowing non-coded orders to get through

Although the entry page didn’t say anything about this, curious visitors who chose to click on the “CONTINUE” button without entering anything in the promo code— or if they entered an incorrect promo code— could still proceed to the next page. In this case, it was a generic “Radio Listeners” landing page.

Plus, to encourage more entries, the site served a small pop-under to all visitors who went to the entry page but left without getting any further (i.e., entryway abandons).

The pop cheerfully read,

Forgot your promo code?
It’s not too late!

Click here for your
FREE 30-day trial

[TRY IT NOW]

4. Adding a radio button to the homepage

You never know if folks seeing your offer offline will type in the specific URL you ask them to. To catch folks who typed in the main URL instead of the special entry page URL, the team added a small yet easy-to-see button on GoToMyPC’s homepage that simply read, “Radio Listeners Click Here!”

5. Test duration

You need to run a longer test than you may think — it takes repeat hearings for a radio listener to move off the dime and react to your ad. GoToMyPC found that four to six weeks of data with three-to-six reads per week worked well.

6. Rest and retry

Sometimes results trail off too much after a campaign has run awhile. The team gives that station a rest for a couple of months and then retries the campaign. Sometimes it works and an old campaign has new legs. Sometimes it's a dud.

So never assume that once a station's bell curve of great responses has passed that it can never be revived. (Note: We've heard many other media perform the same way.)

7. Live reads vs. canned ads

As every other marketer we've interviewed has said, live announcements about your product in the radio host's own words are generally the most powerful ads. Live reads pull better than canned ads in the same way text-ads tend to pull better than standard banners.

However, live reads are limited and sell out. Plus, they can be far more expensive than canned ads (as can highly targeted niche shows). So you may need to add lesser responding radio media to your campaign mix to get the best ROI.

Many stations and most radio networks now offer you the ability to monitor digital versions of your live reads. Sometimes you can spot something in the announcer's delivery, perhaps a lack of enthusiasm or incorrect information, which might be remedied with a pep-talk phone call with them or by sending them more product information.

Bonus radio copywriting tip

Here's something that worked well for lingerie retailer Bare Necessities: creating geographic-specific URLs to relay in radio spots. It made it very easy for users to remember, and gave a local, trustworthy feel. Also, never forget to include the 'www' in the URL name. What's the point? To put people in the frame of mind that they're about to hear a Web address and to listen.

Web Ads

Here are some tips for customizing your landing page from a Web ad:

1. Tie into what they were just reading. If the banner ad is placed on an e-mail newsletter for engineering, for example, customize your landing page to the engineering field.
2. Take into account that banners often don't provide context. They don't have much room to tell a story, so the prospect may be confused about what they're clicking on. Especially with rich media or high design ads, prospects may have clicked simply because it was visually compelling or fun to do so. For ads like this, create landing pages that provide context for the user, and ease them into your proposition.
3. Match the colors and style, as well as the copy. If there's a dominant image or scheme to the banner, make the landing page match it.
4. People who click through from a banner ad generally need more education than those who click through from a search engine or an e-mail because often they click on a whim. Ask yourself whether this market needs to be sold or educated and, if it does, make sure your copy starts at that level.
5. Banner ads are easier to produce than landing pages. Try working backwards, and starting with the landing page. Once you have a design, copy, and process you like, reflect that in the banner ads you produce.

Example: The landing page for the Nivea campaign for men had a 22%-44% conversion rate depending on offer (marketers tested a variety). That's an unusually high conversion rate for a landing page from what was an oversize banner ad.

MarketingSherpa believes that in addition to a targeted media buy and compelling offer, the team behind this landing page did a great job of matching the creative as closely as possible to the initial ad. That very lack of creativity on the landing page may have been the factor that made a big difference. (The model's resemblance to Brad Pitt may have also helped a bit.)

Sample 3.40: Nivea for Men Banner Ad With Matching Landing Page



Banner Ad

WIN 2 ROUNDTRIP TICKETS to ANYWHERE IN THE U.S.

FLY FREE SWEEPS
sponsored by NFM Oil Control

2nd Second Place Prize: NIVEA FOR MEN gift baskets valued at \$50
3rd Third Place Prize: One month premium personal care kit on Gay.com

Required Fields

*First Name *Address 1
 *Last Name Address 2
 *City *State *Email
 *Zip Code *Gender ☐ Female ☐ Male

1. You have selected NIVEA For Men as your NIVEA brand of preference. Are you still interested in our other brands?
☐ NIVEA Visage ☐ Nivea Body

2. * Please provide us with your birth date:
 Month: Day: Year:

3. * How much importance do you place on the condition of your facial skin? Would you say you feel it is ...

4. * How often do you purchase the skin care brand you use most often for your face?
 If you are not sure, please use your best estimate.

NIVEA Club Blue already includes many benefits and even more are on their way.
 You are currently registering for:
☒ Newsletters with tips, product information, special promotions, contests, and samples.

[Submit >>](#)

Thank you for your interest in Nivea for Men.

Landing Page

Mobile Marketing Landing Pages

First the bad news: Even if you think this section doesn't apply to you, it almost certainly does. That's because your audience is probably trying to get to your Web site via their mobile phones and devices—ranging from Blackberries to iPhones— even if you are not “officially” conducting mobile marketing.

Consider these stats:

- 64% of decision-makers in corporate America view much of their email via Blackberries or other mobile devices.
- 16 million people — 7% of total U.S. mobile phone users— admit to checking email from their phones (sometimes while driving).
- Mobile search is taking off with millions of new users each year.

And, as you know, that “Third Screen” is tiny compared to the average PC or Mac monitor. Luckily the World Wide Web Consortium has published best practices on how to reconfigure regular landing pages so they are viewable and useable via mobile phone. So make sure your design department is thoroughly familiar with these.

Tip #1. Consider creating two landing pages — one for regular visitors and one for mobile users.

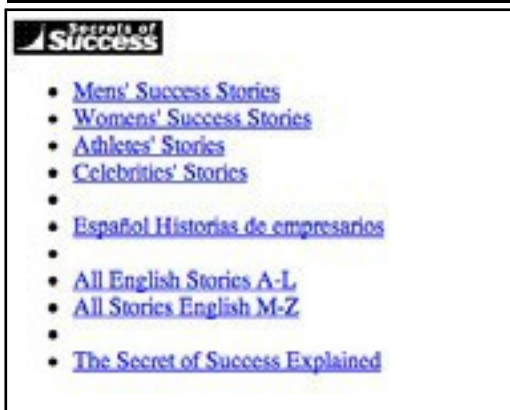
You can use either sensing software to tell if a user is coming from a computer or a mobile device (this is available from GetDeviceInfo.com and elsewhere) or you can simply buy a second domain name for mobile users. We suspect someday all Web sites will sense visitors' systems and accommodate them.

Most importantly, whichever solution you choose, be sure to get regular traffic reports from it so you're aware of how many mobile users you have.

Sample 3.41: Secrets of Success Traditional, Mobile User Homepages



Traditional Homepage



Mobile Users Homepage

Tip #2. Buy departmental testing phones

Just as your Web department should have both PCs and Macs, they now need a variety of mobile devices for testing, including a Blackberry, an iPhone, a popular model Internet-ready cell phone, and other devices your target demographic may use.

There are also an increasing number of online applications (aka “device simulators”) such as ready.mobi and mtld.mobi that allow you to see what your landing page looks like on mobile devices, and recommend these in a pinch. However, if you need to persuade top management (or a stubborn advertising client) to make a change for

mobile, handing an actual mobile phone to them with the company landing page on the screen can work wonders! There's nothing better than a real-life demonstration of unusability to bring them around.

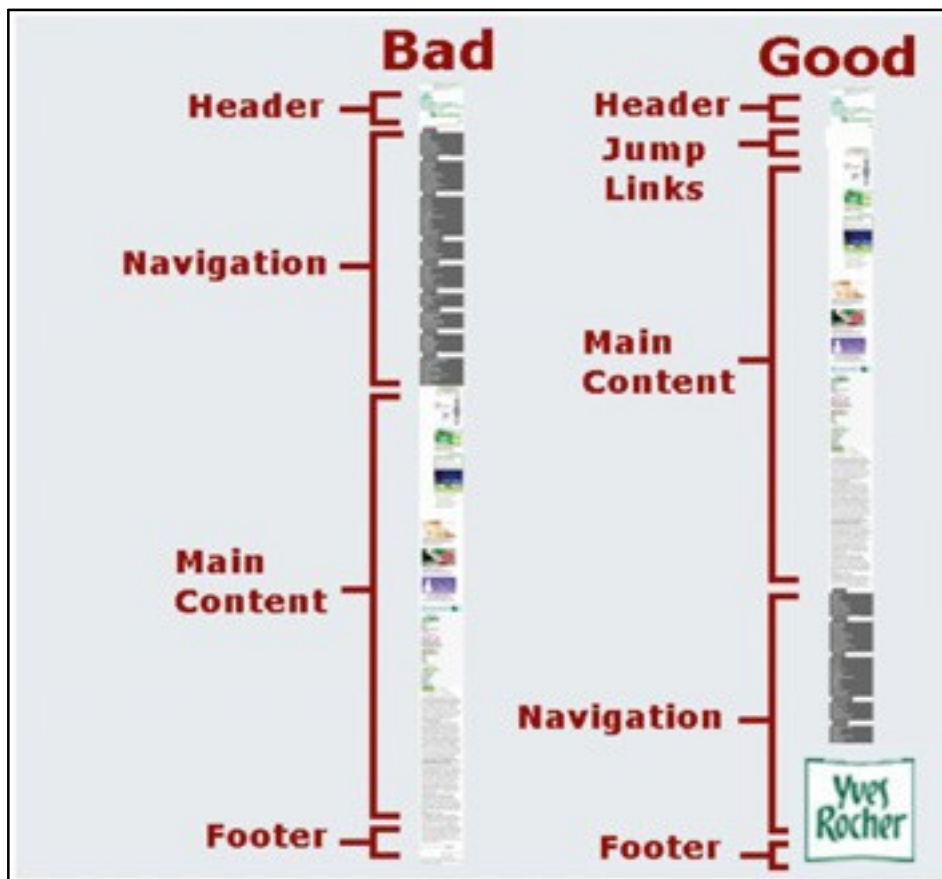
Tip #3. Get one of your Web designers certified

If you're working with an agency, ask if they have a certified developer on hand. If you have an in-house staff, ask at least one of them to become certified. If the developer in question says, "I don't need to take a course; I know all this stuff already," say, "That's great. I'd be happy to pay for you to take the Certification Test then so you can add that to your résumé!"

The cost is \$195 — and, no, MarketingSherpa has no affiliation with the organization offering it. Go to <http://prometric.com/dotMobi/default.htm>

Then you'll be sure that your site is designed the right way for mobile users.

Sample 3.42: Integrating Mobile & Email



Our thanks to Cindy Brown, CEO Blue Moon Works, for this illustration.

Chapter 4: How to Test Landing Pages & Improve Results

Every list of marketing best practices begins and ends with testing. Fortunately, landing pages are fairly easy to test (perhaps even easier than you suspected). Plus, over the past few years testing costs have gotten lower while technology has gotten better than ever before. Despite this, if you come from a company that does not embrace a testing culture you may have to do some undercover testing. See the end of this chapter for more notes on how to accomplish this, even if you don't have a tech team or big budget to back you up.

Real-Life Data on Testing Landing Pages

First, here are some general data from thousands of real-life marketers who have tested landing pages in the recent past.

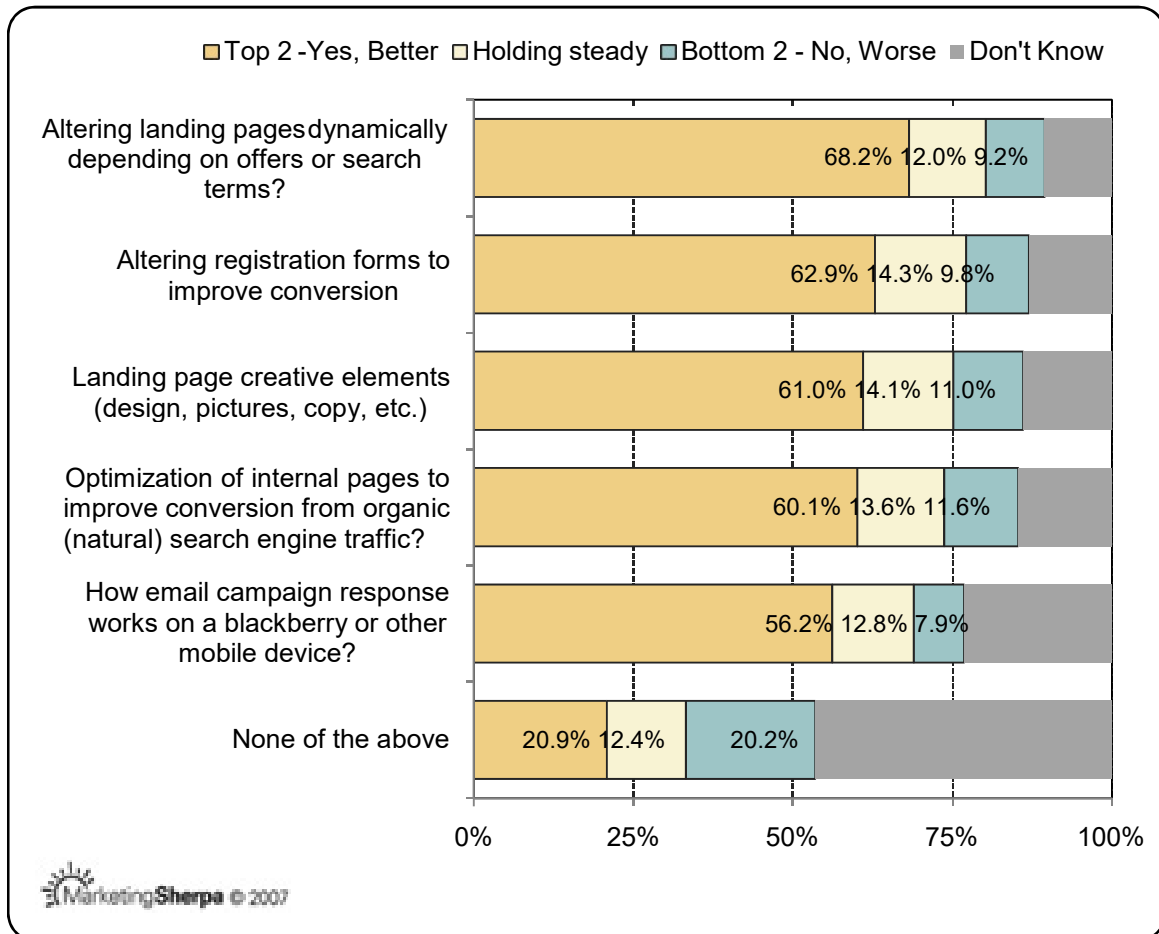
In the chart below we can see a pretty massive difference in conversion improvement over the prior year between testers and non-testers. While we can't attribute the results solely to testing, there certainly seems to be a correlation between testing and improved conversions. Altering landing pages dynamically depending on offers or search terms seems to be the most effective test for increasing conversion, with 68.2% of marketers who tried it reporting increased conversions, compared to a mere 20.9% of non-testing marketers who saw increased conversions. On the bottom end, not testing led the way down with 20.2% of non-testers actually showing a decrease in conversions over the prior year, compared to the average of 9.9% of testers who saw a decrease in conversions during the same time period.

Chart 4.1: Landing Page Testers & Non-Testers: Conversion Improvement in a Year

Have you tested any of the following over the past 12 months?

vs.

Have your average landing page conversions improved over the past year?



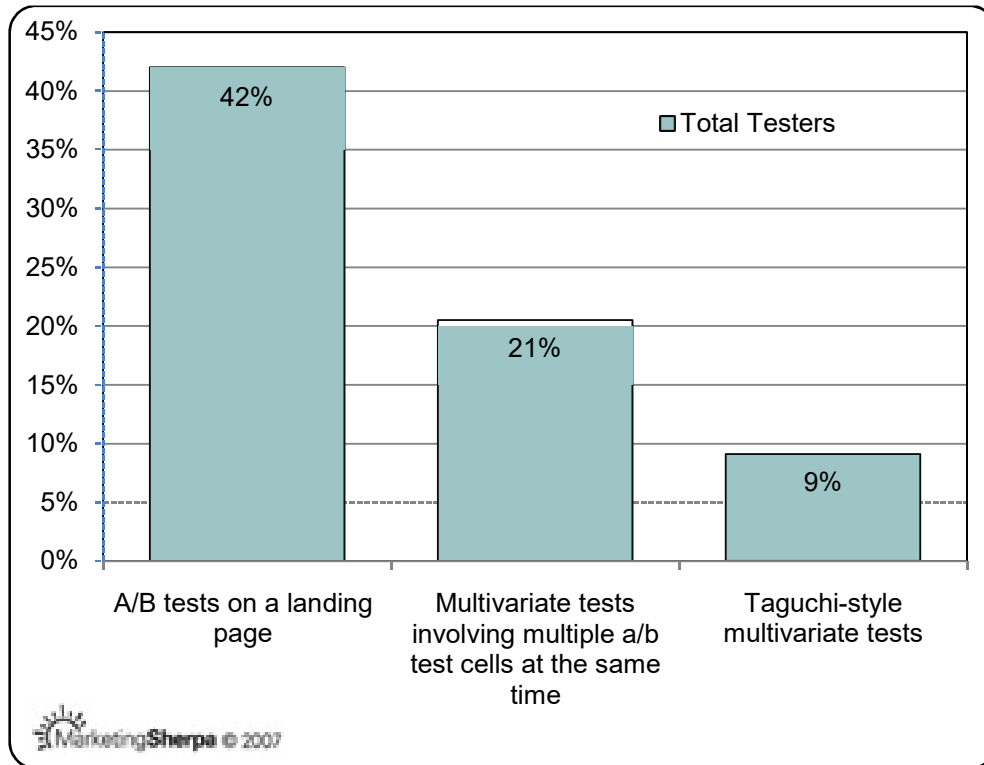
Base: None n=816, Mobile device n=348, Optimization of internal pages n=1883, Creative elements n=3021, Registration forms n=1512, Dynamic n=988

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6th and September 18th, 2007.

We also asked marketers who have tried landing page tests in the last year what they thought of the experience. As you can see, the difficulty involved in each style of test cuts the number of testers in two. Among actively testing marketers (not all marketers), we see that 42% have tried A/B tests, 20.5% have tried multivariate tests, and 9.1% have attempted Taguchi-style multivariate tests.

Chart 4.2: Which Tests Were Tried Last Year Among Testing Marketers



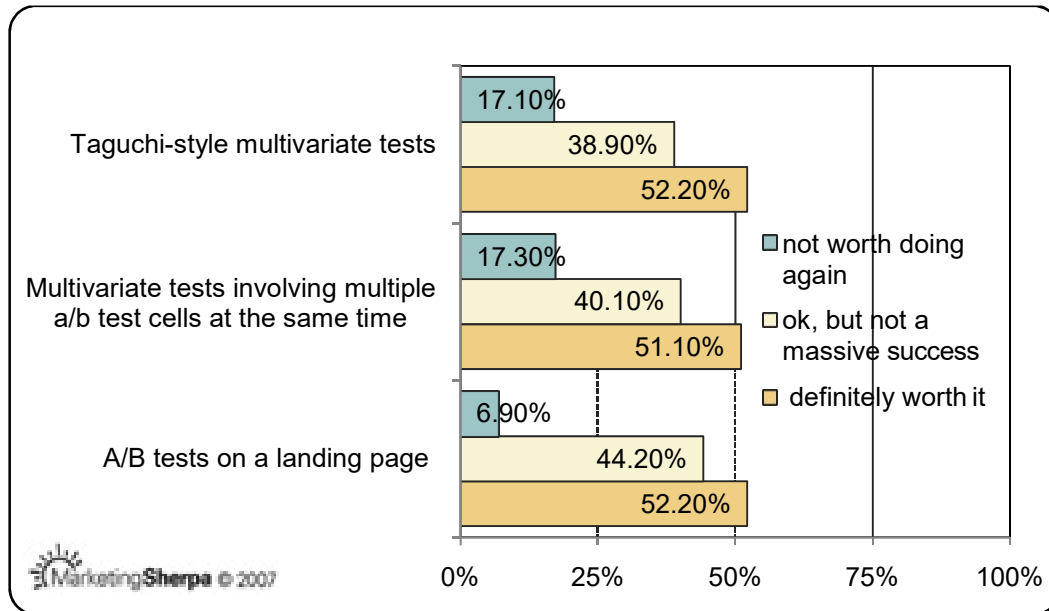
Base: Total Testers n=2191

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6th and September 18th, 2007.

Perhaps most interestingly, when we look at just the testers of each method, they all score about the same when we asked whether the test was “definitely worth it.” Right down the line, about half of the marketers that actually tried the method thought it was great.

Chart 4.3: % of Marketers Who Think Landing Page Testing Is Worthwhile



Base: Total Testers n=2191, Taguchi Testers n=199, Multivariate Testers n=455, A/B Testers n=949

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6th and September 18th, 2007.

The take-away from this for any marketer considering testing is that you have a better than average chance at increasing conversion, and that simple, inexpensive tests seem to work just as well as the more expensive and complicated ones.

Data below based on (very) generalized averages—real-life results certainly will vary. However, we can promise the one thing that won't vary is that a properly-run, ongoing testing program will help you improve results—all the way down to the bottom line.

Table 4.4: Example 1—Airline tickets offer via email campaign to segmented house list

	Totals	Without Testing	Lift with Testing
Emails sent to house list	100,000		
Clicks	8,000		
Click rate	8%		
Number of conversions		160	240
Conversion rate		2%	3%
Average sale		\$400	\$400
Total sales		\$64,000	\$96,000

Table 4.5: Example 2—B-to-B sales lead generation campaign

	Totals	Without Testing	Lift with Testing
Webinar offer clicks	2,500		
Leads generated		250	350
Form fills		10%	14%
% Sale-ready leads	12% leads		
Hot final close rate	10% (in 90 days)		
% Nurture-worthy leads	40%		
Nurture final close rate	5% (in 9 months)		
Value per sale	\$50,000		
Total final sales		\$300,000	\$550,000

Table 4.6: Example 3—Online publisher

	Totals	Without Testing	Lift with Testing
Visitors	250,000		
Convert to opt-ins		2%	4%
Value per opt-in per month (Email ad sales, online banner sales, AdSense Revenue)	\$1		
Average months' lifetime	6		
Total revenue		\$30,000	\$60,000

Table 4.7: Example 4—Ecommerce site prospecting new customers via SEM

	Totals	Without Testing	Lift with Testing
PPC clicks	10,000		
Convert to buyer		1.5%	2.1%
Average sale	\$50		
Revenue		\$7,500	\$10,500
Convert to 2nd time buyer	30%		
Total revenue		\$9,750	\$13,650

As you see from the fourth example above, a few more new customers can turn into more and more sales months down the line as you cross-sell, up-sell, and re-sell to your now-larger customer base.

Before You Start: Top 9 Rules of Conducting a Landing Page Test

#1. Get enough responses per test to make sure any differences seen are real, not just random variance

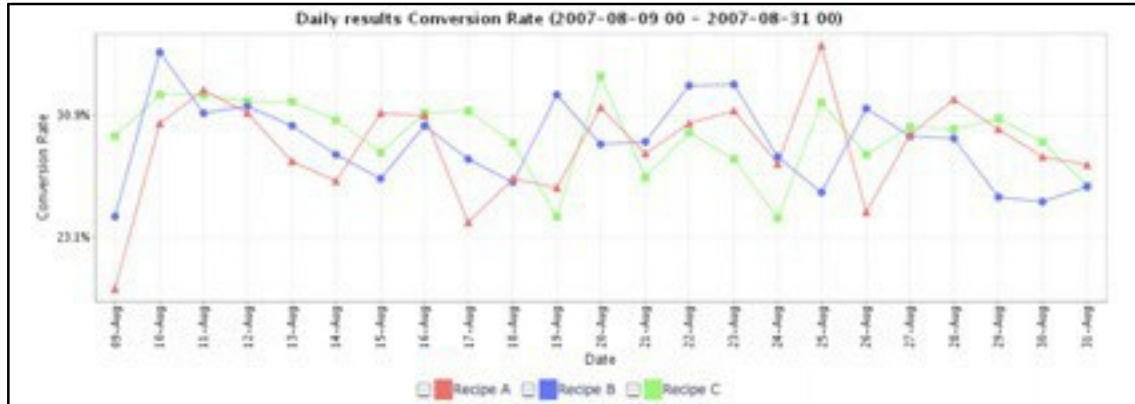
The way to tell whether differences are real or not is by running a test of statistical significance. Testing stats can be complex, especially if you have more than two test cells. We've provided a special Spreadsheet download below to help, but here are the basics you need to know.

The more people you have in each test cell, the more likely their actions are to be predictive of the actions of others. If 3 out of 10 people respond, we would not expect 30 out of 100 people to respond. However, if 300 out of 1,000 people respond, it would be reasonable to expect that 30 out of 100 people would respond. By responses, we mean conversion actions taken on the landing page.

Watching your test results can be exciting and addictive. It's easy to get sucked into the excitement and begin reporting on "early results" to the rest of the company before you have enough responses. Just like election day polls, the data you see early on may be completely invalidated by the time the test is through. If you tell people about early data that's later proved to be invalid, then you run the risk of turning your early results into

“Remembered Corporate Fact” instead of the correct results. This “Remembered Fact” has a way of dictating the future even when you know better.

Chart 4.8: Landing Page Test Daily Conversion Rate



Source: Jonathan Mendez, OTTO Digital

So, take our advice and bite your tongue. Don’t release any early-on results—even to your boss and even if they validate a point you’ve been yearning to prove! Hold on until you have statistically significant results.

#2. Eliminate any differences in traffic coming to your test pages

In order for your test to be valid, you need to make sure the only variables in your test are the landing pages themselves. If you have any other difference between the two test pages, you can’t say for sure whether the difference in response is due to the difference in pages or the difference in traffic to the pages.

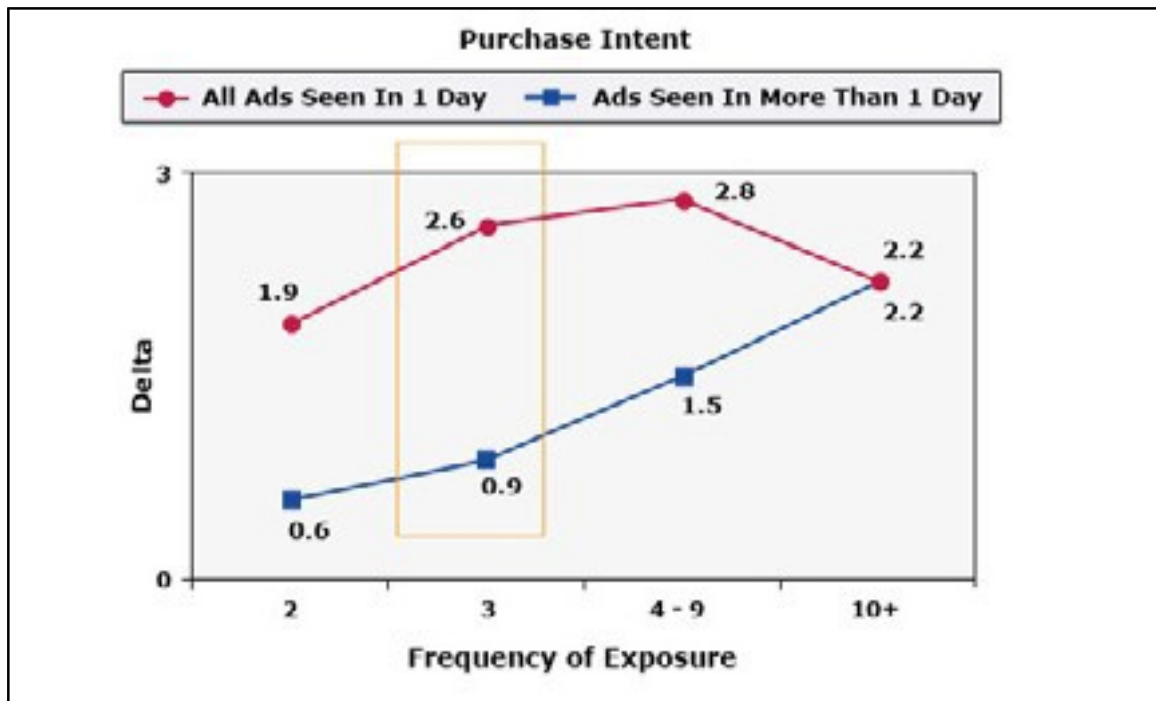
The number one most influential factor on any marketing campaign’s results is traffic source. In direct (postal) mail, marketers know the list they choose will dictate 75% of the results, with offer, creative, timing, etc. falling into line below that. In brand advertising, it’s all about whether the media buy hits the target demographic at the right time of day within the right media brand context.

No matter what media you use to drive traffic to your landing page, that traffic source will dictate your page’s results far more than any other factor. This means a great landing page can get lousy results if you send the wrong traffic to it. The traffic-source factor is so overshadowing, in fact, that it can easily skew test results without your realizing it. Suddenly you think the big green button is the winning creative, when actually a particular PPC ad made all the difference.

Throughout the entire duration of your test, your incoming traffic should all come from:

- The same particular type of media (that is, radio, postal mail, etc.)
- The same particular media (for example, Google ads) or if it can't be helped, then the same mix of media (for example, a banner run on the same ad network)
- The same creative—and we mean *precisely*—so all traffic is responding to precisely the same ad, especially including headline, offer, amount of detailed information, and even graphics.
- The same period of time—this could be “during the summer season” or “from 5 to 6pm on Thursday night.” It depends on how seasonality, day of week, and time of day affect your business.
- The same relationship with your brand—past customers respond differently from current customers. New opt-ins respond differently from opt-ins who've been on your email list for more than 30 or 60 days. Each relational demographic will react differently to your page. If you're sending one slice of your list to Landing Page A and the other slice to Landing Page B, the two slices must have precisely the same demographic brand relationship. In email, this is accomplished by doing an “nth” name select, where every second, third, fourth, or fifth name is put into another list. That way you don't get one list that's loaded up with new names and one list with older names.
- The same general brand awareness—as many studies have revealed, including the one illustrated by the chart below, the frequency of your advertising can affect landing page conversions.

Chart 4.9: Concentrated Online Ad Exposures Enhance the Impact on Purchase Intent



Source: Dynamic Logic's MarketNorms through Q1/2007

Note 1: 'All Ads Seen In 1 Day' N=2,611 campaigns, n=2,474,149 respondents; 'Ads Seen In More Than 1 Day' N=2,471 campaigns, n=2,410,737 respondents

Note 2: 'All Ads Seen In 1 Day' includes media purchased as fixed roadblocks as well as that running in rotated placements

We've actually discovered extra ad spend can affect things even if that ad spend is NOT online and even if it does not link in any way to the particular landing page. In addition, heavy non-search promotions can in turn increase your incoming traffic from search engines as consumers go to Yahoo or Google to find your URL instead of typing it directly in. These extra visitors in turn may convert differently from typical search traffic.

So if you are doing any "extra" marketing campaigns ranging from TV to trade shows during the time period that you're running landing page tests, your landing page results may be skewed if you don't ensure that your test pages are getting the exact same kind of traffic at the same time. Greater brand and promotional awareness affects conversion rates.

#3. Measure by KPI instead of merely conversions alone

What's your Key Performance Indicator? The simplest view is it's the percent of people landing on your page who convert, taking the positive action you wanted them to take (buying something, registering, downloading an ecoupon, whatever.)

However, whenever possible smart marketers try to dig deeper because all converters are not alike. A few basic examples:

- Opt-ins who consistently open and click on your email vs. opt-ins who add their name to your list but then ignore the email you send them.
- Ecommerce customers who purchase once but never again vs. new customers who become repeat buyers.
- White paper downloaders who are highly qualified sales leads vs. tire kickers.

One of the reasons many marketers measure simply by conversions alone is that more valuable KPIs may be too hard to get at. Your measurement systems or dashboard may not be set up to track conversions as far through as you really need to. This is especially a problem in B-to-B with long sales cycles requiring multiple touches, as well as for consumer packaged goods marketers who can't easily track a conversion activity such as a sweeps entry or newsletter sign-up directly to a retail sale.

Another reason marketers may not emphasize KPI measurements enough is that it can make the testing cycle feel interminably long. Waiting for an ecommerce customer to prove lifetime value, or a B-to-B lead to qualify can take weeks if not months. In the meantime, you've got a campaign to get rolling and landing page decisions to make. That's why we also suggest you work with analysts to determine what *preliminary* KPI indications are for your campaign. In direct postal mail, preliminary KPI indicators are known as "Doubling Dates," the date by which you can safely assume roughly 50% of your final response is in, in order to do the math to see if the campaign is a winner or not.

Some KPI preliminary measurements—ones that go beyond the immediate conversion to indicate true conversion value—may include all sorts of behavioral patterns that new customers who are valuable tend to exhibit:

- Welcome and early email offer open and click rates
- Cross-sales in the shopping cart during initial check out
- Answering a quick survey after registration or check out
- Being confirmed as a high quality lead by immediate telemarketing follow-up efforts

#4. Re-test routinely

"After achieving high conversions from an optimized landing page, a few weeks or months later it is not unusual to see a slow but steady decline in conversion rates," note lab technicians in a formal paper published May 2006 by MarketingExperiments, a partner of MarketingSherpa.

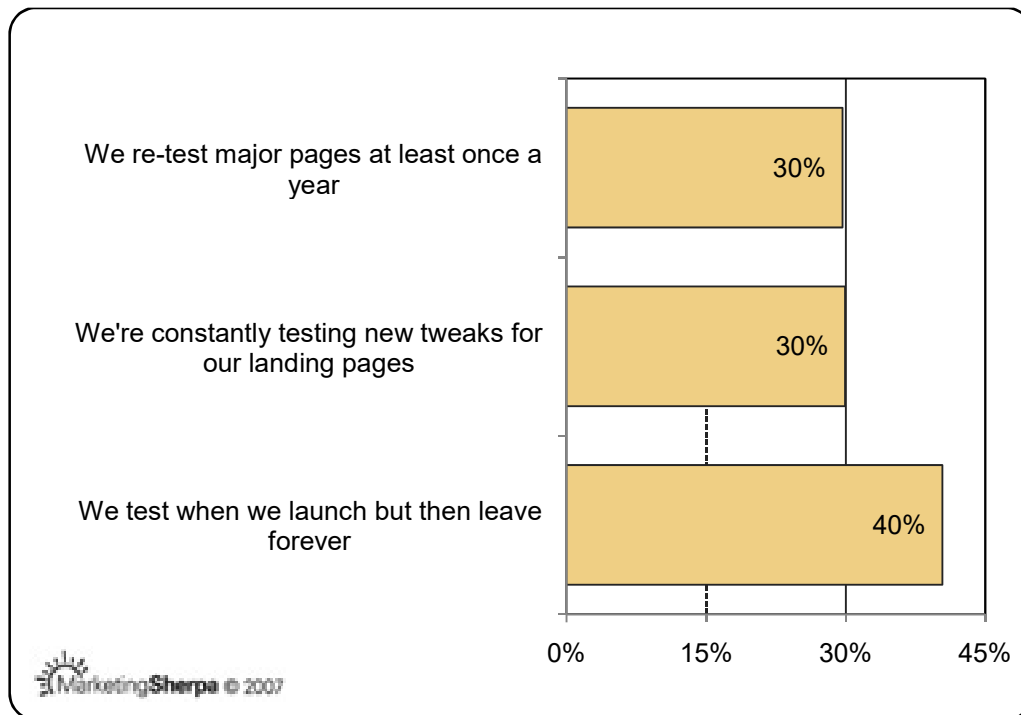
This phenomenon is well known offline as well. The old winning campaign just stops pulling as well as it used to. This may be due to:

- Overexposure in the target market
- Too many look-alike competitor campaigns
- Seasonality
- Fashion

Fact: not every campaign will “go bad” on you. The Wall Street Journal, Classmates.com and VistaPrint, all savvy and intensive testers, have had campaigns that lasted for years. But, in all three cases, their marketing departments never blindly trusted that the old creative was the best creative. Instead, month after month, marketing pitted tweaked versions and even radically different ideas against the old “control.” Like a lion in the Serengeti, sooner or later the control will fall to a new contender. The only question is when it will happen.

For most campaigns we know of, the control lasts only four to six months. Then, the old landing page you counted on will start slipping. Landing pages are like company Web sites—good ones are in an almost continual state of evolution.

Chart 4.10: Frequency of Landing Page Tests



Base: Total n=2260

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6th and September 18th, 2007.

#5. Never test too many factors at once

The more factors you test at once, the smaller your test cells are, making it more difficult to come to a clear conclusion about what caused your success or failure. If you can't make any actionable conclusion, the entire test was wasted. We're not advising against multivariate testing (although we suggest you keep an expert by your side when conducting them). If you have thousands of visitors and hundreds of conversions every day, you can totally disregard this advice, but if you have a small site and a limited number of conversions to work with, keep your test down to one variable at a time.

Alternatively, you can test entire concepts against each other. So, you might test two completely different landing pages against each other at the same time. Your results will show you which page won, but you won't know why on an element-by-element basis, or even if particular elements could be further optimized.

Key, no matter if you test one particular factor against another, or if you test an entire page against another entire page, you must keep both the incoming traffic sources and the pages further in the path experience stable. That way the only thing affecting test results is the landing page and results are not skewed by factors elsewhere.

#6. Test what needs testing

How can you know which test to conduct first? Go through your Web and sales analytics in a step-by-step fashion looking for the biggest problems. *Test the pages with the most critical drop-off first.* Often that page may be the landing page, because it's at or very near the start of the sales funnel. However, if pages or other conversion activities further in the process—in particular the “second page” (the page immediately after the landing page) —have bigger problems, fix them before you focus on landing pages.

Review the average conversion data in Chapter One as compared to your own response rates. If you are getting remarkably better conversion rates, you can still improve results by testing more. However, you might be smarter to first examine other areas in the conversion funnel to optimize if you haven't already done so.

#7. Test tiny tweaks as well as big crazy ideas

Josef Mandelbaum, CEO of testing powerhouse AmericanGreetings.com, stresses the importance of creating a formal testing group but also suggested dividing that team between two goals:

- One to test small items that add incremental value
- The other to test big ideas that could have a huge impact

“Incremental changes may not have the big bang, but you’ll never get the big bang without incremental changes,” Mandelbaum says.

While this is certainly good advice, sites with low conversion numbers may not be able to have big enough test cells to see significant differences due to tiny tweaks. There’s nothing more frustrating than running a test only to find that your two pages perform so similarly that it’s impossible to come up with a statistically significant winner. For smaller sites, it’s best to do a little soul-searching and ask yourself if testing tiny tweaks isn’t just a way of procrastinating by putting off testing larger changes that will likely result in a better pay-out.

Scott Butler, VP Marketing, Blockbuster.com, agrees with the value of testing small tweaks, saying his team performs careful multivariate testing of offers and landing pages but they also make sure to test a handful of big ideas that could radically change their marketing tactics or materials.

“Usually, it’s your multivariate testing that will deliver the 5% to 10% incremental lift, but it’s the blue-sky testing that can get the 30% to 40% increase,” Butler says. “You can discover a new control, a new champion that beats everything else.”

#8. If you don’t have enough traffic to do a quantitative test, try a qualitative test

Sometimes there just isn’t enough data to run a quantitative test, but that doesn’t mean you’re out of options. Surveys and interviews offer solid ways to gather data to help improve conversion. An exit survey that pops up once an individual leaves your site is a good way to gather data on why people aren’t converting. It’s especially important to survey the people that leave quickly, not just those that make it to a thank you page or take the time to answer an in-page survey link. You may find that your landing page is just fine, but your search copy is vague or confusing and is driving unqualified or confused visitors to your landing page.

#9. Don’t bet on which page you think will win

... unless you want to lose money. No, not even if you “know better” than everyone else in the building.

When Is the Best Time for Landing Page Tests?

Generally you want to conduct tests prior to investing heavily in sending traffic to a new page or offer. That way you can optimize before the bulk of the new traffic gets there. This is the main reason you’ll see so many ecommerce sites running tests mid-way each summer; they’re prepping and optimizing ideas for major roll-out in the fall-winter holiday season.

Landing page tests can also serve as market research indicators prior to investing heavily in expensive non-Internet campaigns such as TV and print. A limited run landing page can quickly tell you if an offer, a price, and key benefits are the best ones to feature in more expensive media. The fact is, consumers' actions on a landing page may give you as much (and sometimes more) genuine information as focus groups will. And landing pages can be a good deal cheaper.

Major direct response marketers test all year long. Often their tests are conducted in an ongoing three-week cycle. Week one a test is mounted, week two results are analyzed, week three a new test is mounted based on the past test's results, etc.

Landing Page Test Calculator: Excel Spreadsheet Included With This Handbook

Sample 4.11: Excel Spreadsheet of Landing Page Test Calculator

The screenshot shows the MarketingSherpa Landing Page Test Calculator Excel spreadsheet. It is divided into several sections with blue headers:

- 1. Question:** Contains a text box for the question and a formula bar showing $U = 2Q + L + 20 + 2V + 50$.
- 2. Treatments:** Contains two text boxes for (2.1) What is the variable? and (2.2) What are the values?.
- 3. Metrics:** Contains a text box for (3.1) What must we measure in order to determine the best performing value? and a table for metrics.
- 4. Validation:** Contains a text box for (4.1) Have you considered the impact of these validation threats? and a table for validation threats.
- 5. Sample Size:** Contains a text box for (5.2) What is the sample size needed to ensure that the results will be predictive? and a table for sample size.

Testing math can be far more complex than most marketers (especially those from creative backgrounds) can imagine. If you did well at statistics in university then you may be fine—the rest of us mortals require help.

So, we asked the statisticians at MarketingExperiments, a partner of MarketingSherpa, to create a handy spreadsheet for your use. Just fill in information about your proposed test in the boxes, and it will show you if the results will be statistically viable. Plus, the stat geeks in the audience will appreciate the detailed footnotes on all calculations found at the bottom of the spreadsheet.

To get your copy, go to: http://www.marketingsherpa.com/MEC_testspreadsheet.xls

Copyright note: This spreadsheet is for the use of Landing Page Handbook owners ONLY. You may download and use the spreadsheet as much as you'd like. Please do not share this URL with others or hand the spreadsheet to them. That's breaking copyright. Thank you.

What Should You Test Specifically?

You can run limitless tests on your landing page. But an infinite universe isn't terribly useful. So here's a list of most important tests, in approximate order of potential conversion impact:

Step A. Fixing what's obviously broken

If you have a current landing page, use your analytics program to spot potential problems. These might include:

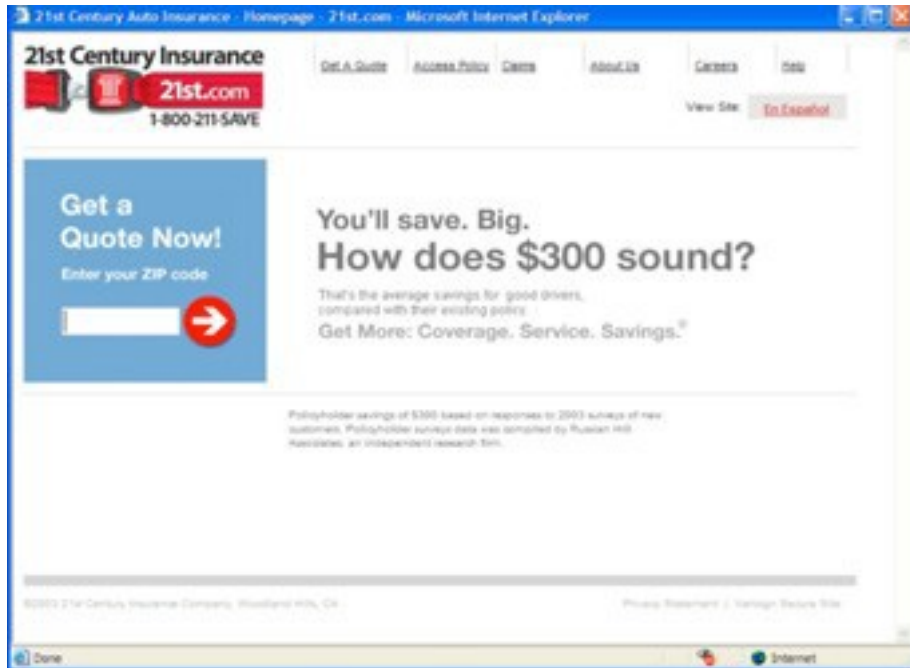
- *Scrolling behavior*: for example, how much of a page is actually seen by a visitor?
- *Field analysis*: looking at how people fill out forms. For example, what fields get filled first, what last, and when do people abandon the form (critical for improving lead capture or shopping cart completions)?
- *Click density*: for example, where are people clicking—whether on whitespace, a button or link—and which clicks are the ones driving the most success?
- *Link analysis*: for example, which links are most popular?
- *Path analysis*: how are people moving through the landing page if multiple paths are possible (that is, if there are navigation options beyond the conversion click.)
- *Form errors*: how many times do visitors encounter broken forms or missing pages?

Step B. Clarify and simplify

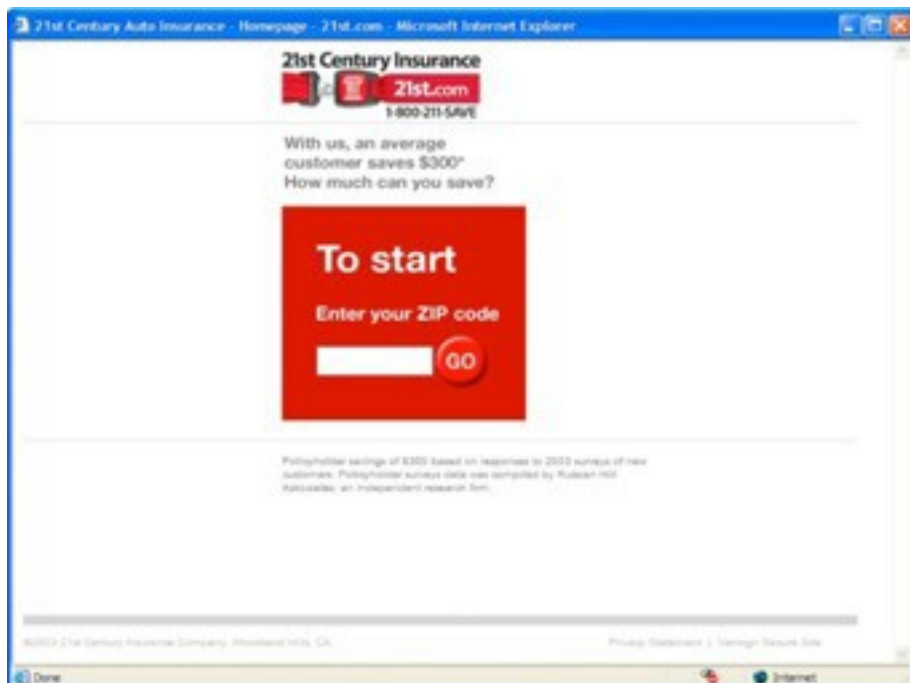
Can you reduce extraneous or overly verbose copy? Can you remove graphics or navigational elements unrelated to the conversion at hand? Can you make typeface and submit buttons a little bigger? Can you get rid of a few form fields? Overall, can you obey the first law of direct response marketing: KISS (Keep it Simple, Stupid)? Even small-seeming distractions in text or graphics can hurt response rates. So, test trimming down your landing page. The results may shock you.

Here to inspire your simplify-and-clarify redesign test are two tests conducted on behalf of clients by Clear Ink using Optimost multivariate testing technology. 21st Century Insurance raised landing page submissions from 30.03% to 42.84%—a 42.7% conversion leap—by simplifying its form and testing an in-your-face color change.

Sample 4.12: 21st Century Insurance Test Using Multivariate Technology, Winner & Loser



Loser



Winner

Like many strong brands, Shutterfly had to use its homepage as a landing page (because so much traffic just arrived having heard of the service via word of mouth and offline campaigns). These design tests prove that even if you have to use a homepage, which serves many other needs concurrently, as a landing page, you can still simplify and clarify to improve results. Shutterfly homepage sign-ups went from 4.76% to 6.95% after the tested redesigns, a total 46% increase in conversions.

Sample 4.13: Shutterfly Test Using Optimost Multivariate Technology, Winner & Loser



Loser



Winner

Step C. Headline, caption, and submit button copy

Headlines, hero-shot captions, and submit button copy are the most read areas of the page. Tweak your wording here first for maximum impact.

Step D. Graphical elements

Test different pictures of people and a page without humans. Dynamic Logic has shown that simply including a graphic with a human face in a banner ad can increase brand awareness and favorability among viewers. If you're using a cartoon character, try removing it to get a lift. Make sure critical offer elements such as "Free Shipping!" really stand out. Test alternate submit button styles.

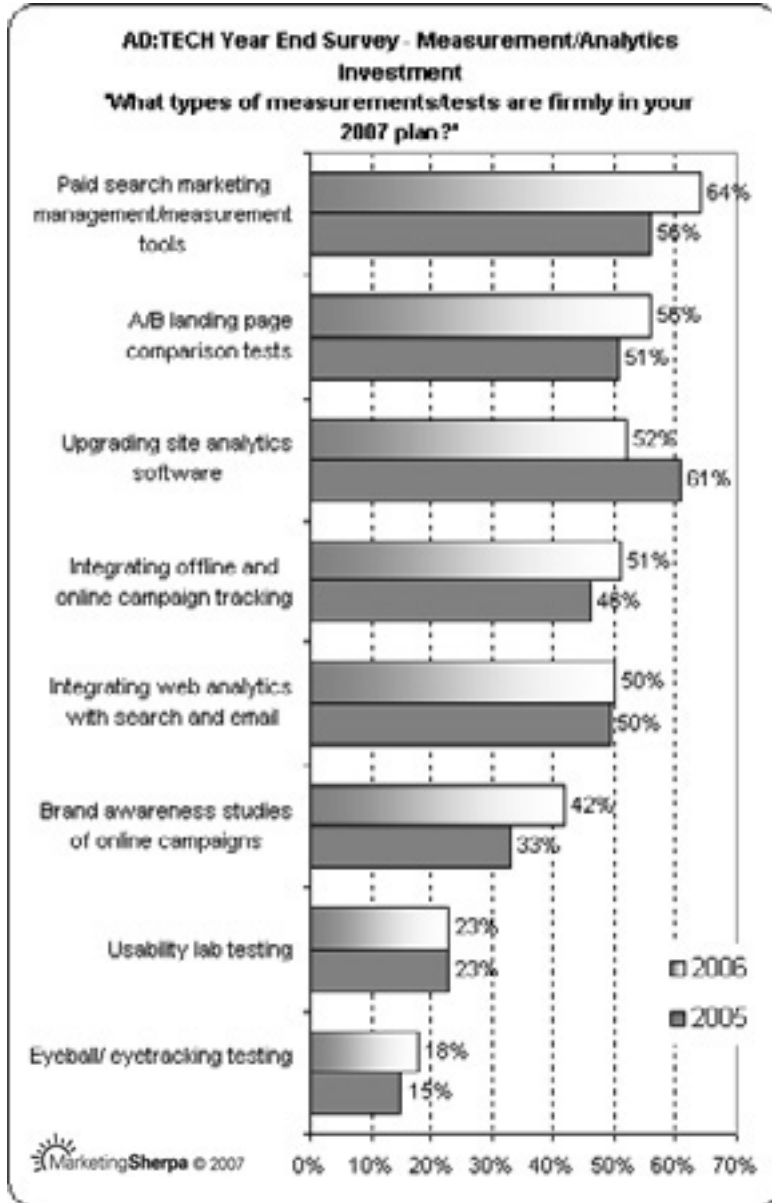
Step E. Body copy

Overall length may be the most important factor, so try boiling it down or adding more details. Also test prose vs. bulleted points (bullets almost always win.) The order of text within bullets can also cause incremental conversion lifts.

Testing Costs, Services, and Technologies

What's the most popular testing and measurement option? In December 2006, MarketingSherpa asked ad:tech attendees, who on average spend 47% of their total advertising budgets online, what they were planning for 2007:

Chart 4.14: Analytics Tests & Tech Planned by Heavy Online Advertisers: 2007



What's the best type of testing and measurement for you? Review the following table to see various testing methods compared. Further detail follows:

Table 4.15: Landing Page Testing Types Compared Briefly

Testing type	Cost	Requirements	Results May Tell You
A/B	Free (in-house) —\$10k or more depending on cost of design, creative, and traffic.	Split traffic to two pages (or three if you keep control as “C” option. Need 100 conversions per cell.	One single variable or 100% different landing pages may be measured per test cell. Useful for significant changes. Results easy to interpret.
Multiple A/B tests (often referred to as “Multivariate”)	Free (in-house) up to \$50,000 or more depending on cost of design, creative, and traffic.	Split traffic to multiple pages, each with a single element altered. Need 100 conversions per page.	Requires more traffic. Can work best as a starter and then narrow to tweaking biggest winners in fewer cells.
Multivariate (Taguchi-style)	Requires specialized software, analysis, and often consulting. Costs range from \$10-75k.	Split traffic to multiple pages, each one with multiple creative differences. Doesn’t need as much traffic as Multiple A/B tests.	Complex tests that might take months of A/B are finished much more quickly. Results harder to analyze. Hire an expert.
Eyetracking	Requires specialized software (\$5k month, or hire lab), plus cash “thanks” to test subjects (10+ people per page tested).	Can be conducted without live Web page (just need mocked-up image of page.) Can be done in a week.	If your layout is clear or needs simplification. How much and which copy is read? How far down people will scroll.
Usability lab	Free (in-house) —\$25k or more depending on complexity, plus cash “thanks” to participants. As few as five per page required.	Participants, a computer, an experienced note-taker who can be trusted to remain impartial.	Major design, offer, or creative flaws you might not suspect. Aids creative breakthroughs. Video convinces management to invest in design changes.
Online survey	\$20 bucks—\$10k depending on whether you do it yourself or hire a firm.	100 answers for each survey question. Experience in survey writing and results analysis.	The “why” behind Web analytics statistics. Aids product development, may lead to significant offer or product changes.
 MarketingSherpa © 2007			

A/B Split Testing

Used to measure the impact of different pages and page elements. At its simplest, this type of test splits responses into two groups (A and B); you can see which page performs more effectively. Some marketers prefer to keep the house “control” page running separately at the same time and split a segment of remaining traffic to the two test pages.

Key: For a classic A/B test, you can change only one element per page. That might be a single word, a single graphic, the price, etc. This precision is required so you’re absolutely clear about what page change caused any response changes. However, some marketers will use A/B to test two radically different pages against each other just to see if a crazy idea can work. In that case, you know which page is the winner, but not which elements on that page made the difference. It’s less useful as lessons to apply to other pages or the rest of your site or offline campaigns. Nevertheless, a radical bump can be worth it.

A/B testing is something you can do in-house with any half-decent analytics package as long as you have control of the content management system for those pages and don’t have to get in line at the IT department for a few months for each tweak.

Because A/B testing is cheap and relatively easy, most marketers who test use it frequently. If you’re having an argument about offer, pricing, copy, etc., it’s very easy to resolve with a quick A/B test. You may find that there is no difference, in which case, you should stop arguing and start listening to your consumer. Our suggestion, start your current landing page redesign by running some A/B tests on really obvious possible fixes. Then, once you’ve gotten all the basic improvements done, consider investing in more expensive multivariate testing to take things up a notch.

A/B testing is easiest in email, because you can simply mail different emails to different list segments, with each having links to separate pages. It is good practice to randomize your segments as much as possible. For example, if you want to test an email and landing page combination with 10% of your list, sort your list by first name (it’s the least likely variable to have meaning) then take 20% of the names out and create a separate file. Then take every other name from the list. Not only does this randomize, it has a better chance of filtering out users with multiple entries of similar email addresses. Of course, many systems have built in randomization that can be used instead.

For a Web campaign, you can use the ad serving system for your site to split traffic between landing pages. Most ad servers can randomly split your traffic by sending all clickers with an even numbered cookie ID to one page, and all odd cookie IDs to another. This ensures that the ad and media placement don’t bias the test. If you aren’t using an ad server, you can create multiple ad/landing page combinations to test the performance of different ads.

Multivariable (a.k.a. Multivariate) Testing

In the past, we referred to multivariate as “A/B testing on steroids.” That’s because you can run dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of page variation tests as one huge test together. If you have a lot of questions or variations you want to test, this can save you months. On the other hand, it requires more traffic than a single A/B test and often more technical help as well. So costs are nearly always higher.

Multivariate has become very fashionable in testing circles in the past three years. The term has come to encompass two different types of tests, both confusingly called by the same name by many people.

Type 1. Multiple, simultaneous A/B tests

In this case you’re really doing precisely the same thing as you would be with an A/B test, except you are running a lot more test cells at the same time. This means you need more live pages, more traffic to get enough results from each live page, and stronger analysis skills than a classic A/B test would require. However, this analysis is still something any educated response marketer with a spreadsheet could figure out.

Unless you’ve got an unusually strong and helpful Web department, you’ll probably outsource all or part of the process simply because developing, hosting, and tracking all those pages can be a lot of work. Outside specialists who do this for a living do it more easily and quickly; plus, they may have invaluable insights into what’s worth testing for your particular brand, offer, and marketplace.

Type 2. Taguchi-style multivariate tests

If you want to test a lot of tweaks, but you don’t have enough qualified traffic coming to your landing pages in a time period that’s short enough to conduct viable multiple simultaneous A/B tests, then you’ll need to hire a Taguchi-style consultancy to help you. Niche marketers and B-to-B marketers often have this challenge. Taguchi-style testing uses an advanced statistical model designed to amplify fairly small and disparate amounts of data to project much larger consequences or results. It’s far more complex, but works on pretty much the same premise as statistical significance testing—the idea that a mathematical model applied to a small dataset can predict the results of a much larger dataset.

Decades ago, long before the Internet was a sparkle in anyone’s eye, the automotive industry wanted to get viable data on what features would sell more cars before they actually started heavy production of a particular make and model. Taguchi analysis was invented by a mathematician named Genichi Taguchi so solve this common industrial problem.

To our knowledge, the marketing world didn't start using Taguchi testing until about 2001-02. The very first marketers to test were scoffed at by experts, including the Advertising Research Federation. However, Taguchi testing still spread, partly because of a Harvard Business Review paper on the subject (See the Resources Chapter for details.).

MarketingSherpa continues to hear both raves and jeers about the method from marketers who have used it as applied to landing pages. Can Taguchi work? Probably in a best practices scenario with a great team of analysts and software. Does it work for the real world? Most often likely not.

If you're considering a Taguchi test:

- Don't do it in-house unless you have a highly skilled in-house analytics department. Some Web analysis and even email campaign software packages now claim to have integrated Taguchi testing capabilities. We don't doubt they have it, but we do doubt your Web team has the statistical expertise to use the packages properly. Just because you can drive a car doesn't mean you can win a race at NASCAR.
- Ask who the subcontractor is. Relatively few shops specialize in Taguchi—we know of fewer than 7 with significant proven experience. However, dozens, maybe even hundreds, of other marketing and advertising vendors offer the service. Usually this is through a sub-contracting relationship with one of the handful of expert shops. Don't take your agency's word that they hired the right people; check out the shop doing the actual work yourself.
- It's fast, but will still take longer than you expect. Most Taguchi tests we've heard of required two to three months or longer from start to finish. A lot depends on your traffic flow, but there's also quite a bit of set-up work and final analysis. If your brand has huge seasonality or other external factors that could affect results during such a long time period, consider rescheduling.
- Your final page will require more tests. Multivariate tests look at each element on the page and tell you how dozens or hundreds of variations on each one might affect response. However, once you put together all the final winning elements onto a single landing page, the result may be jarring. It wasn't "designed" to hang together or flow naturally.

So, you'll probably need to continue some testing—often A/B can work well enough for this—just to learn how your new improved page elements can fit together into a layout that wins both conversions and brand perceptions.

Eyetracking (a.k.a. Visual Effectiveness) Testing

Eyetracking (literally) looks at the way the eyes of people scan and consume the content of a Web page (can also be used for testing email campaigns, search marketing, software applications, etc.). While other methods of testing quantify the end-result, eyetracking measures the consumption as it happens. By aggregating the viewing patterns of many people, it's possible to see what visual elements are getting looked at, and what's being ignored. By testing variations of the same page, it's possible to find the version that consumers are most likely to absorb the intended message from.

Specifically, you can learn:

- Where the eye goes when it looks at your page.
- How much copy is read by most people and in what order.
- How your design/layout can dramatically affect time spent, words read, where the eye went

Also, you'll learn how far down people scrolled and where they clicked even if it wasn't a clickable link (although you can learn that from other software, too.)

Eyetracking can be invaluable for both copywriters and graphics designers. We recommend you use this at least once when you're training new creative staff to help them understand at a gut-level how prospects "see" Web pages. It's also awfully useful when you have a bunch of new landing page ideas you'd like to get a quick check on before they actually go live. Eyetracking isn't the end-all be-all of Web testing, and should not supplant other testing methods, especially if you are price or offer testing. It's useful in and of itself as a design tool though.

Eyetracking has some benefits over other testing methods:

- You don't need to make pages live online. Brand marketers who are wary of exposing their audiences to "imperfect" page tests will like this. Test participants see whatever the lab loads up on the screen in front of them. It can be a Web page mock-up that only looks real.
- You need only a few participants. Typically, 10–20 people from a targeted demographic segment will be invited into a lab where they will be able to interact naturally with a Website or test pages. Their eye movements, where they click, and information related to the Webpage are recorded for later analysis to discover visual trends across the group. Because of the way human eyes are "hardwired," you need only a few participants to derive data that apply across much bigger groups.
- You can conduct multivariate-type tests, testing more than one creative alteration per landing page tested. This also holds down costs and increases testingspeed.

- Results shown via “heatmaps” can be fairly impressive looking, creating gut-level impact that you may need in order to solve design snarls internally. Execs who are unmoved by a bunch of numbers on a spreadsheet may gasp with appreciation when you show them a heatmap.

Usability Testing

Usability testing answers the questions:

- What is confusing?
- What doesn't work?
- What can I do to improve the page?

Best of all, the answers are fairly clear and obvious. In fact, if you're having problems getting management to agree to a redesign, showing them a quick video of a typical human being trying to use the site will usually change their minds.

Usability is most often used for paths in Web sites or microsites rather than just landing pages. You'll want to ask the participants to try to convert from your landing page, and follow them all the way through the conversion path, for the best learnings. If you suspect the landing page is OK but secondary or tertiary pages may be a problem, this is the test for you.

Some marketers find usability testing so efficacious that they set up a lab in house and conduct lab tests monthly or more. This isn't as complicated as it seems because a lab can be as little as a room with a computer and chair in it. You'll want to recruit participants from your target market whenever possible, and just as with focus groups, it's normal to offer them a small cash “thank you.”

You can also go out of house. The good news is many good usability testing shops are around. The entire field's been around much longer than the Web—it started with usability testing for software applications back in the 1980s. (See the Resources Chapter for more information.)

Seven tips for conducting your own usability tests:

Tip #1. If you test with the wrong people, you'll get misleading information. The worst thing is to use your co-workers, because they bring baggage to the test. They care how it will turn out, they know the testers and they may even report to someone who has contributed to the project. Above all, they will have a much greater understanding of what the pages are supposed to do. To get credible information, you must get representative customers.

Tip #2. Give users representative tasks. Give them a job to do that represents what average visitors will be doing. Example: “Become a registered user and create your own profile.”

Tip #3. Shut up. Don’t interfere at all. Let them speak, but don’t answer questions and don’t respond to what they say or what they do with any emotion or information. Don’t ignore them, but simply offer a neutral and standard reaction. After all, you won’t be there to help your visitors when they’re on your landing pages.

Tip #4. Work with usability testers one at a time. Observe everything they do, such as what tasks take a long time? Where do they click by mistake? What do they read, or ignore? Do their expressions change at any points in the process?

Tip #5. Ask them to describe what they’re doing as they do it. Only prompt in a neutral way.

Tip #6. Use at least 5 people in your test. The only limit is time and money.

Tip #7. You can expect 5 people to provide you with a list of 20 potential issues and 3 to 5 glaring problems.

It should be noted that a study examined the practice of conducting small, 5-user usability tests. The study found that some groups of 5 found 99% of possible issues, while other groups of 5 found only 55%. With 10 users, the groups found at least 80%, and with 20 users the groups always found upwards of 95% of potential issues.

On the other hand, usability expert Steve Krug recommends a simpler approach. Test 3 or 4 people and do it in-house in one morning. That way, you have a better chance of team members coming and watching the tests. Then, you can debrief at lunch. It’s important to get the whole team in on the experience, because watching someone having specific problems with your pages is much more powerful than reading a report.

Online Surveying Tools

Online surveying tools can be used to ask users what they think of the site, and whether their goals are being met. Often these rely on dhtml or JavaScript pop-ups; however, these are blocked by many computers these days, so you may need to use other tactics to draw attention to your survey invitation.

The cost can be extremely low—some marketers' Web departments build them in-house. There are also ASPs specializing in providing online surveying tools which can be integrated into your site starting at \$20 a month.

A few rules to bear in mind:

- Keep the survey fairly short. Most people will answer a 5-question survey happily, without being bribed to do so (you don't want to bribe because that can skew your respondent pool). If you have more questions, break the survey in half and serve up a different short version to different people.
- Include some KPI data by respondent, either from your analytics or by asking. When examining results, you need to know what sort of person answered, as that affects your business. For example, was it a customer or a prospect? Make sure you can segment your best customers out, since their answers are far more important than the answers of others.
- Make the first question very easy—something yes or no can be best—that way people get started easily and are more likely to continue.
- Don't ask for data that you cannot act on/respond to because a) you're wasting the survey-taker's effort and b) over time people do notice these things and it can negatively affect brand perception.
- Save any sensitive questions like age or income for the end of the survey and make it clear they

Survey: Why didn't you buy?

Neil Greer CEO Impact Engine Inc, was frustrated by the high percent of his company's landing page traffic (from fairly costly PPC clicks) that converted to a free trial, but then never converted to being paid buyers. Luckily he had asked for email address plus opt-in permission from respondents.

So, he quickly set up an online survey form for non-buyers. "We set it up as a series of conditional logic flows based on their responses. For example if they said the reason they didn't buy was price, their next question expanded on that. It's a typical reverse funnel.

"Each recipient saw no more than five questions in all. It was very hard to pick the five. You know the old saying, 'If I had more time I would have made it shorter?' Prospects have such a limited time to give us feedback, I wanted to make sure we got 30 seconds of their most valuable opinions."

Afterward, Greer emailed his list of non-buyers a quick note asking them to take the survey. "Within 30 minutes we had almost 100 responses back. It was just phenomenal. In the end, the response rate was something like 20%."

The results "radically changed the way I was looking at things."

don't have to answer these questions. Likewise, if possible, don't ask for email addresses.

- Don't ask for data for two different department's goals. For example, the content team may want to know what people think of the landing page's videos and the ecommerce team may want to know if they can raise prices. Focus your quick survey on just one set of pointed questions.
- Don't be afraid to ask one (but only one) open-ended question. The resulting typed-in answers will not only reveal things you never dreamed of, but the taxonomy can be invaluable for improving both your copywriting and search marketing keyword choices.
- Don't put a survey onto a landing page, unless the conversion goal of the page is to get people to take a survey. Instead, have a survey appear on the "Thank you" page or use technology to send non-responders a survey. (Note: pop-ups that launch on exit work well, while non-responders from a known group of people, such as people who clicked to your landing page from a house email campaign, can be contacted via email.)
- Don't ask people to rank 1–10 because 1–5 is actually more accurate. You'll never be able to guess at what survey takers think the granular difference between 6–7 is, but the difference between 3–4 is obvious.

Production & Landing Pages

The single greatest obstacle to optimizing landing pages is a lack of resources, and often the most precious of those is the time of in-house developers. In a recent survey, MarketingSherpa asked marketers about this challenge.

Table 4.16: Obstacles to Optimizing Landing Pages

Are any of the following big barriers within your organization to creating and/or testing improved landing pages? (Check any that apply to your marketing department)	Percent
Our marketing department is overloaded already; we don't have time to be frequently testing landing page improvements.	57%
Our analytics aren't good enough. I can't tell which landing pages or tests really improved our conversion rates and helped us land profitable new customers.	41%
The IT or Web department doesn't have time or resources to create pages for us and we can't do it without them.	31%
Management likes to have creative input into landing pages, but they don't really know what they are doing or what best practices are.	24%
Top level management is not convinced this is a priority.	20%
Our agency's creative costs for new landing pages can bust our budget.	15%
Total Responses:	2,688
 MarketingSherpa © 2007	

Since optimizing the landing pages can have a profound impact on ultimate conversion, we wanted to explore the tactics for getting optimal results from in-house resources, as well as work with outside firms.

Planning

By far the easiest way to get development time is to plan well in advance. Development and Web design resources often operate on a longer timeline than marketing, with time allotted months in advance. Becoming familiar with the product or Website development schedule can alert marketers to areas of the schedule that will present opportunities or challenges for resource availability. If a major release is scheduled for March, don't expect developer time in February.

Involving the technical team

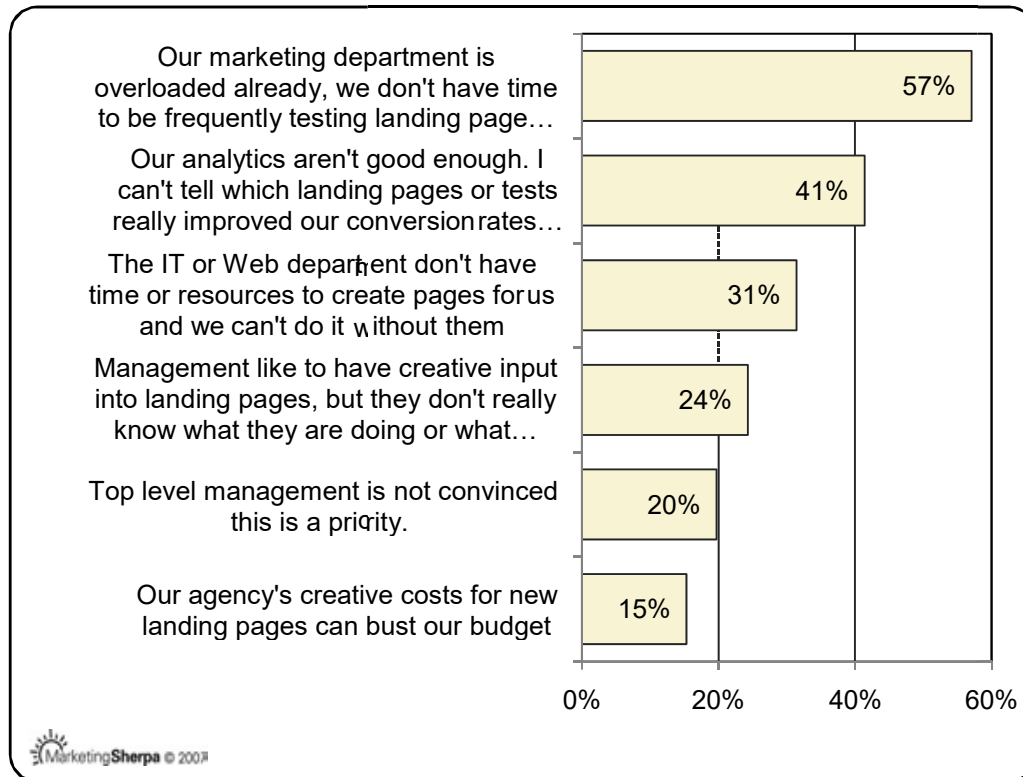
One of the pleasures of marketing is being in a position to be in touch with every department and level in a company. To tell the company's story, you need to know the sales people, customer service reps, and definitely the technical team. Unless you have your own development team (beyond a designer), chances are that you'll need the help of some of those departments.

The direct approach — go to the CTO or VP of Product Development and explain the importance of your landing page project. You really need their assistance in a team effort and a developer dedicated half-time (for starters) to the project. The more detail you have, the more it looks like a product development spec., the better it will be received, and the more able they'll be to say yes. If you come in asking for "some help over the next few weeks" it isn't detailed or early enough to get a good response.

In smaller companies, it's likely that the development team will have several contractors they use for overflow. Find out which one they would hire if they could and carve out a piece of your budget. It's cheaper than working with an agency — the corporate preliminaries are complete and the transition will be smooth.

Getting buy-in from the technical team isn't always easy. The priorities of marketing don't figure into product development schedules. However, in the experience of most of the marketers to whom we posed the question, the best weapon was always preparedness and the ability to tell the story of why the project is important. Everyone likes working on an important project. If you can make it high-profile within the company, that will make raising your team that much easier.

Chart 4.17: Frustrations of In-House Marketers Around Analysis of Landing Pages



Base: In-house marketers n=2688

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6th and September 18th, 2007.

Working With Outside Companies

If you can budget to include outside resources to assist in landing page development, it can move your program forward quickly. If possible, begin by budgeting specific landing pages into the marketing programs related to the source of the leads. In other words, include some budget room for your email vendor to work with you on email campaign landing pages. The same goes for search. In many cases, the companies that are in a position to help you get your outbound marketing programs out the door will also be able to help in designing and implementing the campaign's landing pages. In fact, they're probably dying to.

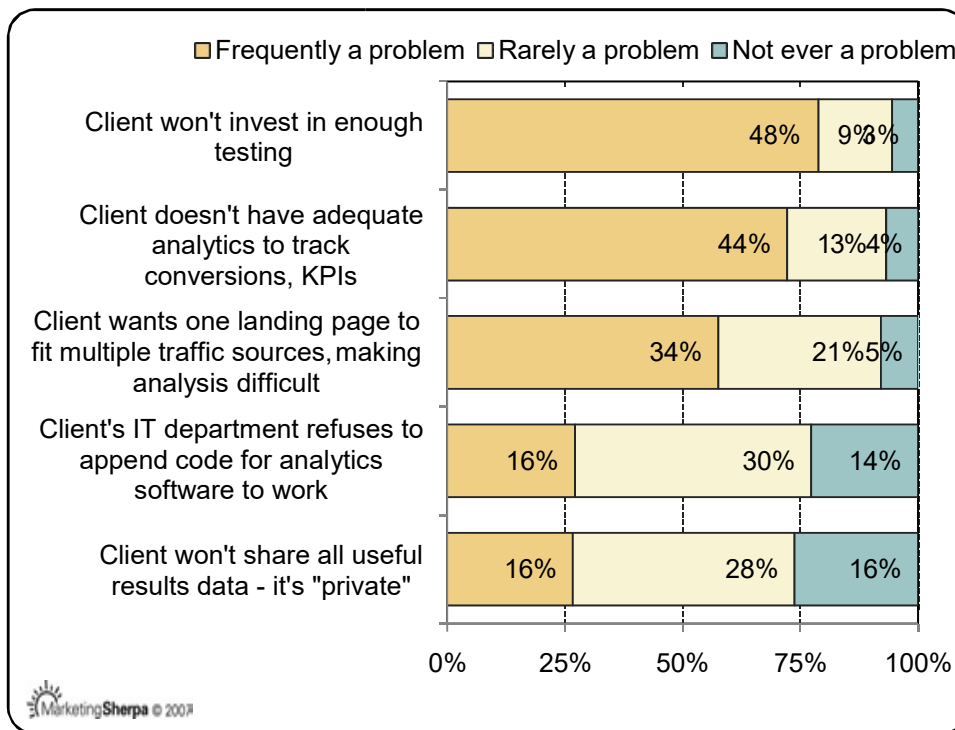
The most common complaint we heard from agencies and consultants in this area had to do with the disproportionate amount of work that went into the wide end of the funnel—the ads, media buys, creative, etc. After all that work, it's disappointing to see a campaign's full potential wasted by an anemic landing page program.

A word of caution: an agency will tend to have strengths in design or analytics or direct marketing, etc. While any agency will tell you that it can assist with landing page implementation, they may not have the full skill set to get it done substantially better than you could do in house.

First, map out your full-blown landing page wish list. How many specific audiences are you going after? What kinds of data are you trying to capture? Does the landing page just start a conversion action or does it get finished there? What are the questions you want answers to once it goes live? Do you need design and brand help or is it just putting the pieces together and collecting the data?

Once you know these things, you can quickly determine whether an agency or consultancy is right for you.

Chart 4.18: Frustrations of Agencies in Providing Better Analytics to Clients



Base: Agencies n=1084

Source: MarketingSherpa, Landing Page Survey, September 2007

Methodology: 4,213 surveys were collected from in-house marketers (n=3,120) and agency marketers (n=1,093) who are actively involved with landing pages in some capacity. They were recruited from MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments reader lists between September 6th and September 18th, 2007.

Get the Ball Rolling

Go online and see some of the landing pages they've developed. Get a detailed account of the kinds of technology that they implemented vs. the company they were working with. If it's a small firm, find out whether the developer for that cool application is still there. Chances are the issue won't be in design, but in development and testing.

Find out what kinds of strategy they've developed in the past for landing pages. If they are dealing with clicks and page views instead of conversions, abandonment points, and click streams they may not have the skills you need.

Make sure you specify up front which metrics you want. The analytics department needs time to build their own code during the design phase. If you demand quick turnaround times, it's usually analytics that gets left out. If the analytics software code was never implemented, you will have no data to analyze at the end of your campaign.

Also, find out what analytics software or vendor they use. You may be getting access to a much more robust package than you are using in house.

Budgeting

Simple design and implementation

If you're in danger of a campaign going live without a landing page unless you get something up last minute, you can hire freelance developers through a number of programmer-for-hire companies. This may be a one-time arrangement, but if it works out, for hire programmers are usually happy to forge an ongoing relationship. For a single landing page with a simple form that spits out form data, you can expect a 2 or 3 day turnaround with a budget of around \$500.

Landing page strategy, implementation, and testing

Working with companies that specialize in increasing conversions is expensive. That kind of expertise isn't cheap because it can be justified by impact to revenues. Most of these companies prefer to work like traditional agencies with monthly billings. However, almost all will take project work, at least as a proof of concept. A single project might run from between \$5,000 and \$10,000, depending on the number of pages, and the complexity of the data. Ongoing relationships that cover multiple campaigns might mean \$20,000 to \$50,000 per month.

Because of the scope at which these companies work, it is better to regard these projects as ongoing. Properly executing a lead generation strategy with accompanying media and landing pages takes months to go live and months more to test and optimize. One search marketing expert told us that it took a full year to truly hone their largest client's landing page inventory.

Repurposing existing content

There are also companies that simply customize existing lead capture or shopping cart programs (sets of forms, reports, database tie-ins, etc.) to fit your needs. The costs and turnaround time are much less than boutique shops, starting at around \$1,000 to get started, with monthly reporting fees in the hundreds of dollars.

Example: How to hold a landing page contest to test new “outside the box” ideas

Even experts have a tough time creating landing pages that work gangbusters. Although Rand Fishkin, head of SEOmoz, knows more about online marketing than most marketers, he was less than thrilled with his membership site’s landing page results, calling conversions “relatively dismal.”

He tweaked the page a bit trying to improve results but secretly wondered if he was too close to the project to do the best job. A marketer needs a certain perspective, and the ability to consider the page through the eyes of a prospect. (That’s perhaps why the landing pages top management love may not always be test winners.)

Fishkin needed out-of-the-box the box thinking to turn the landing page around. Inspired by a copywriting contest he’d seen elsewhere, he decided, “Why not hold a landing page contest?” So, on July 16, 2007, he did just that, posting a blog asking all of his site’s 30,000 regular readers in the marketing field to consider entering.

(Note: This tactic might work very well for marketers in large or distributed organizations where you can try an internal marketing department-wide contest asking for outside-the-box landing page ideas. Be sure to spread the net as widely as possible. Your Web team can often work from a PDF or mock-up, so you don’t have to require HTML programming from entrants.)

Keys to Fishkin’s success:

#1. Give people a reason to enter

Fishkin offered prizes including \$1,000 and a lot of publicity to the top three winners. After the contest launched, other members of his community stepped in to volunteer additional prizes to winners.

#2. Set a tight deadline

Fishkin allowed everyone, and anyone who wanted to, to enter; however, they had to get their ideas in within eight days. A tight deadline often works better to get creative juices flowing.

#3. Open your statistical kimono

Great landing pages start with market and demographic research. Fishkin posted stats about his conversion rates, along with notes about the site pages and PPC search terms the best converting traffic tended to come from. He also promised all entrants he would track contest stats carefully with top-notch analytics and would publicly report on the results for all to learn from.

#4. Winnow the pack

When the deadline was up, Fishkin and his team (including a landing page test consultant) winnowed out the stack to a short-list of 10 pages to test. Most critical for a test of this nature when you're looking for a potential dramatic results lift: each page was fairly different. Each page chosen was the best page of its nature. For example, Fishkin chose the best very-long-copy page, the best seriously-simplified page, the best big-buttons page, etc.

Naturally one of the ten pages was the current landing page because you always want to test against your control.

#5. Split traffic fairly and evenly

The Web team put all 10 pages up live at the same time and turned on the traffic spout. Traffic was evenly distributed to each page for the first 2,420 visitors in the door.

#6. Track both immediate and following conversion activity

The landing pages' immediate conversion goal was to get visitors to click on a button to "Choose" their membership option. Then the next page actually converted the final traffic into registrants and asked for a credit card. Although only the initial landing page was being tested, Fishkin's team set up analytics to watch conversions on the next page as well—by which landing page that traffic came from. (This proved to be critical down the pike.)

#7. Jettison worst performers quickly

242 visitors are not enough to make a statistically valid decision about a winner (you need at least 100 conversions for that—and often more.) However, for this test, 242 visitors per page were enough to spot pages that were tanking fast. Fishkin's team shut down traffic to five of the 10 pages based on this limited traffic.

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These losers' conversions from visitor to "choose" path ranged from 1.65% to 4.55%.

Next, the team allowed 500–630 more visitors into every still active page. Then starting at the 702–total visitor mark, they again began to jettison pages which were clear losers. This time three more pages bit the dust. These pages' conversions from visitor to "choose" path ranged from 5.59% to 8.14%.

#8. Let data end your test, not your calendared deadline

Now just two pages were left alive, splitting total traffic between them. Fishkin hoped this "jettison duds quickly" would cost him less money (why leave a non-performing page up?) and help him determine a statistically valid winner more quickly as well.

However, he was disappointed on the speed front. Both of the front runners had results so close together, he wound up letting the test run for nearly a month more than expected to get enough results.

"Seeing the winning page performed equal or better on the vast majority of days tested gave us a higher degree of confidence that the results were stable," he noted.

Results? All ten of the winning and losing pages follow so you can judge for yourself.

You may be surprised to see the length of the copy on the page that won. Fishkin notes, "I have to say—the winner totally shocked me. Those long form letters are not mystyle, but it's hard to argue with results." The winning page had a Choose click conversion rate of 9.08% and a secondary page conversion of 2.55%.

In comparison the old control page had only 5.59% Choose clicks and a secondary page conversion of 2.05%. That one stat alone should convince any marketer who is always "too busy" to test out-of-the-box landing page ideas to reconsider priorities perhaps annually.

The winning page's creator, Paul Robb of CredibleCopy.org noted his tactic had been to target a very specific demographic—"raw traffic"—by which he meant visitors who might not be pre-qualified with past knowledge of what the SEOmoz brand is all about. He suspected most PPC search clicks and much of the SEO traffic the site received were of this nature. Plus, even people who came to the page from internal site links might not have as much knowledge of the brand as might be expected.

Robb noted, "Converting rawish traffic into customers takes a LOT of copy." MarketingSherpa agrees, which is why we strongly recommend that if you don't have copy shops as good as Robb's apparently are, or you don't have a demographic willing to read much, your best bet is to set a far lower conversion barrier for "raw" traffic than an immediate sale or trial with credit card.

It's worth noting the runner up—which came in a fairly close second to the winning page—used the opposite tactic, appealing directly to the portion of traffic that were very knowledgeable SEOmoz fans.

Our final recommendation, therefore, is that SEOmoz use **both** pages for optimum conversions, planting the long-copy-for-newbies where newbies arrive and the conversion-offer-for-fans in site paths fans tend to take. This approach may appeal better to both audiences than a single all-in-one page could ever manage.

One final lesson—although the final conversion page (the next page after the landing page) was absolutely identical for all ten tests, its conversion rates varied dramatically from a low of .83% to a high of 2.55%. This second page's results affected the bottom line so much that the ultimate test winner was the page that influenced the highest conversion rates here, even though it hasn't had the highest conversion rates on the actual landing page itself.

This shows that your landing page may have more affect on your overall site conversions than you may have previously believed possible. All pages along the path prior to a final conversion activity directly affect the results of that conversion. No page (or test winner) stands in isolation.

Test: Neon Colorspray: Choose Clicks 4.55% 2nd Page Conversions 1.65%

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Test: 3-Column Graphics Error: Choose Clicks 3.31% 2nd Page Conversions 1.65%

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Test: Will Critchlow Checklist **Runner Up**: Choose Clicks 12.76% 2nd Page Conversions 2.41%

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Test: Greenglebot: Choose Clicks 6.41% 2nd Page Conversions 2.14%


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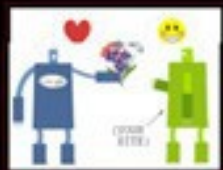
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Search Engine Watch, Dec. 7, 2005

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E-mail info@support.seomoz.org with any questions, comments, or technical issues regarding Premium Membership.

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Test: Scroll Forever ** Winner!**: Choose Clicks 9.08% 2nd Page Conversions 2.55%

[illegible]

Test: Original (Control): Choose Clicks 5.59% 2nd Page Conversions 2.05%

The image shows two side-by-side screenshots of a landing page for 'SEOMoz Premium Membership'. The left screenshot is the original version, and the right screenshot is a modified version with a different layout and content.

Left Screenshot (Original):

- Header:** Includes the SEOMoz logo and a navigation bar with links like 'Home', 'About', 'Contact', 'FAQ', 'Privacy Policy', and 'Terms of Service'.
- Hero Section:** Features a large headline 'SEOMoz PREMIUM MEMBERSHIP' with a sub-headline 'The only SEO tool that gives you everything you need to succeed in 2014'. Below this is a list of benefits and a 'Join Now' button.
- Body:** Contains several sections of text, including 'Why SEOmoz Premium Membership?', 'What You'll Get', and 'Who Should Buy This?'.
- Footer:** Includes a 'Join Now' button and a 'Learn More' link.

Right Screenshot (Modified):

- Header:** Similar to the original, but with a different layout.
- Hero Section:** Features a large headline 'SEOMoz PREMIUM MEMBERSHIP' with a sub-headline 'The only SEO tool that gives you everything you need to succeed in 2014'. Below this is a list of benefits and a 'Join Now' button.
- Body:** Contains several sections of text, including 'Why SEOmoz Premium Membership?', 'What You'll Get', and 'Who Should Buy This?'.
- Footer:** Includes a 'Join Now' button and a 'Learn More' link.

Chapter 5: Useful Resources

First, a note about footnotes:

Whenever possible in this Handbook, we have cited data sources and/or real-life examples to serve as back-up for our assertions of what works and what may not. Sometimes, however, we just have to ask readers to take our word for things because we have access to A LOT of data behind the scenes that we're allowed to look at but not actively cite. Marketers want to keep corporate privacy, but they also love to share details with MarketingSherpa. So, we have the data (nothing is our opinion alone), but we can't always say where the data is from.

If there's a particular data point that you need validation on, please let us know, and we'll see what we can get you! You can reach us at Service@MarketingSherpa.com (yes, although that's a generic email, several human beings check it throughout the business day, every business day.)

In the meantime, here are some of our favorite (mostly free) resources to help with your landing pages:

How to pick a great vanity URL

1. <http://www.bustaname.com/>
2. <http://www.domainpunch.com/products/dna/>

MarketingSherpa's Viral Marketing Hall of Fame 2007

<http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article.html?ident=29947>

Web 2.0 How-to Web Design Guide

<http://www.webdesignfromscratch.com/web-2.0-design-style-guide.cfm>

The We-We Calculator – a fun (and effective) copywriting evaluation tool

<http://www.futurenowinc.com/wewetext.htm>

Landing Page Blocking Systems

1. AOL's Parental Controls microsite: _

<http://daol.aol.com/safetycenter/parentalcontrols>

2. Websense's filtering categories:_

http://www.Websense.com/docs/Datasheets/en/v5.5/Websense_URLCategories.pdf

Print-on-demand integration with landing pages

<http://www.podi.org>

Multivariate Testing - Taguchi Info

Harvard Business School article on experimental design related to multivariable testing with small respondent pools (there is a fee to access this article):

http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/b02/en/common/item_detail.jhtml?id=R0109K

How Your Web Site Appears in Various Browsers

<http://browsershots.org/>

Mobile Landing Pages

1. World Wide Web Consortium's best practices for delivering Web content to mobile devices:

<http://www.w3.org/TR/mobile-bp/>

2. mobi Mobile Development Community

<http://dev.mobi/>

3. Mike's Industries Blog: How to make your site Mobile-friendly in five easy steps_

<http://www.mikeindustries.com/blog/archive/2005/07/make-your-site-mobile-friendly>

Basic PPC Campaign ROI Calculator

<http://www.thinkseer.com/tools/seo-search-engine-marketing-roi-calculator.php>

Landing Page Loading Time Calculator

<http://www.websiteoptimization.com/services/analyze/>

Tool to See Where Visitors Click That's Not Clickable

<http://www.clickdensity.com>

Typeface and Online Font Studies

<http://psychology.wichita.edu/surl/usabilitynews/41/onlinetext.htm>

... and, of course:

MarketingExperiments' Lab Tests Results on Landing Pages

(Note: This is MarketingSherpa's partner) Type in "landing page" to the search box at the top of this page:

<http://www.marketingexperiments.com>

MarketingSherpa Case Studies & Research Database on Landing Pages

<https://www.marketingsherpa.com/web-site-landing-page-design-category.html>

How to Conduct a "Skunk Works" Landing Page Project

The biggest problem many marketers have in creating and testing landing pages is an internal-resource challenge. You know what you should be doing to improve landing page conversions, but the IT department, Web development, or management may not agree with you. So you may be considering starting a "skunk works" (also known as "black ops") project.

A skunk works project can range from an authorized marketing campaign that is produced using resources outside of official production channels (such as "Just get a landing page up any way you can and don't bother IT with it.") to an entirely secret and unauthorized campaign that goes outside of all official channels.

Key: Skunk works are not the most fabulous thing since sliced bread. They exist due to perceived dire necessity. Every brand and marketing department would be better off if skunk works were unnecessary. Landing pages developed outside official channels can create endless problems, including:

- Branding problems if creative does not match brand values, which can include significant internal political problems with stakeholders and cost you your job.
- CRM, customer/prospect database, and sales department follow-up nightmares if responses are not carefully logged into company databases swiftly and accurately.
- KPI (Key Performance Indicator) tracking problems due to landing pages being hosted outside of a company's analytics systems.

- Performance problems due to low-budget hosting, when servers slow or crash due to unexpected campaign success.

These problems and many more are the reason that MarketingSherpa strongly advises:

RULE: If you can avoid a skunk works approach and work through normal channels, do it.

That said, we have used skunk works on occasion to get landing pages up when official channels couldn't manage the workload. In fact, countless mainstream marketers, including many household name brands, have used skunk works projects to improve their landing pages. Skunk works commonly are used to combat one of three typical marketing problems:

1. Limited in-house technical resources

Your IT or Web department may be backed up with lots of other projects, and improving or even launching new landing pages isn't high on their lists. This is by far the most common catalyst for skunk works as well as being the easiest and least potentially damaging to your career.

In this case, your two primary goals should be:

- Get a reasonable-looking landing page up that reflects your brand and works (that is, conversion activity can take place, be tracked by source and conversion rate, and any new leads or accounts can be ported easily to CRM or other in-house systems) with a low budget, little time, and a minimum of technical know-how.
- Track the value of the ability to create reasonable landing pages on the fly to your brand so marketing can petition IT or management at a later date to get a budget to build this ability into in-house systems.

Biggest key to success: Get your IT and/or Web department on board from the very start. Best way: Formally ask for their advice for the project **before** you do anything else. Let them know you utterly respect their time, expertise, and resources and that, in a perfect world, you would prefer to work directly with them on this project and not "go behind their backs." Tell them your goal is to minimize their workload and to gather data that will convince management to expand their budget in the future.

Make sure you document, in writing, each step of the skunk works project, including outside technology used, passwords, user names, how systems work, etc. and place it on a public place within company documents, such as a folder on your intranet. Finally, keep IT and Web in the loop as things progress so they also learn your lessons along with you.

The good news is that many easy-to-use content-management systems exist these days for marketers who want to get up a quick landing page on the fly. You don't have to know any programming. You do need access to:

- Your brand logo in a format and sizes that will work on the page.
- Your brand rules surrounding email opt-ins (if taken), including the hotlink to your privacy-policy URL.
- Ability to send traffic to the landing page, and measure that traffic by source if it is from multiple sources and/or PPC keywords.
- Possibly the ability to create and redirect vanity URLs so the URL reflects your brand and not the landing page vendor's or host's.
- The page's copyright line or footer.

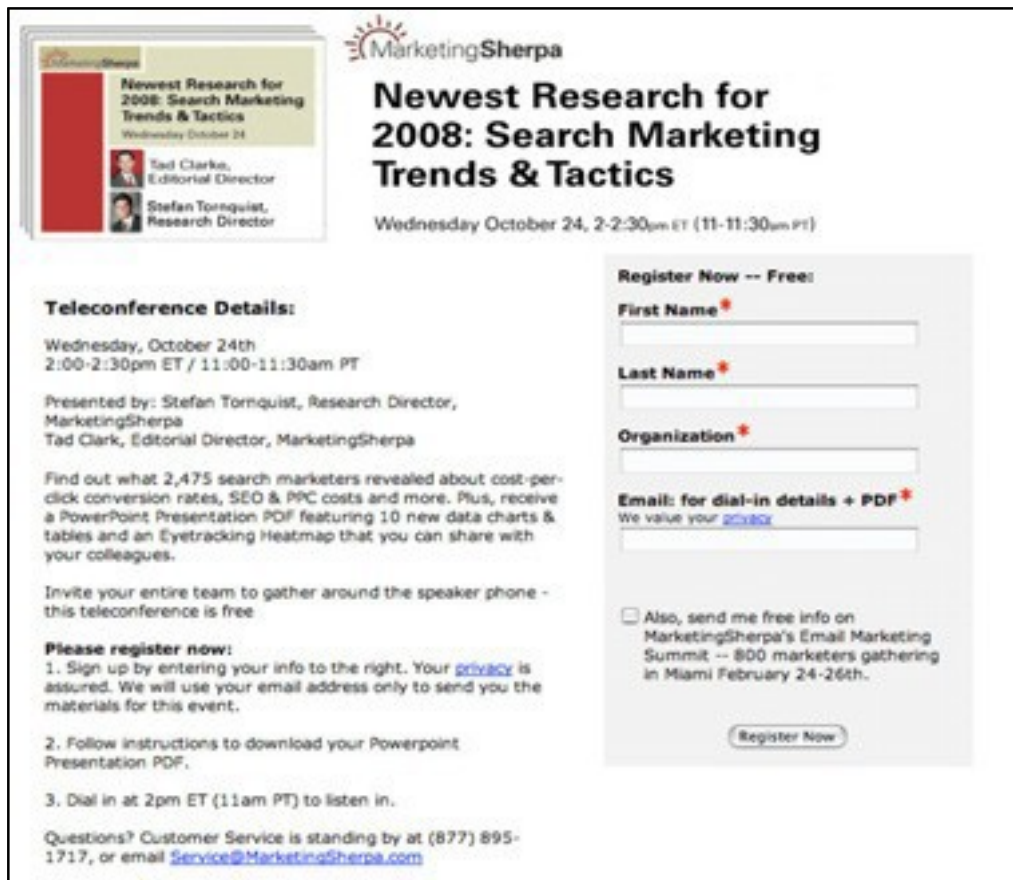
You also need the ability to swiftly and easily handle responses to questions like these:

- Where do conversions go next on their path?
- What happens to their registration data if collected?
- Can you easily yet securely download all responses from the system yourself
- Are all responses confidential to your account or does the vendor co-own the data?

Some (but not nearly all) of the systems that marketers we know use to create landing pages on the fly for little cost include:

- Online surveying tools. Online surveying tools, such as SurveyMonkey, Zoomerang, and SurveyGizmo, can be used for non-survey purposes. Instead of asking survey questions, for example, you ask registration questions.

Sample 5.1: MarketingSherpa Registration Landing Page

The image shows a registration landing page for a teleconference. On the left, there is a graphic for the 'Newest Research for 2008: Search Marketing Trends & Tactics' featuring speakers Tad Clarke and Stefan Tornquist. The main heading on the right is 'Newest Research for 2008: Search Marketing Trends & Tactics' with the date 'Wednesday October 24, 2-2:30pm ET (11-11:30am PT)'. Below the heading, the 'Teleconference Details' section provides the date, time, and speakers. A 'Please register now!' section lists three steps: signing up, downloading a PDF, and dialing in. A registration form on the right includes fields for First Name, Last Name, Organization, and Email, with a 'Register Now -- Free!' button. An optional checkbox for additional information is also present.

MarketingSherpa

Newest Research for 2008: Search Marketing Trends & Tactics

Wednesday October 24, 2-2:30pm ET (11-11:30am PT)

Teleconference Details:

Wednesday, October 24th
2:00-2:30pm ET / 11:00-11:30am PT

Presented by: Stefan Tornquist, Research Director, MarketingSherpa
Tad Clark, Editorial Director, MarketingSherpa

Find out what 2,475 search marketers revealed about cost-per-click conversion rates, SEO & PPC costs and more. Plus, receive a PowerPoint Presentation PDF featuring 10 new data charts & tables and an Eyetracking Heatmap that you can share with your colleagues.

Invite your entire team to gather around the speaker phone - this teleconference is free

Please register now:

1. Sign up by entering your info to the right. Your [privacy](#) is assured. We will use your email address only to send you the materials for this event.
2. Follow instructions to download your Powerpoint Presentation PDF.
3. Dial in at 2pm ET (11am PT) to listen in.

Questions? Customer Service is standing by at (877) 895-1717, or email Service@MarketingSherpa.com

Register Now -- Free!

First Name *

Last Name *

Organization *

Email: for dial-in details + PDF *

We value your [privacy](#)

☐ Also, send me free info on MarketingSherpa's Email Marketing Summit -- 800 marketers gathering in Miami February 24-26th.

[Register Now](#)

- Blog software. Blog software like Moveable Type or Blogger can be tweaked in such a way that instead of a blog you have a page of marketing copy; offer images, and response hotlinks, buttons, and even forms. (Note: Be sure to check the use limits before doing this. You will probably have to upgrade to a commercial account, and some blog systems do not allow commercial uses of this nature at all.)
- Low-cost landing page and online forms generators. Dozens of these are online. Use a search engine with terms such as “Landing Page Creation,” “Landing Page Templates,” “Build a Web Site,” “Design a Web Page,” and “Web Site Tools.” Key: Avoid services that offer creative help (such as copywriting or automated translations) in addition to providing tools for creating pages. Very low-cost copy is never worth anything and can actively hurt your brand.

Note: You may want to meet with your IT department to be sure the landing page service you are using has the hosting capacity you'll need. You also need to know if its IP addresses are blacklisted due to spammers using the same service. (See Chapter 4 email section for more details.)

- Low-cost freelance Web designers. Low-cost freelance Web designers can also build landing pages for you. Tens of thousands of freelance Web designers worldwide are angling for your business. If you use common online bidding services such as eLance, you'll find most of them located in India or Russia. MarketingSherpa has had good luck using freelancers in Serbia as well.

In any case, check their references carefully. If the job is complex, get your IT or Web department to write and/or vet your proposal language so it includes all the technical terms and programming requirements.

Assume you will need to go through more rounds of changes and more communication confusion than you are used to when working with in-house resources and regular vendors. Breaking in a new freelancer can be frustrating and time consuming. If you plan to use them again, however, the extra communication work you put into the first few jobs can pay off later.

Also assume the designer's creative skills will be poor at best. In our experience, most freelancers come at Web design from a programming background. They know how to use the program to create a landing page so they automatically think they can design. Often the opposite is true. If you use outside designers, either give them a landing page that's already live online to copy or have your graphic design or art department whip up a PDF showing your landing page exactly as you want it to appear. Even so, the design will not match as closely as you expect the first time.

2. Lack of management belief in testing

In this case, although management agrees that your brand's Web presence isn't perfect, management may not want to give you a budget for testing new landing pages. They just don't understand what kind of response lift you can get from tests. In this case, your goal will again be twofold:

- Run a test that gets significant results, hopefully of a strong positive nature for a landing page tweak.
- Collect enough data to convince management that testing is worth budgeting for. (Basically you want to blow their socks off with the amount of money or sales leads they are leaving on the table by not routinely testing.)

Pick a page that is:

- Critical in the funnel.
- Obviously not optimized (under-performing and rife with basic mistakes).
- Not anybody's special baby (don't step on toes if you don't have to).

Best practice is to inform management of your tests and progress up front. Some marketers are not in a situation where this is possible. In that case, be aware that you are risking your bosses' trust at least and maybe your job. No one likes a colleague who

goes behind their back, even if the tests prove irrefutably that there was a good business reason for doing so.

You should also take care to strictly limit your brand's potential negative exposure during the testing process. Send only as much traffic as you need to get statistically valid results and no more so if your test fails, few customers and prospects will see it. Key: Determine prior to launch the criteria for aborting the test rather than running to completion. Remember, major changes — good or bad — become evident very quickly. If your new page is not crashing and burning, let it run. It's not doing any harm and sometimes daily, weekly, or other patterns of performance will emerge if you give them time. After all, that is exactly the kind of hidden insight that proves the value of testing.

When it's time, make sure you can turn off the test quickly and efficiently. Most commercial testing tools make it simple and easy. If you are using an in-house testing process, verify and practice this procedure before launching a live test.

If your brand is very shy of negative customer comments, but you think the landing page has giant design problems, consider starting with an eyetracking test and/or usability lab instead of a heavy traffic test. These tests only use a few dozen people, and you can even use people who work within your company on occasion (best if they work in completely unrelated departments to your brand) and still get impressive results.

Even if you are convinced the page needs broader, more extensive testing, such as multivariate tests, you may find it easier to demonstrate the value of testing through an A/B skunk works project before trying to sell them on going for the whole hog.

Most testing vendors are experienced at helping marketers make a case for industrial-strength testing; they can even offer advice for skunk works projects. Reputable testing vendors profiled in MarketingSherpa Case Studies included (but are not limited to):

- ClickTracks
- Conversion Multiplier
- Coremetrics
- Memetrics
- Offermatica
- Omniture
- Optimost
- SEMphonic
- SiteSpect
- Unica
- Vertster
- Visual Sciences
- WebTrends

3. Institutional unwillingness to change creative

Many marketers find themselves in this dangerous situation. You are longing to improve your brand's landing pages and management and/or the creative team responsible for the current pages see absolutely no merit in making changes.

In fact, they like the landing pages. They either created or signed off on them in the first place. Your creative suggestions may even be taken as insults!

In this case, your best chance at someday making the changes you desire is to find a small landing page somewhere that no one currently in the organization (including trusted vendors) has any skin in at all. This might be a small, tangential and old project no one thinks is important or, perhaps, a new again unimportant project without any current team behind it. The key: If you tweak the page or replace it with something else, you threaten no one's turf and perceived damages from failed tests won't be terribly big either.

Some marketers use an online media buy as an excuse for a new landing page. For example, you may be about to run banners on a major media Web site and you can get the landing page development "thrown in for free." Since it's officially not costing anything and the Web team doesn't have to do any work, they may not mind loosening creative control a bit. Then you can use results to suggest changes to other pages down the line.

If you are passionate about a creative test, be careful to disguise this passion with professional, non-emotional interest. Also, if you are spending much time on the test, be careful to be seen getting your officially approved work done first and well. Some marketers even do creative testing on their own time.

Be careful to adhere to every possible brand rule and guideline that might trip you up down the road. Check anything with legal that could ever cause concern for them (even if you think it's an entirely needless concern.) Check with agency and other brand creative guidelines such as colors, typeface size, etc. The more rules you obey when you break the rules, all the better.

Managing a Skunk Works Project

People:

Line up whatever allies you can prior to creating the new landing page (much less going live.) You should include someone in legal, in IT or Web, in CRM or databases, and in the sales management team if you generate leads. Even if you're sure that you know best, ask for their input before putting final plans together. Your goal is a successful outcome, not total control.

Great skunk works project team members tend to be:

- Open to unconventional options; interested in creative freedom.
- Discrete and trustworthy — able to keep secrets.
- Not selfish, prideful, or arrogant.

- “Golden” (aka “Teflon”) in internal politics.
- Smart and indispensable rather than well-connected.
- Able to give the time even if it’s in addition to their current work.
- Understanding of the career risk they are taking.

Technology:

Use company-standard software, tools, and procedures whenever possible even if you don’t like them much – unless it is completely impractical. Your goal is to prove that a better tested landing page will give better results, not that your IT department picked the wrong technology or does things badly. Plus, using old technology saves money, minimizes learning-curve impact, and minimizes questions and objections from accounting, legal, and IT about new vendors while your project is active.

You can realize additional cost savings (and help maintain a low profile) for your skunk works project by putting your test environment on existing pre-production servers rather than dedicated machines. Most server operating systems, databases, and content management platforms will allow this without leaping through undue hoops.

Your IT department probably already does this internally, and you will need someone friendly to your project in IT to help you with other hurdles for integrating your skunk works project with the production systems when it’s time.

About MarketingSherpa



MarketingSherpa is a publisher focused on reporting on inspirational stories of customer-first marketing. Our goal — to give marketers of the world the stats, inspiration and instructions to improve their results.

Since 1999, we've published 8,508 (and counting) case studies, how-tos, charts, blog posts, videos, publications, events and webinars, which can be searched in the MarketingSherpa library.

Our name "Sherpa" refers admiringly to the Sherpas of Nepal who guide climbers up Mount Everest. Our goal is to be your friendly native guides who help you on your tough climb toward more effective customer-first marketing results.

Praised by The Economist, Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge Site, and Entrepreneur.com, MarketingSherpa is distinguished by offering practical, results-based marketing information researched and written by a staff of in-house reporters.

Our offices are located in Jacksonville, Florida, at MECLABS Institute. MarketingSherpa is a subsidiary of MECLABS, a research organization dedicated to discovering how people make choices. MECLABS provides research, education and services backed by customer-first science.

Visitors to MarketingSherpa.com may sign up for their choice of six newsletters, including the following: Specific case studies for business-to-business versus business-to-consumer marketers, email-focused studies, inbound marketing, and charts showing the latest business and consumer trends. Sign up for newsletters at www.MarketingSherpa.com.

Fast Facts about the MECLABS Institute



- MECLABS is the parent research organization of MarketingSherpa
- Built the first and now **oldest conversion marketing research program**
- Pioneered the conversion industry, established its concepts and principles, and launched the first certified courses in the field
- Invested **two decades and \$138 million** trying to understand the fundamental unit of conversion: a “yes”
- Trained thousands of students in the rigorous science of conversion marketing
- Defined the primary standards for scientific testing in conversion marketing, teaching at **Adobe, Microsoft, Google, Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford** and many others
- Tested **over 20,000 marketing hypotheses** (treatments) — building the **largest library** of valid marketing experiments in the world
- Conducted field research with hundreds of the top brands in the world, including **Verizon, Amazon, The New York Times** and many more
- Featured in major media outlets including **Forbes, The Washington Post, Entrepreneur, the Huffington Post, FOXBusiness, Adweek, AdAge, the Wall Street Journal**, and more
- Continues to push the frontier of conversion marketing, experimenting with new technologies such as **artificial intelligence** and mixed reality
- Patented **the most widely used** and well-known conversion heuristic:

$$C = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a$$

MECLABS Research Approach

CONVERSION INDEX

$$C = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a$$

EMAIL MESSAGING EFFECTIVENESS

$$eme = rv (of + i) - (f + a)^0$$

NET VALUE FORCE

$$Vf_{Ac} - Cf_{Ac} = Nf^0$$

OPTIMIZATION SEQUENCE

$$Opr > Oprn > Ocnn^0$$

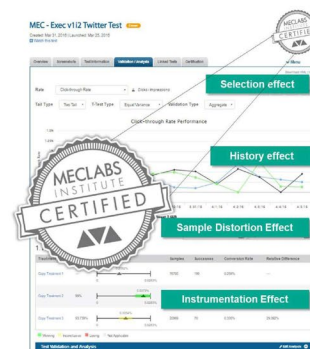
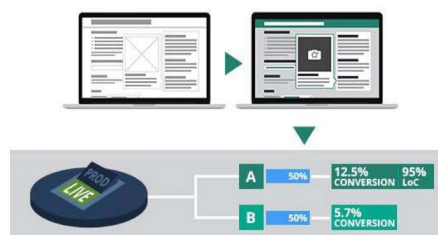
TEST PRIORITY SEQUENCE

$$Q = (2i_p / I_t) - r^0$$

TESTING UTILITY

$$u = 2q + t + m + 2v + i^0$$

And more...



10 Patented Heuristics developed from 20,000+ sales path experiments are applied respectively for analysis. MECLABS Scientists use this rigorous methodology to identify testing opportunities and generate optimized treatment designs.

A/B Split Testing is used to validate hypotheses and collect customer data. Traffic is divided amongst test pages, and performance is compared to identify behavioral insights.

The MECLABS Seal indicates that an experiment has undergone multiple validity checks by the MECLABS Data Sciences Group and is certified as an accurate representation of real-world customer behavior.

Boost your conversion rate with a

MECLABS Quick Win Intensive

Get the scientists at MECLABS to rapidly analyze your critical pages for the **fastest way to drive a major revenue increase**. Using the largest library of conversion experiments in the world (more than 20,000 treatments tested), MECLABS can help you **ramp up your conversion rate**.

- Designed for lead gen, ecommerce or subscriptions
- No **long-term** commitment required
- Drives **quick fixes to drive immediate results**
- Provides **strong testing** Ideas for long-term success
- Works for **small** and **large** organizations

Here's how it works

- The scientists at MECLABS will help you **visualize** your funnel while searching for key behavioral patterns that yield conversion opps
- Then they will help you study the **customer psychology** of your offer: You will get two types of actionable insights, "Fix-Now(s)" and "Test-Now(s)"
- And they will help you **score** and critique the force of your **value proposition**



MECLABS.com/QuickWinIntensive

MarketingSherpa Landing Page Handbook

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MarketingSherpa Inc.

customer.service@marketingsherpa.com