Landing Page OPTIMIZATION

WRITTEN BY NEIL PATEL & SHERICE JACOB

INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS GUIDE?

There are few other things that create a first impression the way a strategically designed landing page can. Many companies, some of them profiled within these pages, have seen their conversion rates and profits soar thanks to a properly created landing page.

But landing pages are about much more than just creating a simple design and slapping up an email subscription form or download button. They're about carefully combining just enough persuasive content to get the reader's attention, while combining it with an unbeatable offer and a *"visually digestible"* design.

But is it really that simple?

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

If your site's landing pages are suffering from poor pay-per-click performance, you're not getting customers to click past the first page or you just want the absolute truth on what really works — today so that you can start optimizing, testing, tracking and reaping the benefits — this is the guide for you. Whether you're a small business owner just getting started or the head of a Fortune 500 corporation's marketing team who needs real insights that get results — you'll love this guide.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

In the following chapters, we'll break down the entire process of creating stellar landing pages from scratch. We'll cover everything from what a landing page is and how it fits into your marketing campaigns, to troubleshooting and what actions to take if your landing page isn't performing well. You'll also get valuable tips and tools, as well as in-depth profiles on companies from a wide variety of industries — and how they put their landing pages to use.

CHAPTER ONE

How Landing Pages Fit into Your Marketing Arsenal

In the first chapter, we'll cover what landing pages are and what they can and cannot do. Some marketers will use landing pages as a *"crutch"* for a lackluster campaign, when the blame truly lies with the lack of preparedness, expertise or even the platform being used. We'll also cover the differences between landing pages and search engine optimization as these two methodologies typically go hand-in-hand.

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER ONE ❯
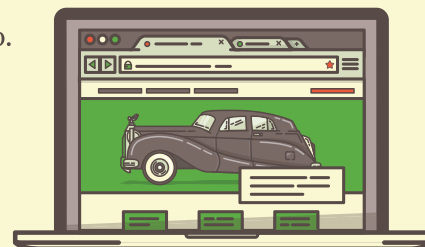
How to Read Your Audiences' Minds

In the second chapter, we'll look at the planning that goes behind the creation of some of the most successful landing pages. You'll learn how to become effortlessly *"in tune"* with what your audience wants *(even if they can't tell you themselves!)* and how to determine what, exactly should be tested when it comes to analyzing your landing pages for the best possible results.

You'll also learn about the different types of landing pages — and when to use each one. Plus, we'll cover what a winning landing page looks like piece by piece, so that you can break off and start creating your own — confident in the knowledge that you're putting all of the pieces together the right way — right from the start.

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER TWO ❯

Optimizing Traffic for Higher Conversions

In the third chapter, we'll talk about traffic — as landing pages are utterly helpless without it. We'll cover the five best ways to get traffic to your landing page, including both free and paid methods. Even if you're starting out on a shoestring budget, you can still attract the right kind of people to your pages by following these easy steps.
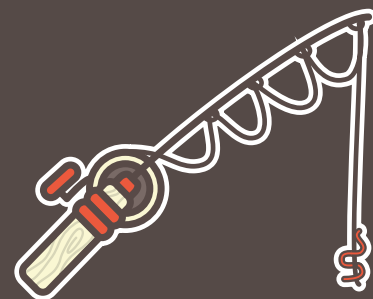
TAKE ME TO CHAPTER THREE ❯

Read. Review. React.

Chapter six is all about results — how to read them, how to act on them accordingly, and even what to do when your landing page tests fail. But don't worry — because even the most well-intentioned, data-backed tests sometimes go over like a lead balloon with your viewers. But you can learn an astonishing amount about them just by doing these tests, and the more you know, the further ahead of your competition you'll be.

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER SIX ❯

Tools of the Trade

Finally, chapter seven will cover some of the best design, testing, tracking and tweaking tools available for landing pages. Even if you consider yourself *"technology-challenged"*, these tools will make setting up and monitoring your landing pages as easy as possible. This means you have no excuse not to start learning what motivates your customers to take action — and then giving it to them.

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER SEVEN ❯

LET'S GET STATRTED!

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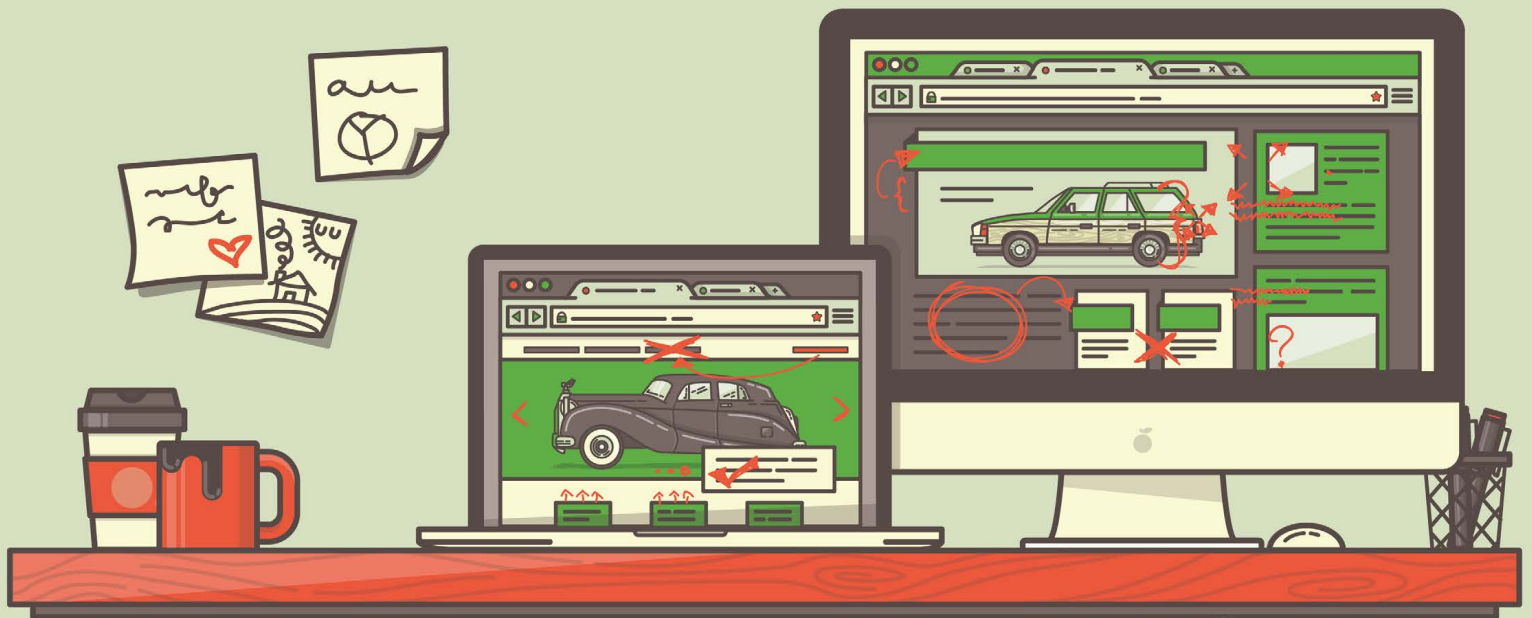
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CHAPTER ONE

How Landing Pages Fit Into Your Marketing Arsenal

A landing page, simply put, is any page that gets traffic from anywhere other than the same pages on your site — hence the name landing. It's most commonly associated with pay-per-click ads like Google Adwords, where you can drive traffic to a specific URL that has been designed to receive those visitors. We'll talk more about Adwords in chapter three, but for now — it's back to basics.

The problem with most landing pages is that they're created around broad categories like "*jeans*" instead of being more specifically focused like "***women's skinny jeans***" or "***juniors bootcut jeans***". These days, people intuitively understand that when searching the web, the site whose description most closely matches their search is likely to be the winner. And when you're paying for clicks — you're losing money every time a customer goes elsewhere.

DOES KEYWORD RELEVANCY MATTER?

You may think that once you've caught the user's attention *(and their click)* with a highly targeted ad — that your job is done. Retailer California Closets wanted to test this theory out for themselves. **Would an ad-specific landing page outperform a more generic one?**

HERE IS THE AD-SPECIFIC PAGE:

HERE IS THE GENERIC PAGE:

Although it's unclear what the original ad text was, one could theorize that it was "*get organized*" — which then leads people directly into the site with organization tips and products.

The ad-specific landing page outperformed the generic page by increasing lead form submissions by 115%

With this in mind, a landing page is generally your first and only opportunity to make a first impression with your customer. It's your chance to start a conversation, ask a question, invite discussion and welcome clicks on into your site. For many sites, particularly those in high-competition areas, it may be your only chance to reel in a visitor and convince them that your offer is worth their time and attention.

That means you simply can't afford to get it wrong.

Fortunately, setting up and using landing pages in your overall marketing plan is relatively easy. It's just a matter of creating a web page that combines all the components needed to make a page successful *for your specific customer.*

Of course, entire books have been written on the subject, and it's still very much an evolving science. But this guide will work hard to dispel the myths, lift up your conversion rates, and get you on the right track.

Is My Home Page a Landing Page?

It is if your visitors type in your URL directly. But this is likely because they're familiar with your brand and site already — not that they just happened upon your site mysteriously. Typically, your home page is a more broad, generic introduction to what you have to offer, rather than being narrowly focused to one particular topic.

Many marketers mistakenly direct pay-per-click traffic to their home page, thinking that their visitors will "*figure out*" where they want to go. Bad news — they won't. There's just too much competition, too many opportunities to comparison shop, and limited time to do so. And all these reasons are why we create landing pages — to simplify and streamline the entire process.

Why Should I Use Landing Pages?

Landing pages let you **narrow your focus and remove the clutter** from your pages that could distract your visitor from taking the action you want them to take. It allows you greater control to direct them and help them find what they're looking for much faster — and this, in turn can ripple out to affect your search engine rankings too.

Even if people have landed on your page and know exactly what they're looking for — they want to take the quickest action possible to get results. This was exactly what Time Doctor, a productivity software tool wanted to test in their own landing page. They created a long, detailed page which covered all the major features of their program *(see screenshot)* and **tested it against a much shorter, single "screen-width" page:**

See exactly where time is spent in your business

Track your time. Track your team's time. Know EXACTLY what is REALLY going on.

No credit card required!

"Time Doctor does everything we dreamed of and more!"

*Nicole Herstik, Canada
Founder Article Teller*

Create an Account and See Where Time is Spent

Name

Email

Password

Get Started

7 6 8 0 0 0 productive hours tracked

The shorter version converted 36% more customers than the longer version. However, it's worth noting that not all short copy pages will outperform their longer counterparts. Depending on the item being sold — a higher price-point product would likely have required a more in depth showcase of features and benefits.

So What Does This Mean for My Search Engine Ranking?

Since search engines like Google are all about relevancy, they want people to find what they're looking for. If your site does a good job of that in a straightforward way, then chances are, you'll steadily outrank your competitors for being the answer to the searcher's needs — it's a win-win!

Good landing pages, in turn, can improve your conversion rate — which is the percentage of visitors that ultimately took the action you wanted. These people have been converted from visitors to interested shoppers to potential buyers and hopefully, lifelong customers.

Landing pages are like signposts that direct buyers at each stage to take that next all-important step.

When is the Best Time to Use a Landing Page?

Not all pages are cut out to be landing pages. That's why, ideally you'll want to use them:

▶ **As destinations in your pay-per-click ads**
Create a different landing page for each keyword and group so that you can test, track and see how each one performs.

▶ **To create anticipation about a product launch**
*Landing pages are a great way to promote a **"coming soon"** teaser — even if the product isn't finished yet.*

▶ **To segment your offers**
No single offer will appeal to everyone. Some people prefer printable coupons, while others would rather redeem promo codes online. Landing pages can help you steer visitors exactly where you want.

▶ **To segment your audience**
*Just like your offers, not every visitor should be directed to a generic **"one-size-fits-all"** landing page. Attract different groups with pages tailored specifically to them and their needs.*

How Do Landing Pages Fit In with Other Online Marketing Strategies?

Landing pages aren't meant to replace any other forms of marketing, but rather add to them.

Unlike most other marketing strategies, however, landing pages follow a **keep-it-simple** approach. When it comes to design, content and other aspects of a page — less is more. This means that it's not uncommon to see landing pages with the entire site navigation stripped away so that few elements remain on the page.

We'll discuss the exact anatomy of a winning landing page further on in the chapter — but for now, it's important to understand the role that landing pages play in your overall marketing plan:

LANDING PAGES AND SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

Landing pages are designed to go hand-in-hand with search engine optimization. Any optimization strategies that you employ across your site should also be used on your landing pages as they can only benefit from it.
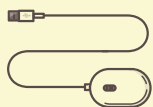
LANDING PAGES AND PAY-PER-CLICK (PPC) ADVERTISING

Landing pages and Pay-Per-Click advertising go together perfectly, and landing pages being used as destinations for PPC ads are one of their most common and most popular uses. But you should also know that landing pages can be used just as successfully with organic search engine rankings — they're not reserved solely for paid ads.

LANDING PAGES AND CONVERSION RATE OPTIMIZATION (CRO)

It's a very common misconception that conversion optimization (*the act of getting your customers to take the action you want them to take on your site*) is done solely by landing pages. Conversion optimization involves many more aspects — but landing pages are a strategic part, and just one of the ways you can convince customers to come further into your site and interact with it.

LANDING PAGES AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Landing pages also work well with social media, and many businesses have one or more pages for their fans on Facebook, Twitter and other social sites they frequent.

As you'll see, landing pages give you an easy way to create a customized destination for every customer segment, marketing campaign, special offer or pay-per-click add. As such, they're immensely powerful.

But, as with all great marketing strategies, there are some things that they can and cannot do. Let's take a closer look:

Landing Pages are NOT:

LONG SALES LETTERS

This is not your chance to go into great detail about how great your product is, but rather to provide the user with exactly what they're looking for — immediately. Remember, relevancy is key here. If they want to know more, they'll come back.

"NAME SQUEEZE" PAGES

These are part of an old internet marketing tactic that presented users with a choice: enter your name and email to get a freebie, or go elsewhere. Landing pages are more evolved than this.
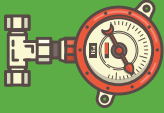
AN OPPORTUNITY TO PUSH A HARD SELL

This is also not the time to pressure your buyers. For many people, this is the first impression and likely the only one. You want them to take the next step into your funnel — you don't want to shove them into it!

A ONCE-AND-DONE STRATEGY

Landing pages need to evolve and change as the market and demands change. You should always be testing and refining your message so that it is more relevant, more helpful and more on target with what your customer wants. This is a long but thoroughly rewarding process as it gets you closer to achieving your overall marketing goals.

The Problem with Most Websites

The issue that most websites have is that they are built from either a design or development perspective.

With a design perspective, there's an emphasis on the aesthetic. A great deal of attention is paid to typography, color, consistent branding, the tone and *"voice"* of the content and other creative areas. With a development perspective, there emphasis is on the platform. How is content published and managed? What kinds of content are accepted? How will the platform evolve as needs change?

While there's nothing inherently wrong with either of these points of view, they're missing the marketing element which should be at the foundation of any site designed to sell. Because we're so caught up in design/development changes and their various stages, we often forget to put the customer first and ask — what are they looking for? And more importantly, how can we deliver that experience and make it flawless at every step of the way? This is where the design and development points come in.

Case Study: How Much Should You Include on a Page?

The question then becomes — what's the right amount of content and design on a page? Confidis, a French credit loan service, tested two variations of its landing pages — one which removed images, navigation and even customer support links, and the other which included all of these elements:

HERE WAS THE ORIGINAL PAGE: (SOURCE: WHICHTESTWON)
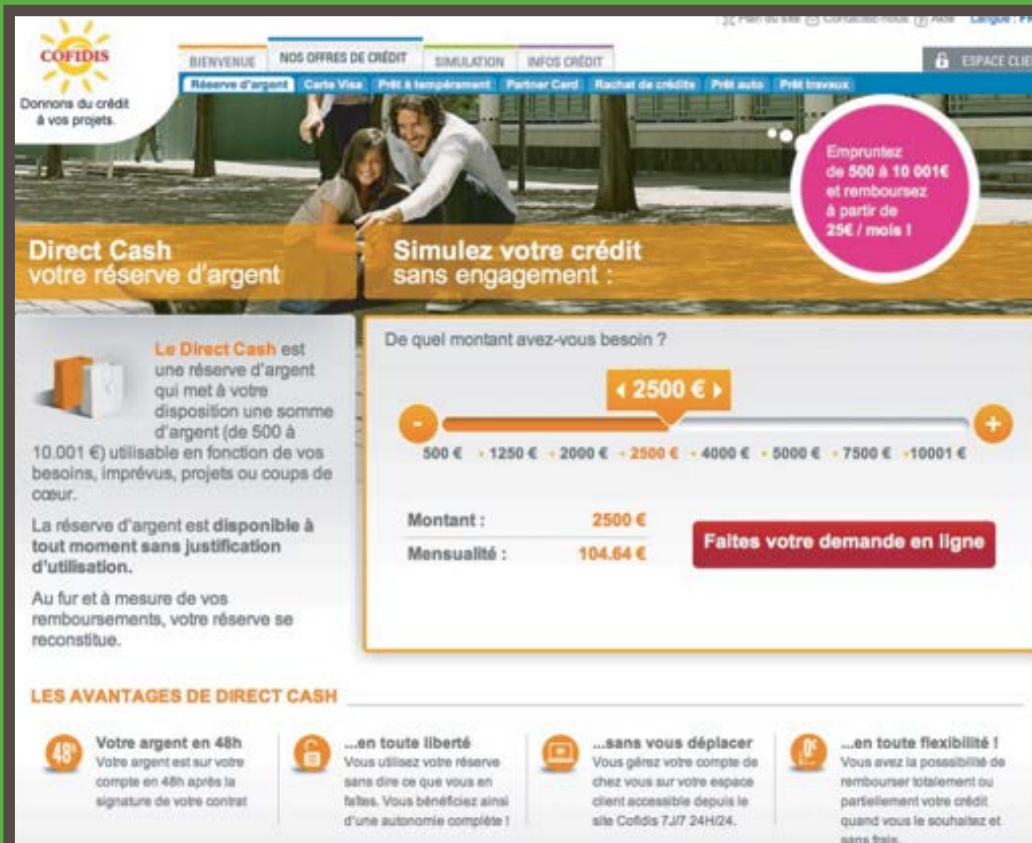
The updated Confidis landing page without navigation, images or support links

The results were astonishing — a full 48% more people signed up as a result of viewing the shorter, *"stripped out"* landing page. It was shorter, more compact and all of the information the user needed loaded *"above the fold"* — within the first 1/3rd of screen space.

These are just a few of the ways that a reworking of existing screen space, and prioritizing different elements can have a dramatic effect on increasing conversion rates and bringing in more customers with less effort, time and money spent.

But how do these changes affect search engine optimization? You might be surprised to learn that landing pages aren't designed to replace SEO at all.

SEO vs. Landing Pages

Search engine optimization is a component of landing pages — but it isn't designed to compete with them. Now that Google is hiding keyword data — marketers can no longer put as much of an emphasis on keyword research as they once did. Now, the strategy shifts from pure optimization to pure intent.
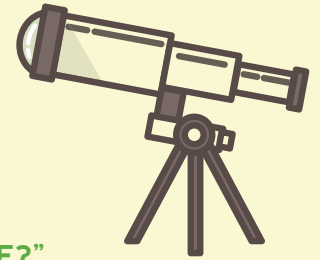
"WHAT DID THE CUSTOMER HAVE IN MIND WHEN THEY FOUND OUR PAGE?"

The first step, therefore is to bridge the gap between what the user's intent is, versus your landing page. As an example, someone searching for *"cheap flights to Paris"* may only be in the starting phases of planning their vacation, whereas someone searching for *"cheap flights to Paris from Denver in May"* may have their calendar all planned out and might optionally be looking for car rentals, hotels and activities to do during that time.

That's the difference — and power — of intent.

Once the user determines that your page most closely matches their question or issue — they'll give you a click. But your job isn't finished yet.

SCANNING FOR VISUAL CLUES
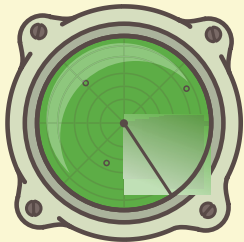
Web users are, by nature, *"scanners"* rather than readers. They don't have time to read all that content you worked so hard on writing. They want to know — at—a—glance, whether or not your page is going to meet their expectations. They're also secretly judging you, asking themselves, *"Can I trust this advice? Is it safe? What else should I know about this?"*

Matching Headlines with Search Queries

One of the most important steps that you can take to improve both your landing page conversion rate and your search engine optimization is to match headlines with your user's search query.

In this example from Search Engine Watch, the search phrase was best health insurance plans for single men. The resulting first ranked entry was the Ask Men website, with the title *"best health insurance plans"*.

This communicates two points — that the site is a recognized authority and it likely has the answer the user is searching for. It's also easy to visually scan and understand within seconds — all things that searchers want:

The AskMen homepage explores the best insurance plans for single men — its headline is right on target with the searcher's query

The page above could do with a lot less clutter — but considering that their galleries and advertising are the biggest money-makers for the site, rather than the articles, it still does a good job balancing out the user's inquiry with what it needs to keep earning profit.

Now that you understand how landing pages are different from other marketing methods — the question you should be asking is ***"what do my users want from my landing page?"*** They won't readily tell you, but enough marketing tests and psychological profiles have been done to tell us which types of pages typically perform best no matter what the user is looking for:

HEADLINES WITH DIRECTION
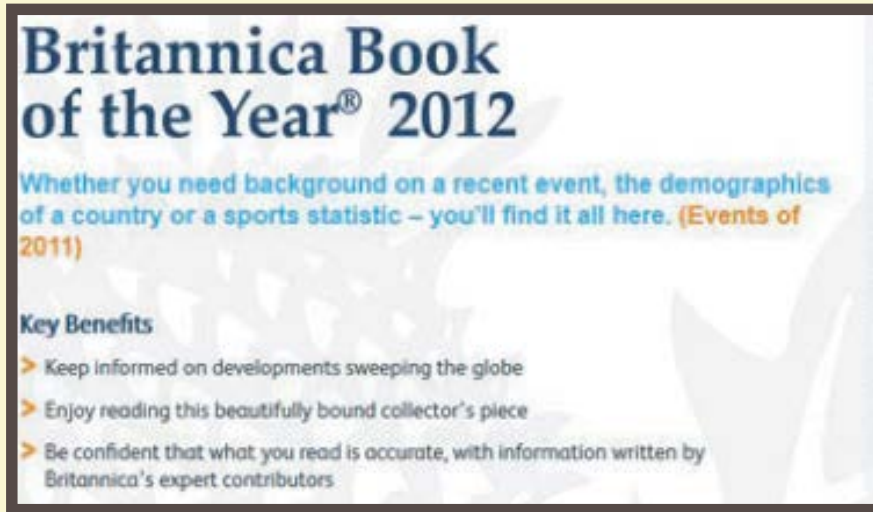
Users want to be told where to go, what to do, and how to do it. That's why the best performing landing pages have a clear, concise headline that immediately speaks to the reader's wants, fears or needs. Here's just such a headline from Carelogger, a diabetes tracking system that instantly addresses the user's concerns:

Anyone struggling with diabetes wants to keep themselves in better shape and keep their blood sugar on target— and by highlighting what it tracks, as well as the words ***"Optimal Health"***, Carelogger was able to increase their conversion rate by 31% because they matched their headline to what their audience wanted.

CLEAR, CONCISE LANGUAGE

The Encyclopedia Britannica was able to [boost their conversion rates by an astonishing 103%](#) just by adapting their copy to include everyday language which included bullet points that highlighted the best reasons to buy now:

Apple's marketing team are masters at *"less is more"* when it comes to selling some of their most powerful benefits. How would you describe something as complex as Siri in just a few words?

One sentence. Unlimited possibilities.

FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER

People visiting your landing pages want to know that they're important and valued. Using self-centered language like *"I"* and *"we"* gives the impression that you only care about yourself or your business/ solutions rather than the customer.

Email management service AwayFind once used the headline *"Let us find urgent messages"* — but in a test, they replaced it with *"Let urgent emails cut through the clutter and find YOU"*. Not only does this sound much less *"stalker-ish"* and give less of an impression that the company decides what's urgent or not — but it puts the user in a position of control and convenience.

As a result, AwayFind increased signups by 91% — a remarkable achievement by any measurement.

Be Trustworthy

Adding security seals, such as what Mint.com employs on their page, ensures that your personal and financial data is safe with them — and that they have the third-party credentials to back up their promise:

Summary

LET'S QUICKLY GO OVER WHAT WE'VE LEARNED SO FAR

▶ *Landing pages are designed as a springboard for users to step further into your site. They do this by being relevant and focused on a single point — such as the user's search inquiry. They are most commonly associated with pay-per-click pages such as Google Adwords but are certainly not limited to that platform.*

▶ *Using landing pages is all about maximizing your return on investment for each customer. The more specific, simple and streamlined a page is, the more likely the user will take the desired action.*

▶ *Ideally, landing pages should be used to segment your offers, your users, as destination pages for your pay per click ads, and/or as a way to create anticipation about a product event (and encourage users to sign up as the event comes closer).*

▶ *There are certain things that landing pages are not built to do — mainly act as long-form sales letter or simple name-squeeze pages. Your landing page is essentially the **"welcome mat"** that draws visitors into the rest of your site. Provided that you have a captivating offer that resonates well with them, you're digitally encouraging them to walk through the front door.*

▶ *Some of the best converting landing pages embody the philosophy of **"less is more"**. It's common to remove superfluous graphics, navigation, testimonials and even customer support options to help the user focus on a single action you want them to take.*

▶ *Search engine optimization isn't meant to replace landing pages or vice versa. SEO adds to landing pages, and when done right, landing pages can in turn increase relevancy in the eyes of the search engine and potentially increase your rankings.*

▶ *Users have certain expectations you must fulfill if you want them to take the next step, mainly: a headline that matches their inquiry, clear, easily-understandable language, a focus on their needs and the elements of trust and credibility in choosing to do business with you.*

These are the main ingredients customers are looking for when they land on your pages. And, they want all of these things in a fast-loading, easy-to-browse, and user-friendly environment.

Sound like a tall order to fill? Not when you apply the strategies we'll learn in *Chapter 2*. Targeting your customer is just as important as targeting your pages to meet their expectations. Bring in the wrong type of customer and no matter how good your pages are, they won't convert.

That's why, in chapter 2, we'll be learning about your target market, including creating personas that you can use for various *"test runs"* of your landing pages to determine that you're including the information customers are seeking. You'll also learn about the different components that make up a landing page, and how to use them for best results.

Finally, we'll jump into one of the most important aspects of landing page design and development — testing and tracking. This part is vital to ensuring that you're making the right decisions with all of the available data, so that as you gain more and more insight about your buyers, you'll be able to make changes that encourage even more interaction and higher conversion rates.

SOUND EXCITING? LET'S DIVE RIGHT IN!

TAKE ME TO THE INTRO

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER TWO

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Landing Page OPTIMIZATION

WRITTEN BY NEIL PATEL & SHERICE JACOB

— CHAPTER TWO —

How to Read Your Audiences' Minds

One of the most crucial facets to a successful landing page is the target customer. After all, if you aren't getting the right people to come to your pages in the first place, all your efforts might as well go up in smoke.

Since we can't yet *(legally!)* read people's minds, marketers have come up with a shortcut — personas.

Personas are digital profiles of your best customers — the ideal visitor you want to have take a specific action on your site. Many personas are based around demographics — gender, age range, education, monthly disposable income, etc

But this kind of classification is far too restrictive – who's to say that only women under 40 with young children and a master's degree are all going to flock to your product? While you can tailor your marketing efforts toward a certain kind of persona, it's short sighted to think that this is the only strategy you need to amplify your landing pages' messages.

Instead, consider psychographics — segmenting your audience according to deeper, more meaningful points including:

▶ *Aspirations — what they hope to achieve or dream of doing*
▶ *Attitudes — Their perspective and how they feel about specific ideas*
▶ *Lifestyles — Their choices relating to health, wealth, family and work*
▶ *Opinions — Their point of view on a potentially controversial matter*

"But I'm just selling _____!" People don't really have an opinion or an aspiration about things like that, do they? Whatever you're selling — you can position it to where it makes a statement about a buyer's attitude, lifestyle, opinion or aspiration.

Making Green by Going Green

Case in point — green energy. It's a **hot** topic — environmentally, financially and politically. Supporting these initiatives, to the detriment of other traditional energy production efforts *(fossil fuels)* makes a statement about the person taking that action, no matter which classic demographic they fit into — **for example:**

Aspirations —
   "I dream of making the planet a cleaner, more energy-efficient place"

Attitudes —
   "I feel that clean energy will boost job prospects and benefit the economy"

Lifestyles —
   "I believe there's money to be made in the green energy sector"

Opinions —
   "I think more people should be investing in greener solutions"

Notice how psychographics starts with more intangible points like *"I dream, I think, I feel"*. While it's harder to pin down these emotions and beliefs into tangible, measurable things — you can see how Green Guide, one company promoting *"green investments"* did it with their page:

This is their original landing page, focused on investing in renewable energy solutions. It was tested against the page below:

Not surprisingly, the first landing page outperformed the second — by a whopping 91%. It's simpler, to-the-point layout spoke precisely to the kind of person they wanted to attract: investors. These are people who want the truth — proven, tested strategies made by industry experts. They want to get started today

All of these buzzwords stick out in the copy — things that appeal to the persona of people Green Guide is trying to attract — *"Fortunes stand to be made" "Get Involved". "Put You Ahead of the Pack".*

Try to Beat My Score

Gamers are a class unto themselves, which is why GameGround — a social app that awards players with points as they progress through different games, wanted to test a radical landing page re-design — specifically they wanted to increase Facebook sign-ins.

HERE WAS THE FIRST PAGE THEY TESTED:

(Note, the Get Started/Sign In with Facebook buttons are actually one large button)

AND HERE IS THE VARIATION THEY TESTED IT AGAINST:

Now, using personas and psychographics while looking at both of these landing pages, we can deduce that:

▶ *These people enjoy playing games and earning rewards for playing*
▶ *They are social and use Facebook to connect/play with friends*
▶ *They are competitive in nature and like a challenge*

Between these two, the first landing page outperformed the second by an incredible **203%** — and once you start optimizing landing pages, it's easy to see why: The first page specifically targets Mahjongg players, shows the *"missions"* and the points they can earn, and lets them start connecting to Facebook right away. At this point, they probably don't care about what other games *(Facebook or otherwise)* are supported — they just want to jump in and start playing!

Setting Conversion Goals

All this talk about landing page optimization won't do you any good unless you can correctly analyze what actions your visitors are taking *(and whether they're taking any actions at all!)*. Setting conversion goals through your analytics program is one way to do that.
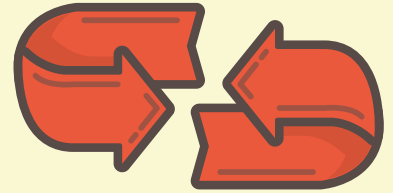
Since many people use **Google Analytics** starting out, it's simplest to start there. There are tons of features in Google Analytics, ranging from events, to triggers to funnels and more — so it's easy to see why so many people simply copy and paste the code on their website and never bother to log back in again to check their stats.

An example of conversion goals in Google Analytics

The good news is that you can set several conversion goals and see how many were completed, and how often. It doesn't just have to be recording a click on the call-to-action button on your landing page.

You can measure:
▶ *Email newsletter subscriptions*
▶ *Downloads of an ebook*
▶ *Time spent on site or number of pages viewed*
▶ *Shares on social media accounts*
▶ *Live chat connections with staff*
▶ *Successful form completions*

There are four goal types in Google Analytics:

URL Destination
Lets you set a *"success URL"* that counts as a conversion if the user reached a specific page *(like a thank you or download page)*.

Visit Duration
Lets you set a timeframe that the user spent on your site as an indicator of a successful conversion.

Page/Visit
Is similar to the above, only it counts the number of pages per visit. This is particularly important for long forms such as when signing up for insurance or other information-heavy requests.

Event Tracking
This is perhaps the most powerful, yet least understood options when it comes to conversion goals. Here, you can specify a certain event — like a "*trigger*" that, when it happens, denotes a successful conversion. For example, if someone downloaded or opened a PDF file, viewed your video or shared your page link on Facebook — those would all count as successful event-based conversions.

For the purpose of your landing page, you'll likely either use URL destination, or the more advanced Event Tracking to measure your conversion goals.

But once you've set them up, you're only half-way done. That's because you can then measure these conversion goals against the search traffic you're getting.

For instance, you could see:
▶ *Which referrer (other site URL) brings you the highest converting traffic*
▶ *Which search engine brings you the highest converting traffic*
▶ *Which keywords bring you the highest converting traffic*

And remember, you can have multiple goals and sets within each goal — so if you wanted to split test two distinct landing pages to see which one resulted in more video views — you can simply create an event-based conversion goal for the video and split test both pages as a set.

We'll get into split testing more in chapter five, but for now, you can start testing and tracking with steps that can be accurately measured, so you'll know precisely what changes have the greatest impact.

How to Analyze Data to Determine What Should Be Tested

Having conversion goals is one thing — but knowing where visitors drop off on the landing page is even more important. In this case, it can be well worth it to add visual heat map tracking to your pages. This gives you a visual overview of where people's attention *(and thus, their clicks)* are going:
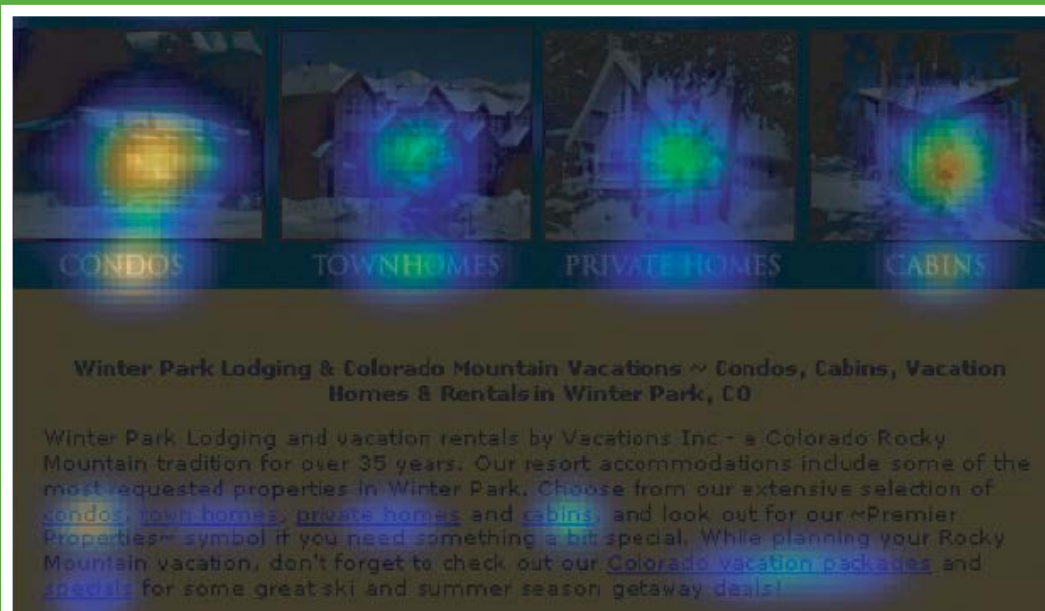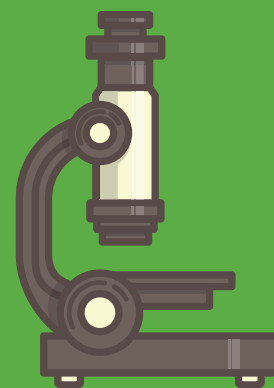
An example of a CrazyEgg heatmap

In this heatmap overlay, advertising Colorado mountain vacations, the majority of attention is on condos and cabins, along with vacation packages. The higher the *"heat"* level, the more clicks and attention that particular segment of the page is getting.

This, in turn, gives you insight into what information people are looking for — in this case, a landing page devoted to condos and a call to action with a link to vacation packages would likely have good results. The only way to know for sure, however, is to test, track and see!

Landing Page Prioritization Chart

One of the best ways to determine which items on your landing page optimization list get the most attention first is to make a prioritization chart. Just assign each task a level from 0-10 and add up each row. The higher the priority score, the sooner you should test it:

Landing Page Test	Test Duration (0-10)	Ease of Execution (0-10)	Business Impact (0-10)	Cost of Advertising 0-10)	Priority Score
Test Idea #1	8	10	9	3	30
Test Idea #2	3	8	4	9	24
Test Idea #3	10	2	7	0	19
Test Idea #4	4	3	5	5	17

Let's take a closer look at each individual category:

Test Duration

How long the test will last. Short tests should score higher than longer tests.

Ease of Execution

Easy tests should score higher than more difficult or time-consuming tests.

Business Impact

How much will this test affect the bottom line? Since your landing page directly ties in with your call-to-action, and thus getting leads or prospects into your sales funnel, the higher numbers have the greatest impact.

Cost of Advertising

How much will it cost you to promote this landing page? If your landing page shows up in organic search engine rankings, your cost of advertising would be 0. If, however, you're using pay-per-click, your cost goes up according to your approximate bid.

This chart is designed to help you immediately launch with ideas that will bring you the greatest returns, and stop settling for miniscule changes that would barely register as a blip on the radar in your visitors' minds.

Anatomy of a Landing Page

No matter how you style it, all great landing pages have a few things in common.
Let's take a look at the highest converting elements and what they mean:

1 **CONSISTENT MESSAGE BETWEEN AD HEADLINE & LANDING PAGE HEADLINE**
For example, if someone searched for *"blue widgets"*, your landing page has a far better chance of converting if the headline mentions *"blue widgets"*.

2 **THE SECONDARY HEADLINE LEADS INTO THE CONTENT**
This section needs to compel the user to continue reading. Short, sweet and to-the-point, it should give a clear reason that speaks to the user's fear, worry or question.

3 **PERFECT GRAMMAR**
This is not the place to be sloppy – with spelling mistakes or grammatical errors. Not only does it make you look like an amateur, but it also gives the impression that your site isn't trustworthy or credible.

4 **TRUST SIGNALS**
Testimonials, security seals and other badges that show that the user will have a satisfactory shopping experience doing business. These all feed right back in to the impression they first generate on whether or not your company is worth doing business with.

5 STRONG CALL-TO-ACTION

Download, Free, Get, Create and other options have been shown to perform better than weaker words like *"Try"*. Stronger language and active verbs compel people to act.

6 BUTTONS THAT STAND OUT

The button needs to be able to catch the user's eye, so make it distinctively different than the rest of the color scheme on your page, to make it stand out and be noticed.

7 A LACK OF LINKS

Keeping users on the landing page and moving them through the call-to-action should be your primary goal. Linking out to other sites or other pages of your own site that aren't tied into the landing page can distract the user from taking the action you want them to take.

8 IMAGES AND VIDEO RELATE TO CONTENT

Adding images and video that give customers a quick understanding of the product/service or explain the basics can all bolster the message.

9 FIT THE MESSAGE WITHIN THE FIRST 1/3RD OF SCREEN SPACE

This is known as *"above the fold"* and greatly increases the chance that visitors will take action, since they don't have to scroll.

Should My Landing Page Fit Into My Design?

It makes logical sense to consider that a landing page should fit in with your existing design — except with certain elements *(such as navigation and other distractions)* removed. But what if the landing page template is radically different from your design — **will that help or hurt your conversion rate?**

That's what computer manufacturer **Dell** wanted to find out. In the following PPC landing page, Dell hoped to attract leads for professionals seeking information about medical device tablets. Most business to consumer companies will tell you that a distinctly design landing page similar to the drawing above will generate a greater response, but Dell's target audience in this case was B2B consumers — where impressions matter and professionalism counts.

SO WHICH WON ULTIMATELY WON THEM OVER?
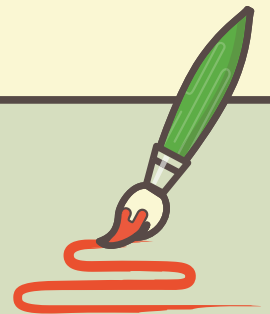
If you chose the second version, you'd be correct — as the standalone landing page design increased leads by an **incredible 320%**. This simply goes to show that simple, clear and concise pages win over bulky, text-heavy versions.

Types of Landing Pages

Contrary to the Anatomy of a Landing Page section above, there are actually several variations of landing pages — each one dependent on your product/service, your target audience and what you want them to accomplish as a result of visiting the page.
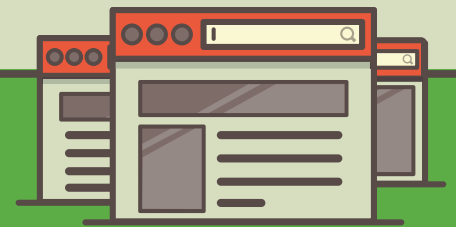
**THERE ARE SIX MAIN TYPES OF LANDING PAGES.
LET'S LOOK AT EACH ONE IN GREATER DETAIL AND HOW THEY WORK:**

Click-Through Landing Page

JCD Repair is an iPhone repair company targeting college-age students and young adults. They tested two variations of their landing page — one with humor, the other with facts. The first one asks *"Did your iPhone have a rough night out?"* while the second informs the user about iPhone 4/4S screen repair.

Users were to select either a mail-in option or schedule a local repair. Because humor doesn't always work — even on younger audiences, the company was truly gambling with their headline. What's more, search engine optimization practically dictates that you use your best keywords *(like iPhone 4S repair)* in your headline — so which one paid off for JCD repair?

In this case, the humor won out — with nearly **18%** more clicks on the Schedule Repair option versus its more factual counterpart. This is a great example of a click-through landing page. There's not a lot of fluff or filler — just the facts, and a button to go through to the next step.

These landing pages typically have just enough bullet points or benefits to convince the person to move to the next step — however, they are NOT lead generation landing pages — those come next.

Lead Gen Landing Page

A Place for Mom, a senior living search and information site used bullet points with carefully crafted copy to encourage people to find out more about its services. In this case, they'd type in their city, state or zip code, and then choose the type of housing they were looking for.

The first test advertised **FREE** guidance — with the idea that people would sign up for something free being the key motivator. The second variation moved away from the *"free"* option and instead emphasized a simple search with detailed community information.

THE FIRST PAGE ADVERTISES FREE GUIDANCE & ADVICE

THE SECOND TEST EMPHASIZES SIMPLE SEARCH AND INSIDER COMMUNITY INFO

Perhaps most surprisingly for copywriters, the second version increased lead generation efforts by **over 13%**. This defies the typical marketing logic that *"FREE"* is always a winner. In cases of finding the appropriate senior care for mom or dad, people likely aren't thinking of price so much as comfort and convenience.

This is also an excellent example of a lead generation page, where the idea is to get names and email addresses *(or in this case, location information and housing type)* to follow up with prospects in the near future.

Viral Landing Page

This is the kind of page that everyone can't stop talking about or sharing *(hence "going viral")*. SMX, a huge search marketing conference, set about creating a *"Who's the Biggest Search Geek"* contest using the following landing page:

If you decided to play, you'd have to answer 20 questions correctly as quickly as possible. Once you finished, you'd be taken to a 9-field lead generation form:
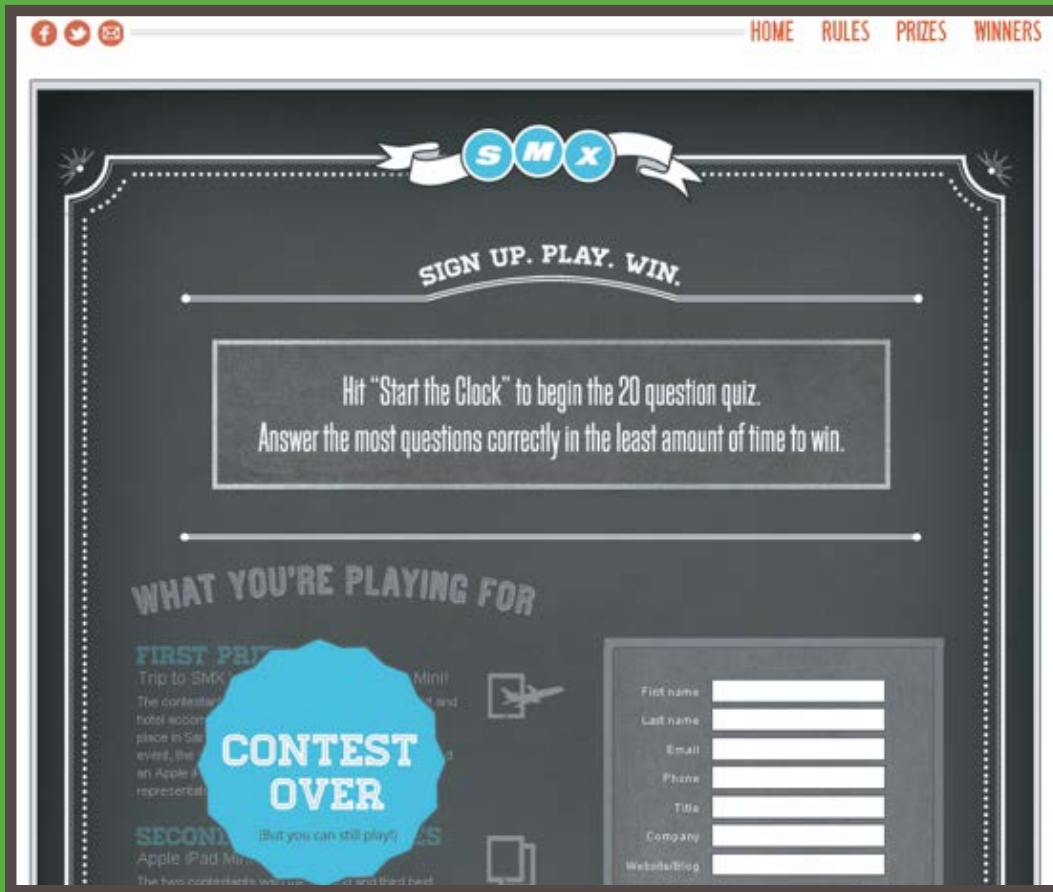
Of course, true search geeks love SMX and this was a great opportunity to prove their search-geek-worthiness. As you can see, a good landing page can be a hybrid of two different types — such as a lead gen page with a viral quiz-style quality.

Mobile Landing Page

A relative newcomer to the landing page herd, the mobile page is all about maximizing the message to fit into one extremely small screen space. As an example, the following email test from Philips Sonicare toothbrushes was sent out to mailing list subscribers. Since many of these users also viewed email from mobile devices, this case study won both an email testing and mobile testing award for its findings.

A friendly reminder to change your brush head — but also learn about good oral hygiene for kids, and the technology behind the toothbrush

A more concentrated version offering a reminder and a discount

If you guessed the second one won — you'd be correct, but what you might not know is that the Change with the Seasons version increased clicks by a whopping 371% and sales by an astounding **1,617%** *(no, that's not a typo!)*

This mobile landing page illustrates that simple is better — and that a large, tappable call-to-action button *(with a discount!)* will outperform a more basic *"newsletter style"* email on mobile phones *(and likely on desktops as well!)* Keep this in mind when crafting your mobile landing pages — simple and direct is best!

Microsite Landing Page

A microsite is, as its name implies, a small, well-timed website that corresponds to a central marketing campaign or message. The Centre for Arts and Technology launched microsite landing pages featuring their programs in merchandising and fashion design, along with sleek, well-presented pages that encouraged prospective students to find out more.

A more concentrated version offering a reminder and a discount

In these cases, the images — with bold headlines incorporating Fashion, Inspired and Vision to Life communicate the very things that fashion designers crave — a way to bring their inspirations to life. Microsite landing pages aren't typically limited to a single page, but have very few navigation options and all of them lead back to the central course of action *(in this case, lead generation)*.

Product Detail Landing Page

The final landing page type is especially important to e-commerce companies. Oftentimes when searching for a particular product, customers will inadvertently end up on the product detail page. For e-commerce sites, these sites need to do double-duty, as they work not only in conjunction with the main site, but also as standalone pages designed to encourage the customer to *"add to cart"*.

Card retailer Hallmark discovered this by testing its landing pages for custom card interiors. It wanted to let customers input a personal message in the card.

HERE WAS THE ORIGINAL DESIGN:

The variation changed four major things *(as opposed to typically changing one thing at a time to determine which aspect of the landing page has the most measurable impact)*. In the second version, the text explaining instructions was changed, as was the stylized arrow. The Start Now button was changed simply to *"Start"* and moved inside the message box:

This variation outperformed the original by increasing clicks to the personalization page by over 7% and overall sales conversions by 2%. That may not sound like a lot, but when you're a major retailer like Hallmark, 2% can equal hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Which Landing Page Type Should I Choose?

There is no one right choice or wrong choice. The type of landing page you choose should be a reflection of your business goals and your testing priorities. You can even incorporate the best elements from several varieties to create your own unique style and test that! A product detail page that also happens to be viral and mobile-friendly — why not?

In the next chapter, we'll be looking at how to drive qualified traffic to your landing pages — since once you have the ideal visitor in mind, it's time to convince them that your page is worth their time. Landing pages wither on the vine if not for qualified traffic — so we'll be looking at **five of the best ways** to bring that traffic in, and get it to convert!

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER ONE

DOWNLOAD PDF

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER THREE
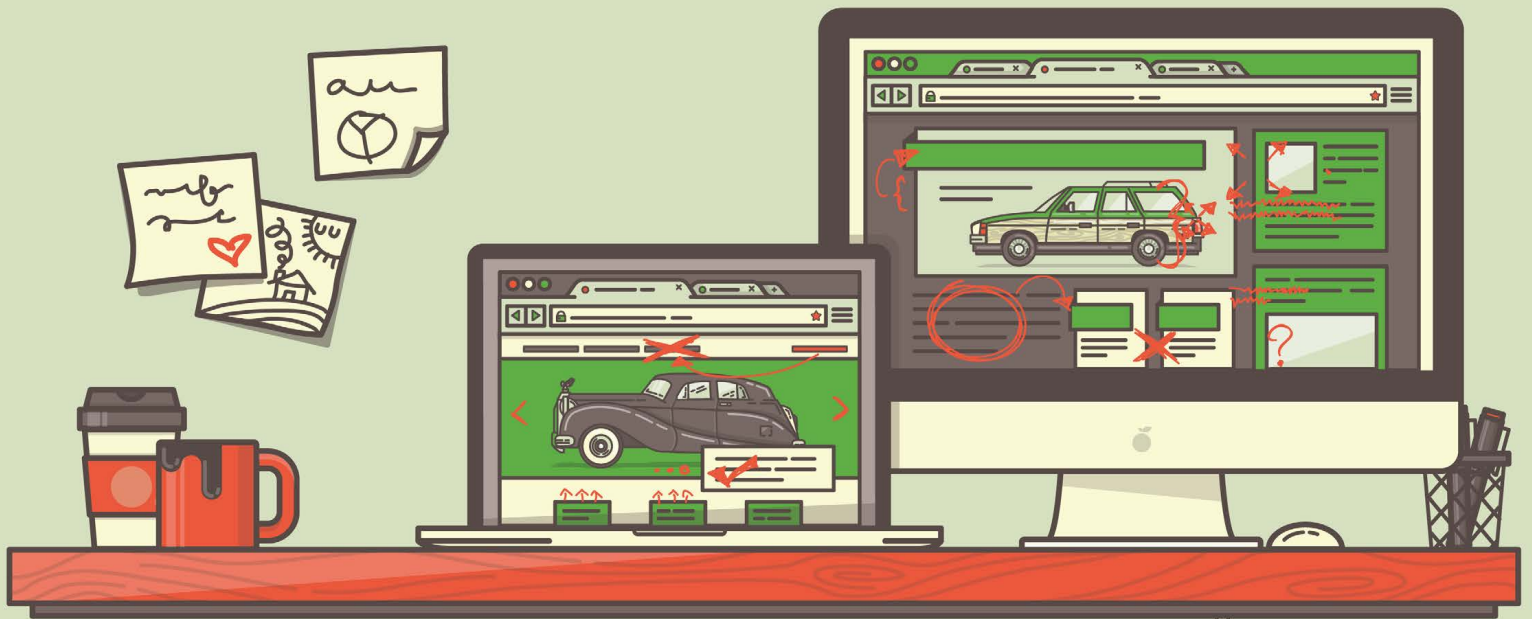
Landing Page OPTIMIZATION

WRITTEN BY NEIL PATEL & SHERICE JACOB

CHAPTER THREE

Optimizing Traffic for Higher Conversions

The best-designed landing page in the world won't do you any good without the targeted visitors to use it. We've already discussed how to pinpoint who those visitors are — now, **how do you reach them?**

There are a wide variety of traffic methods out there — some, like on-page optimization, are nearly as old as the web itself. Others are more recent. You don't have to use all these methods, but rather read the descriptions and case studies to choose the one that you feel would work best for your business goals.

LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT SOME OF THE BEST-PERFORMING TRAFFIC SOURCES AND HOW TO LEVERAGE THEM TO BENEFIT YOUR LANDING PAGES.

PPC/Paid Ads
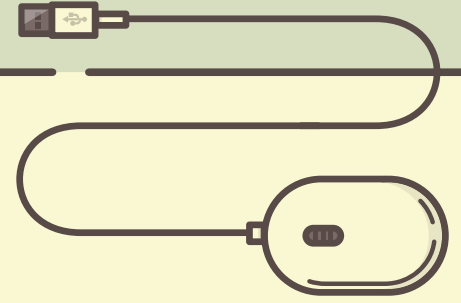
Pay Per Click ads were made hugely popular by Google — but they weren't the first to pioneer such a system — OpenText was, back in 1996. It quickly shuffled its paid listings after user outcry that paying for ads online was crossing the line. OpenText even highlighted its paid ads so that searchers could see the difference between them *(sound familiar?)*

A Brief History

In the late 1990s to early 2000s, major search engines *(at the time)* like Yahoo decided to charge an express fee to review and optionally accept or decline your site for listing in their search engine. At this time, you could still submit your site for free, but paid-to-review would attempt to shortcut the process by getting a human being to actually determine if your site *"qualified"*.

What made a site qualify? This was a grey area at best. There were no set standards or reasoning behind why one site would be listed, and another wasn't. Many business owners whose sites were declined felt that their competitors had an inside track or had somehow caused the editor's ruling to be skewed in their favor.

Needless to say, many perfectly good quality sites were declined, leading to significant negative online press for sites like Yahoo — so monetizing the search engine this way clearly wasn't working.

Google Introduces Quality Scoring

Google was the first search engine to change all of this — with its Quality Score. No longer were sites in the top of the rankings simply because they had the most links.

Adwords was originally launched as a cost-per-impression paid advertising solution at this time, with the top bidder being not only the site that threw the most money at Google, but also the one that had several other relevancy factors.

Google won't say precisely what these factors are, but its own algorithms are made up of a *"secret sauce"* of combinations that determine how well a site will rank. Quality scoring factors have changed over time, but it's still a significant indicator of a site's ad campaign success or failure.

After a brief stint as pay-per-impression, Google figured out that people would rather pay more to get their ad clicked on, rather than simply viewed. With the average ad costing 60 cents per click and millions of searches done per day — you do the math.

Not surprisingly, Yahoo and Bing also followed suit with ad networks of their own.

So How Do You Get Traffic?

Entire books can *(and have)* been written on getting the most from pay per click — but the idea all boils down to one simple question:

HOW MUCH IS EACH CLICK WORTH TO YOU?

No one can answer this for you, except you — so factor in things like:

▸ *Your average order value*
▸ *Your profit*
▸ *Your conversion rate (how many clicks ultimately become customers). You'll at least have some knowledge of this from setting up conversion goals in an earlier chapter.*

Getting started with Google Adwords, which currently has the lion's share of the market when it comes to pay-per-click ads, means that you'll also have to understand and monitor things like:

▸ *The best possible keywords to use for your ad(s) (more on that below)*
▸ *How to split test your ads and determine which ones perform best*
▸ *How to determine the likelihood that your ad will be clicked (first place is not always the best!)*
▸ *How well your ad copy converts, and so on…*

It's worth noting that you can also choose to have your Google ads shown on Google's Display Network, which will not only show your ads across Google itself, but also on its network of partner sites — equaling more exposure for your landing pages.

What's more, Adwords has become more than just the common text ads you see on — it has evolved to cover image ads, video and mobile as well, giving you a wide variety of options to choose from.

Choosing Keywords Carefully

Your keywords form the backbone of your PPC ad campaign — so choosing them wisely requires some research on your part. Fortunately, Google is at the ready with keyword suggestions, including how often they're searched and how much approximate competition you'll be facing.

The most important thing to remember about keywords is that the more specific the search, the greater the likelihood that the user is ready to buy. They'll type in longer words and phrases *(known as "long tail" keywords)*. The shorter keywords are often the ones with more competition, so targeting longer words and phrases is your opportunity to spend less, reach more and work smarter, not harder.

An example of a long tail search
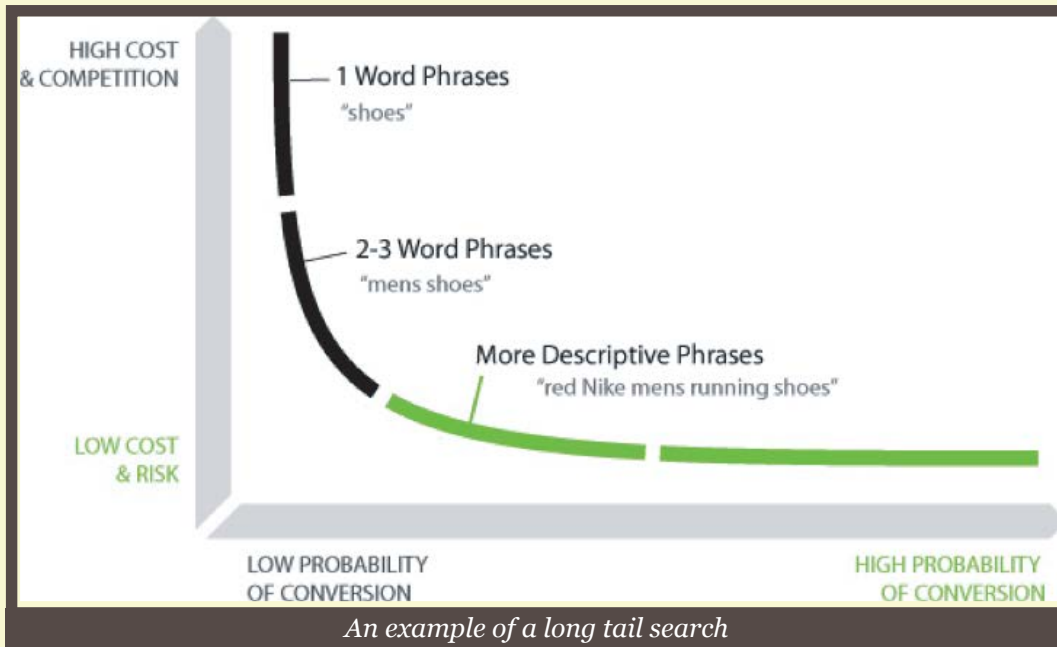
Now, the more specific searches will also mean that you'll get less clicks overall *(because let's face it, how many people are searching for men's red Nike running shoes right this minute?)*, but those that you do get will be highly targeted and in a buying state of mind.

And even after you've crafted a high quality, compelling ad to get the user to click — you're still not done, because this is where your landing pages will come into play. So how can you create a persuasive ad that gets clicks, and how do you make sure things flow seamlessly from the ad to the landing page?

Getting Started with PPC

The first step is to create an account with Adwords, Bing Adcenter, or your chosen PPC network. Once your account is created, you have to decide which portion of the network you want your ads shown on — just search or third party sites, or both?
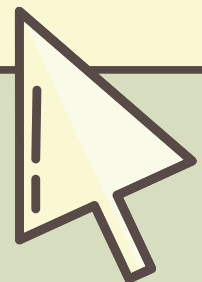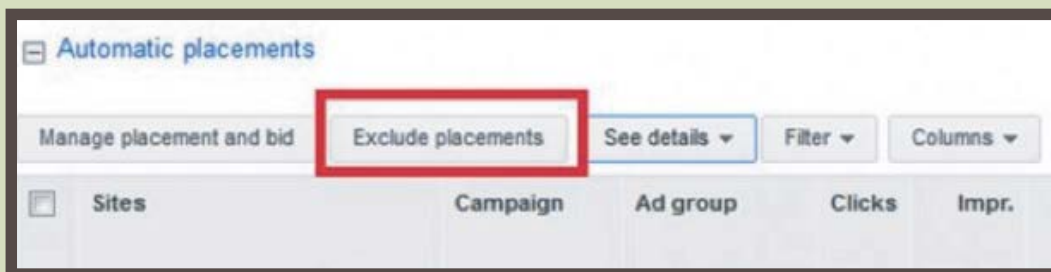
Google has recently released a **_"Display Select"_** option to replace the entire Display Network as a whole, because advertisers were choosing to opt out of the display network because of the questionable quality of sites included in it. This allows you, the advertiser, to more accurately pinpoint the types of sites that more closely match your target audience.

According to Google, initial tests with the Display Select network showed that **_"advertisers, on average, could see a 35% higher click-through rate and a 35% lower cost per customer purchase"_**.

In any case, it's absolutely crucial that you include Adwords conversion tracking. This lets you see conversion data for all the sites that are sending you traffic.

Clicks ▼	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	Cost	Avg. Pos	Conv. Rate	Cost/Conv.	Conversion
12,906	457,916	2.82%	£6.13	£79,125.42	2.5	3.67%	£167.27	47
11,276	800,311	1.41%	£2.27	£25,549.03	2.3	1.03%	£220.22	11
8,219	312,980	2.63%	£3.37	£27,733.51	2.3	1.14%	£294.98	9
3,241	103,025	3.15%	£5.35	£17,344.34	2.0	3.58%	£149.52	11
2,609	88,212	2.96%	£5.48	£14,302.17	2.0	6.09%	£89.95	15
1,104	61,175	1.80%	£1.78	£1,965.79	1.9	0.36%	£490.88	
813	24,992	3.25%	£2.53	£2,055.44	1.7	1.11%	£228.38	
625	39,601	1.58%	£2.52	£1,577.68	1.7	1.12%	£225.38	

You can then use this information to exclude poorly performing sites *(similar to how you can exclude specific keywords from showing your ads)*. **Under Display Network > Placements**, you'll find a tab where you can exclude specific sites:

| ⊟ Automatic placements					
Manage placement and bid	Exclude placements	See details ▼	Filter ▼		Columns ▼
☐ Sites	Campaign	Ad group	Clicks	Impr.	

Ad Sizes

It's also important that you incorporate a variety of banner ad sizes for use across the Adwords display network. The most common ones are:

- Mobile leaderboard: 320 x 50
- Banner: 468 x 60
- Leaderboard: 728 x 90
- Square: 250 x 250
- Small square: 200 x 200
- Large rectangle: 336 x 280
- Inline rectangle: 300 x 250
- Skyscraper: 120 x 600
- Wide skyscraper: 160 x 600

Ad Groups

From here, you can create specific ad groups targeting each theme or keyword group that you want to use to drive traffic to your landing pages. You can also split test different ad groups to see which ads perform best. Within these ad groups, you can also choose to display your address, user ratings of your company, or an image of a specific product.
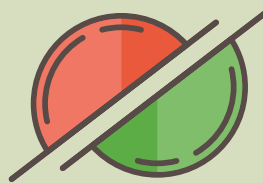
Tips for Getting the Most Out of PPC

There are a few ways that you can squeeze every last ounce of promotional juice from your Adwords budget:

▶ *Set a daily budget rather than a total budget (otherwise you could see your PPC budget drained within a few days depending on your settings!)*

▶ *Use exact match phrases [n brackets] wherever possible to attract people searching for that specific item. For instance, [ike mens running shoes] versus nike mens running shoes.*

▶ *If you have a physical storefront, add the Call and Map extensions to your ads to incorporate rich media through mobile and Google maps to allow people one-click access to driving directions and other features.*

▶ *Set aside a specific time when your target audience is most likely to be online, and use that time to show your ads.*

▶ *If you don't already have a Google Plus account, create one and incorporate the Google Plus button into your PPC ad.*

▶ *Leverage Google's own remarketing tool for improved conversion rates. This lets your ad show on network sites (right down to the specific product being viewed), even long after the customer has left your site. It's a great way to reel them back in with deals, a gentle reminder of what they viewed, and more.*

Not sure what to test on your new PPC landing pages? Here are a few case studies and examples you can learn from.

Inline Forms vs. Self-Segmentation

If a user came to your landing page and were given a choice as to which button to click versus filling out a form — which do you think they would react to? That was the question Iomega posed when crafting its landing pages.

On the first variation, they wanted to test and see if users would voluntarily self-segment themselves based on their network storage needs (*small business vs. enterprise*). The landing page was shorter and above the fold.

Self-segmentation lets people choose their own potential sales path

They then tested this against another more generic version with a catch-all inline form that promised a free network storage solution guide. This type of landing page was more **lead-gen oriented**:

A more generic inline form drives prospective lead generation

Perhaps most surprisingly, the variation with the inline form won by increasing lead gen efforts by **110%** — despite the fact that in many tests, self-segmentation usually converts better. The difference here was that Iomega was targeting PPC traffic, and these visitors typically tend to be in *"instant gratification"* mode. What's more, by carefully selecting the best possible keywords for each group, Iomega would have been able to more precisely target its landing pages accordingly.

It would be interesting to see a test wherein landing pages targeted to enterprise users vs. small business *(and both incorporating the lead gen form)* would have had better results.

Geographic Targeting

Beyond self-segmentation, you can also choose to target users by geographic location. Nationwide Insurance decided to target its landing pages based on the user's location. The results were a conclusive and significant uplift in conversions.

IF YOU'VE EVER WANTED TO GET AN INSURANCE QUOTE, YOU'VE LIKELY SEEN PAGES LIKE THIS:

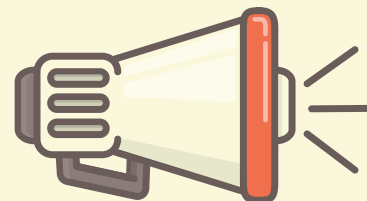**SIMPLE, RIGHT? BUT IF YOU LIVED IN A CHILLY AREA — WOULD THIS AD APPEAL TO YOU MORE?**

Fortunately, you can geo-target your ads in Google Adwords by country, specific areas within a country, or even a specific radius. Depending on what you're selling, a more personalized approach shows that you understand your customers and their specific needs.

I'm Talking to *"You"*

Speaking of personalization — how far should it go? What if you could target landing page ads to people with certain job titles? That's what Marketo wanted to find out when it ran this test. It created two versions of an ad — with a title of

"WHY YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT INBOUND MARKETING".

VERSUS "WHY CMOS SHOULD CARE ABOUT INBOUND MARKETING":

Did people respond more favorably to the title or to the *"You"* aspect? As it turns out — the *"You"* version increased click-throughs by 7% — which only serves to demonstrate that, even if the email marketing software got it wrong, and you're NOT a CMO — you can still benefit from learning about inbound marketing, so it becomes a win-win for both the company and the individual clicking the ad.

Left vs. Right

Even the smallest thing can make the biggest impression when it comes to landing page ads. Here's one from Hyland, which tested the exact same content — but only switched the image placement.

The first version showed the text/image to the left, with the download report field on the right, while the other landing page reversed the placement:
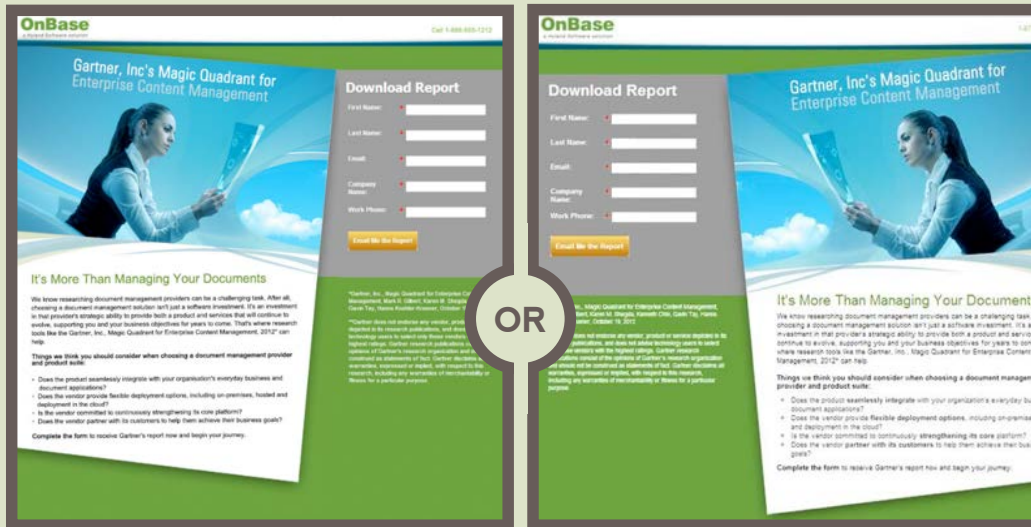
If you think that *"best practices"* dictate that opt-in forms should always go on the right — you'd be wrong in this case — since the left-aligned form field increased opt-ins by 11% — with no other options changed on the page.

Now, does this mean that you should now suddenly change your opt-in form fields to all be left-aligned instead? **No** — the answer is to test and see what works best in your unique situation. Best practices are just that — best practices in that particular instance, for that particular company.
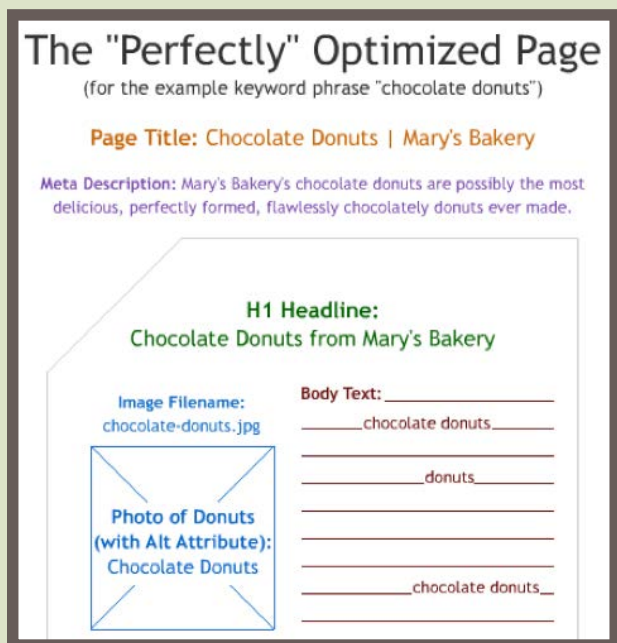
So now that you know how to better create an uninterrupted flow between your ads and your landing pages — what can you do to optimize the landing pages themselves? You already know how a landing page should ideally be structured, but are there any search engine tips and tricks to improve your rankings overall and boost your quality score?

AS IT TURNS OUT — MOST DEFINITELY.

On-Page Optimization Factors

To help your ads convert better, there are also several on-page optimization factors to consider. Take, for example, this hypothetical web page about chocolate donuts:

The "Perfectly" Optimized Page
(for the example keyword phrase "chocolate donuts")

Page Title: Chocolate Donuts | Mary's Bakery

Meta Description: Mary's Bakery's chocolate donuts are possibly the most delicious, perfectly formed, flawlessly chocolately donuts ever made.

H1 Headline:
Chocolate Donuts from Mary's Bakery

Image Filename:
chocolate-donuts.jpg

Photo of Donuts
(with Alt Attribute):
Chocolate Donuts

Body Text: _____
_____ chocolate donuts _____
_____ donuts _____
_____ chocolate donuts _

WHAT DO YOU NOTICE?

▶ *There's a strong H1 headline using the targeted keyword*

▶ *There's a relevant image with accompanying alt text to describe it.*

▶ *The image filename contains the keywords that the page hopes to rank for*

▶ *Body text incorporates the targeted keyword and close variations*

Now, keep in mind that the example above isn't a landing page in the strictest sense *(there's no call to action, for example)*, but it still incorporates the kind of on-page optimization factors that Google and other search engines are looking for.

Landing pages incorporate many of these features, but they also have several other points that can bolster their rankings:

SEO-Friendly URLs (Permalinks)

Long gone are the days of long, ugly strings of code in URLs. Why would someone visit `www.yoursite.com/shoes/0098838d9rrxbl3492/0080472342188/` when a URL like `www.yoursite.com/shoes/nike/mens/running/` seems to fit their needs more accurately?

If you're using a content management system like Wordpress, you can automatically create keyword rich page names through its system of Permalinks. These are just different ways that the content management program will link to individual posts or pages of content.

And whether you're running a blog or an e-commerce store, having URLs with keywords in them will more than likely rank your page higher than random computer URL gibberish that only your inventory database understands:

An example of a search engine friendly URL at Zappos

A not-so-friendly URL for the same search at Dick's Sporting Goods

Rich Multimedia

Incorporating rich multimedia — such as videos or even colorful charts and graphs can make a significant difference in improving your landing page's on page optimization factors. People's eyes are magnetically attracted to beautiful images — so professional-grade videography or crisp, easy-to-scan graphics can increase the time the user spends on the page, interacting with your promotional materials.

Page Loading Speed

Loading speed is another issue that affects ranking. The faster your page loads, the more likely users are going to stay and engage with it. A slower loading page will cause visitors to leave on account of having to wait.

If you're serving up a lot of images, multimedia or other heavy, slower loading elements on your page, it may pay to invest in a CDN or Content Delivery Network. Rather than having one set of pages on one server which people connect to and wait to download on their own computers, a CDN makes multiple, synched versions of your content available at different data servers around the world, serving the one that is geographically closest to the requestor *(the visitor)* so that page load time is faster. Because cost of bandwidth is also a factor, CDNs generally choose an option that is both geographically close and relatively inexpensive to deliver.

Long Tail Keywords

Here again, long tail, specific keywords are a factor in how well your page can rank. By using these keywords in your text in a way that looks and reads natural to a human being, you are sending the search engine signals that this information is both specific and valuable.

By incorporating related keywords such as the year, *"reviews"*, *"guides"*, *"walkthroughs"* and *"tutorial"*, you'll also be letting search engines know that your site is a credible, information-rich source of details for visitors. And because search engines thrive on relevancy, the longer users stay on your page, the more that it counts as a *"vote"* toward your site being a legitimate source of information for that inquiry. A win-win for both you and the search engine!

Page Content Length

Finally, page content length is another factor — although ideally, the longer the page, the more informative the search engines sees it as, landing pages don't always have this luxury. That's why, as a next step into your site and thus, your sales funnel, you may want to provide a longer, more detailed description of what the customer is actually getting after they move past the landing page itself.

Other Types of Advertising

So far, we've discussed pay-per-click landing pages and search engine optimization factors that can help with getting traffic to your landing pages — but what about other forms of advertising? For newer websites who are just getting started with landing page optimization, one has to take into account which methods will result in the most targeted traffic for the least amount of budget spent?

Two of the better methods to help you launch your landing pages right from the start beyond search engines are **Solo/Native ads** and **Facebook ads**.

Solo/Native Ads

Solo ads and native ads are lumped together in this instance because they share a lot of similarities. Solo ads, simply put, **are standalone ads that typically run in e-zines or newsletters**. These types of ads are best done in newsletters that you yourself receive and trust, rather than one of the many solo ad networks online. Typically these sites offer both free and paid variations depending on the cost per impression to share your solo ad across their networks — but your results may vary *(particularly if you opt for the free route)*.

That's why it's better to reach out to ezine and newsletter publishers with small to medium sized *(but highly targeted)* lists to inquire about placing an ad. As their name implies, the *"solo"* part of the ad means that your ad will be the only one shown, thus making the placement a bit more expensive than a typical sponsored newsletter, but also helping to ensure that the spotlight is solely on your business.

In the same vein are native ads — which are ads that are ingeniously disguised as part of the piece they're embedded in. In the magazine publishing world these are known as advertorials, and it's difficult to distinguish them from outright published pieces.
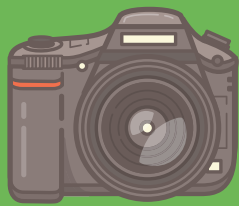
One site well known for its native ads is everyone's favorite time-waster, Buzzfeed. As you'll see from the example below, Buzzfeed showcases instagrammers that you should totally be following. It also highlights the hashtag **#LIFEASPHOTO** on Tumblr. What you may not realize is that the entire front page in sponsored by Samsung and the Samsung Galaxy Camera.

To its credit, Buzzfeed does mention this in the first paragraph, as well as the reasoning behind their choice of photographers *(who were given Samsung cameras)*.

Another example of native advertising appeared in a UK health magazine:

As you can see, the only giveaway about this *"article"* on rosehips to treat joint damage is the note at the upper right about *"to advertise in this section"*. It looks and reads just like a real magazine article, doesn't it?

And as a result of this, you'll get people who are either enthralled with the idea *(since advertising that doesn't look like advertising is much more likely to get more interest and discussion)* or who feel deceived by it.

Getting Started with Native Ads

There are a handful of ad networks specializing in native ad displays — most notably:

- *DedicatedMedia.com*
- *ShareThrough.com*
- *OutBrain.com*

Which Types of Ads Do Best?

There are several types of native ads out there — ranging from blog posts to videos. A study was done to determine which types of native ads were most effective according to publishers — these were the results:
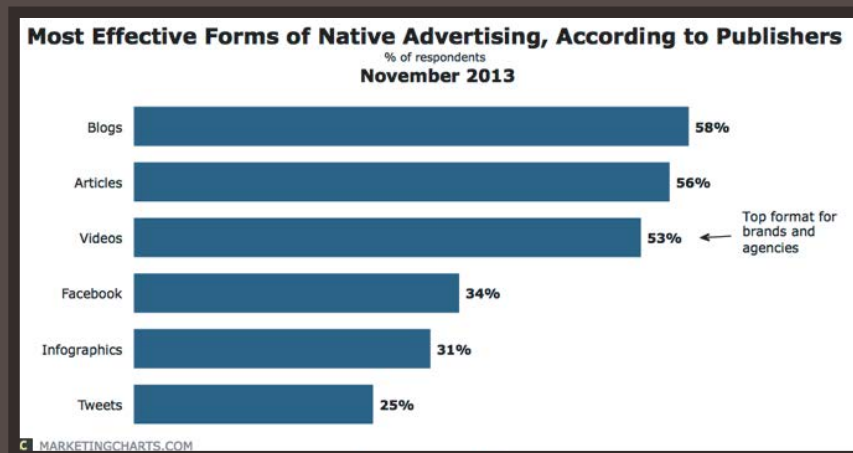
If you decide to promote through native ads, there are a few points to keep in mind to make it as successful as possible, without leaving your potential customers feeling like they've been betrayed by a slick promotion-disguised-as-content:

Focus Your Content

Remember, you're writing to be genuinely helpful and laser-focused on your audience. Think more in terms of content that provides value rather than advertising that provides content.

Remember Your Advertiser

Your content should blend in easily with the advertiser on whose site it's appearing. As with any other content marketing objective, your job is to entertain, enlighten, educate and engage. Find out what your advertiser's goals are for their own site, and align yours to fit in with those goals, while still marketing yourself.

Be Transparent

The line between native advertising and actual articles can be blurry at best. For some consumers, this crosses the line of trust that they have established with the magazine or site you're advertising on. Ask the advertiser what they do (and what you can do) to make certain that you're not crossing that line in their readers' minds.

Native Advertising & Conversion Rates

The Telegraph ran a newspaper-style banner ad with two different layout styles. Which do you think got the highest click-through rate?

A full-page ad promoting a contest to win a trip to San Diego

*A **"Sponsored Features"** daily deals split ad*

The single item, slideshow-style ad greatly outperformed the split-style ad *(exact numbers were withheld but they were promised as being very impressive!)*. Not only does this force the user to pay attention to a single area, but also reads less like an ad, and more like a featured story embedded within the day's news.

CLEVER, ISN'T IT?

Facebook Ads

By far the area of Facebook that gets the most attention is the News Feed. In the case of Facebook mobile, there's not even a sidebar on the right, so any ads that would ordinarily appear there get no love from mobile users — and considering that mobile ads earn up to 2.5 times more than standard desktop ads — that's a lot of potential going right down the drain.

The first step to advertising on Facebook is to have an account with them. Creating a business account is different than a personal account in that there are no individual profiles and business accounts can manage separate pages. You can have a business account on Facebook with or without a separate personal account.

Your new business account can fit one of six choices. Choose the one that most accurately represents your company:
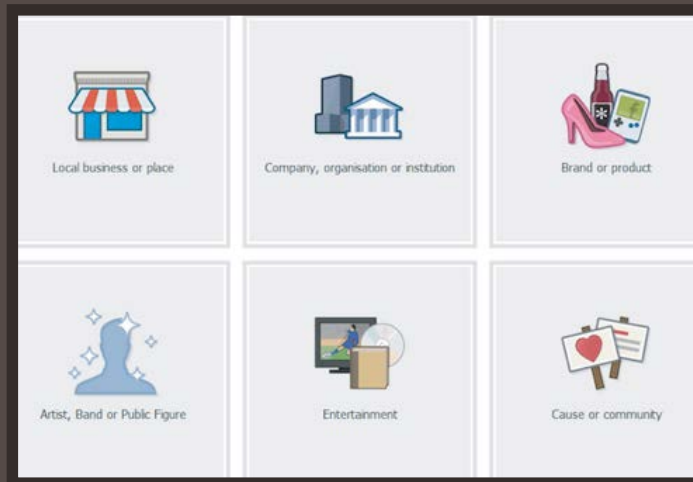
Then just click Create Ads to start using Facebook's advertising tools.

Starting an Ad Campaign

You'll first choose your ad format before you create a campaign. The *"What would you like to do?"* section offers several choices, including:

- *Getting more page likes*
- *Promoting page posts*
- *Attracting new users*
- *Increasing attendance (for an event)*
- *Custom ad options (advanced)*

There are currently 24 different types of advertising available on Facebook Fortunately, the site does a good job of walking you through the different types by letting you make the choices that make sense for your advertising goals. The first choice you'll need to make is to decide whether or not your ad should be shown as the *"voice of the company"* or through the *"voice of a friend"*.

Ads can be customized to display the precise message you want, while attracting the type of audience you're looking for, while Sponsored Stories are messages from friends and fans that demonstrate how they engage with the company. You can choose to promote these types of stories, thereby increasing the chances that others will see them.

From here, you have a number of options — some of which are illustrated below *(images source: SocialBakers)*

Types of Facebook Ads – Voice of Business

For businesses that choose the typical *"ad"* style of Facebook advertisement versus Sponsored Stories, there are a variety of sub-categories to choose from. Let's look at the benefits and types of each one.
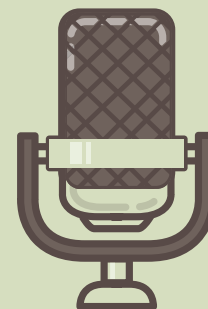
Simple Ads Page Post Text Ad

Probably one of the simplest types of ads — these can appear on the sidebar *(desktop ads)* or in the newsfeed *(mobile ads)* with varying results. Sidebar ads are limited to 90 characters, while newsfeed ads feature up to 500. Similarly, advertisers can use this type of format to also promote videos, images or links rather than just text.

Best Used For: customer acquisition, brand awareness, increasing page likes.
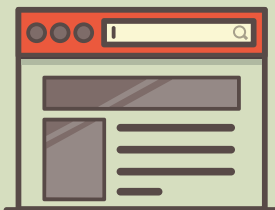
Page Like Ad

Another standard style of Facebook ad, this style is most commonly used to increase page likes. Keep in mind that ad text is limited to 90 characters, so having a strong call to action which increases the likelihood of a *"like"* is very important here.

Best Used For: Customer acquisition, page likes.

Domain Ad

Similar to a Page Like ad, except clicking it takes you to the site's domain rather than the Facebook page. Titles are limited to 20 characters and text to 90 characters. Fortunately, you can conduct a variety of A/B split tests using a combination of images, titles and text to determine which type of domain ad best resonates with your target audience.

Offer Ad

A very popular choice for giveaways, the offer ad is limited to 90 characters and is ideal for reaching out to your target audience with a coupon or discount that may not be available anywhere else.

Best Used For: customer acquisition, branding and loyalty, customer retention.

Question Ad

A straightforward survey-style ad which lets businesses do basic market research with their target audience. Polls will only show the first three answers, unless they're in the news feed which will show four at most. Sidebar ads will show either two or three questions depending on the range of answers.

Best Used For: Market research, customer insights.

Event Ad

Event ads are best reserved for right sidebar placement as opposed to the newsfeed as you get 90 characters of text, versus a simple title / event date / location / time information that would appear in the newsfeed.

Best Used For: Event awareness, customer acquisition.

App Ad

This type of ad is ideal if you're promoting a Facebook app, and you want to encourage users to download and install it *(by clicking the **"Use Now"** link)*. This type of ad is also limited to 90 characters.

Best Used For: Increasing engagement, customer loyalty.

Mobile App Install Ad
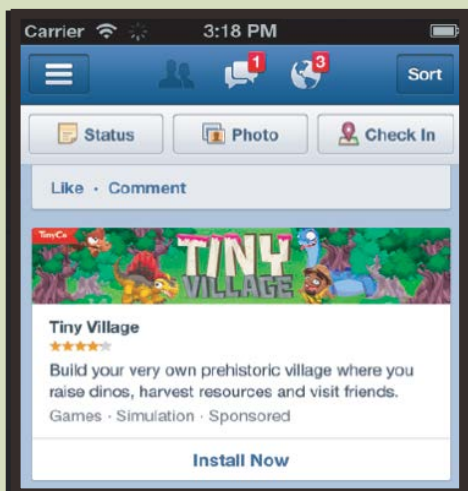
If you want to promote your mobile app *(different than a Facebook app)*, the mobile app install ad is ideal. The image is taken directly from the app store, and there's a 160 character limit — so choose your words wisely!

Best Used For: Mobile customer engagement.

Sponsored Results

Sponsored results helps put your page front and center of any queries the user types in Facebook's search box.

Best Used For: Brand awareness, customer acquisition, page likes.

Types of Facebook Ads: *"Voice of Friend"* or Sponsored Stories

Sponsored stories use the leverage of friends to do the heavy lifting when it comes to increasing engagement. Many of the styles of ads are much like the more business-style ads noted above, except they include the interaction of friends where available. *(Images source: SocialBakers)*
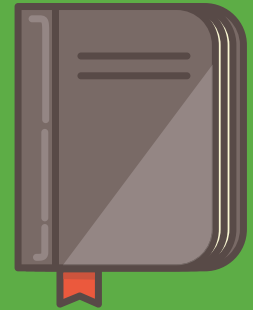
Page Like Sponsored Story

Similar to the page like ad, any friends who like this particular page will make it also display in your newsfeed or sidebar.

Best Used For: Page likes, customer acquisition, brand loyalty.

Page Post Sponsored Story

This type of ad shows when a friend likes a particular post on a business' Facebook page. In this illustrated example, the post is actually a photo album.

Best Used For: Customer engagement, Event awareness.

Survey Question Sponsored Story

Similar to the survey question, this sponsored story includes your friends' responses in showcasing the answers.

Best Used For: Market research, customer engagement, customer acquisition.

Offer Claim Sponsored Story
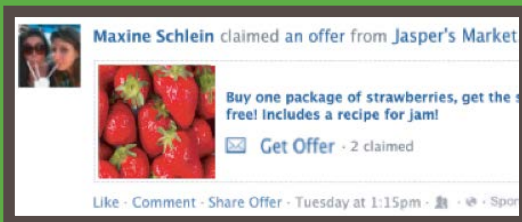
If a friend claims an offer, other friends on their list will know about it through this type of sponsored story, and can also choose to get the offer or share it with their friends.

Best Used For: Coupons and discounts, customer engagement.

Event Sponsored Story
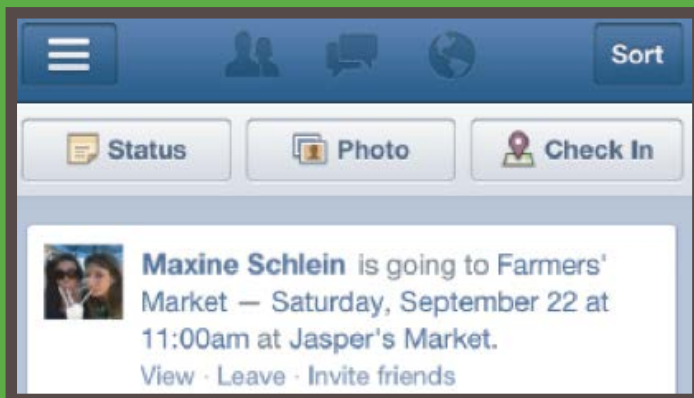
This type of ad is ideal for local events and festivals, and will notify friends that someone they know is going to attend. Users who see this ad can view it, leave *(if they originally posted they would be attending)* or invite their friends.

Best Used For: Market research, event awareness, branding and loyalty.

Check-In Sponsored Story

Similar to an event notification, the check-in sponsored story lets customers check in to a location *(similar to Foursquare)* and leave a comment about their experience. Others than then like or comment on the check-in.

Best Used For: Event attendance, customer acquisition, customer engagement.

Game Played Sponsored Story
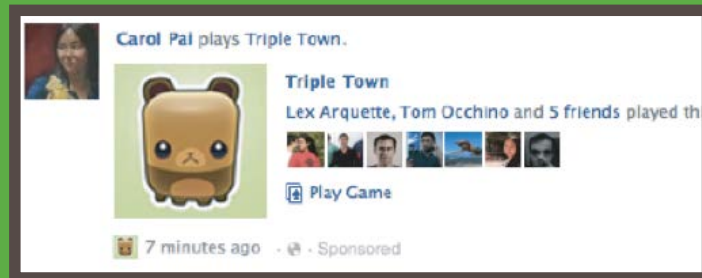
If you're promoting a Facebook game, you can use this type of sponsored story to let players' friends know that they were playing, or even down to the specific action they took in the game.

Best Used For: brand awareness, customer acquisition.

App Used Sponsored Story

Similar to the mobile app Facebook ad, this type of Sponsored Story incorporates a friend's feedback on an app, encouraging others to join in and see what the fuss is about.

Best Used For: customer acquisition, customer engagement.

Domain-Based Sponsored Story

This type of ad is used to encourage friends to visit and like a page on a website beyond Facebook.

Best Used For: Website promotion, blog promotion.

Next Steps: Choosing Your Demographic, Setting Pricing & Scheduling Your Ad

The next steps in getting your ad ready for prime time are to select your ideal demographic. You can target by countries, age range, gender, exact interests, broad categories of interests, the person's connections and their friends:

Facebook will also give you an estimate of how many people *(approximately)* match your desired campaign traits.

Beyond this step, you'll then be asked to schedule and pay for your ad:

You can give your campaign a name or use an existing campaign if you'd like to split test two campaigns to see which one performs better. You can also set a budget and schedule a start/end date, or continuously run the ad.

Tips for Creating Your First Facebook Ad

When creating your first ad, it's best to start with your existing fans and create a simple free offer that gives them something valuable in exchange for their name and email address. Not only will it show how many people claimed the offer, but you can also turn the offer into a promoted post via your Page wall settings and pin it to the top of your wall for added exposure:

An important note to make here is that you should choose your text carefully — Any image-based ad can have a text overlay, but the text can't take up more than 20% of the total ad image itself. Going over this limit will mean that your ad won't be approved for showing in the news feed.

What If I Don't Have Any Fans Yet?

If you're just starting to build out your Facebook page — you can place a simple *"Like"* ad. In the case of these ads, they do appear to work well in the right sidebar as opposed to just the news feed.

These ads will let people like your page and help you build up a community of friends and followers. This is a great opportunity to leverage that professional-grade video you've been holding on to, as new fans want a quick introduction and will always have a *"who are you and why should I pay attention to you"* mindset over anything else.

Creating Your Facebook Ad

When crafting your ad, you want to carefully consider the image used and the message you're trying to convey. One safe school program tested two different versions of a Facebook ad to see which one would get greater response:

The second ad increased click-throughs by a whopping 2,666% *(no, that's not a misprint!)* — and here's likely the reason why:

It invites parents and the community to be part of the solution, while letting them know how their involvement benefits students. Plus, a call to action to **"Learn More"** invites engagement right from the start. Remember, you have limited space in which to add text, so choose your words carefully!

Increasing Conversions with Facebook Ads

So you've got your promoted post, sponsored story or like ads set up — and you're ready to start reeling in potential customers to your landing pages. One of the ways to quickly build up traffic is to target your ads using a Facebook feature called Custom Audiences. This lets you upload your email list or list of your customers' mobile phone numbers and then precisely target those customers through Facebook.
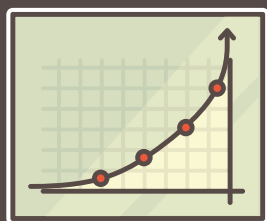
As an added bonus, when you select custom audiences in Facebook's ad management dashboard, you can also choose Lookalike Audiences, which will help you reach out to people who are similar to your custom audience in terms of things like their knowledge of the brand, their geographic location, similar offers they've claimed, etc.

Once you've built up a solid fan base of 5,000 or more followers, you should start seeing your cost-per-click going down, and your conversion rates going up when you precisely target fans with ads.

But how do you create that engagement to begin with? Here are a few ways to build up your community:

Quotes from industry leaders
powerful quotes from people who are leading the pack in your industry are always a hit. Plus, they provide much-needed inspiration or motivation to followers.

Use images to tell a story
Maybe you have a crazy client story that started out a real nightmare and ended up becoming wildly successful? With their permission, of course, you could share this story and invite your followers to share their own experiences.

Fill in the Blank / Caption the Photo
This is always a fun way to pass a little time (and Facebook users are all about fun!) so encouraging them to caption an interesting or funny photo or fill-in-the-blank is sure to get a larger number of responses.

Get Feedback
Just finished the first draft of your new ebook or video? Ask customers if they'd like a preview copy in exchange for a like! This is also a valuable way to get feedback from the very people you're trying to reach.

Always Ask Yourself "What do My Fans Get Out of This?"
In other words, why should they pay attention, let alone participate in what you're sharing? If you don't know the answer — neither do they!

So there you have it — the quickest ways to start getting targeted traffic to your landing pages. But all that targeted traffic won't convert as well unless you've matched up the ad with your landing page. You already know about how to layout, prioritize tests and now even advertise to get people to your pages — so what should actually go on the pages themselves?

In other words, how do you make a landing page that sells without the pressure? That's what we'll be looking at in chapter four, which is all about visitor psychology and understanding not just what makes people click, but drives the underlying motivation that encourages them to interact with your landing pages in the first place.

That being said, there are some fascinating insights here that you won't want to be without — keep reading for all the juicy details.

Landing Page OPTIMIZATION

WRITTEN BY NEIL PATEL & SHERICE JACOB

CHAPTER FOUR

What Makes a Visitor Convert?

So far, we've covered a lot of ground on optimizing landing pages, despite not having focused very much on the creation of the page itself. This is often where an inordinate amount of time is spent — tweaking little aesthetic details and such — when the real bulk of your time should be spend on the person making the decision to click.

Oftentimes with landing pages, people put a great deal of emphasis on the product or service being sold, when the truth is — it's actually a very small part of the overall picture, particularly when you're just starting to create your landing pages.

Push aside all those lists of features, benefits, "reasons why" and other details for a moment. The only important thing to focus on right now is see your offer the way your prospect sees it:

▶ *What (unanswered) questions do they have about the product, the person or the company behind the product?*

▶ *What past experience(s) do they have with similar products?*

▶ *What points about your product or offer are the most appealing to them?*

▶ *How can the product take them from where they are now, to where they want to be?*

The Benefit Myth

One of the biggest misconceptions in writing to address all these issues are that if you simply display a list of benefits, the customer will be eating out of your hand. After all – benefits are a powerful motivator, right?

NOT EXACTLY.

And I realize that's contrary to probably everything you've ever read about online marketing or copywriting.

Because benefits alone can't power the sale beyond the landing page. You have to have a motivator — a proverbial kick in the digital pants to get the prospect unstuck and actively *(not passively)* engaged with your offer, and a laundry list of benefits isn't going to cut it.

You've got to give them something beyond the offer itself something intangible but powerful. And the way you do that is by understanding what the root motivations are that cause people to act:

Fear is a Powerful Motivator

Fear — the need for safety, security, care and shelter powers many of our core decisions. The *"what if's"* start to seep into our minds and create all kinds of unfortunate scenarios — none of which we want to see happen.

All you have to do to see fear as a motivator in action is to turn on the evening news — there's fear about the job market, fear about the stock market, the list goes on and on... Closer to home, we fear losing the ones we love, paying the rent/mortgage on time, or whether or not we're doing this thing called *"life"* the right way.

Many landing pages hint at fear by pushing all the prospect's pain buttons. It's best to be careful with this motivator though, as it's very much like playing with fire. Too little fear, and the user doesn't take your offer seriously *("that could never happen to me!")* Too much fear, and the negativity jars their focus away from what you have to say.

Case in point — United Agencies West conducted an email subject line test in the hopes of increasing open rates. They tested a fear based versus a *"how-to"* based subject line. Which one would you be more likely to click?

$20 MILLION DOLLAR HOMES BURNED TO THE GROUND

OR

**PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM WILD FIRES
BRUSH FIRE SEASON IS COMING**

The first subject line, about $20,000,000 homes burned to the ground, increased leads by 65% for the insurer. Prospects rationalize that if million-dollar-mansions aren't protected from brush fires, chances are their home isn't either — and it motivates them to not only see the potential damage, but also protect themselves from it.

The best way to create a fear-based motivator in your landing page is to ask yourself – what is the deepest, most unspoken fear that my customer really has about my offer? Is it the fear that things ultimately won't work out? That they'll never get something *(or someone)* back? That they'll lose or fail?

Whatever the answer is — **how does your product address and calm that fear, specifically? What would make the customer shift from a mood of uncertainty and anxiety to one of calm hopefulness and confidence?**

Urgency is a Powerful Motivator

The need to act quickly is another strong motivator. However, most landing pages misuse urgency terribly — in the sense that *"there are only 10 copies of this e-book left"* when we all know that it's a digital good and you have an unlimited supply.

DON'T BE THAT KIND OF MARKETER.

Not only does it cheapen your offer, but it also positions you as a fly-by-night cash-grabber who sets artificial limits where there shouldn't be any. Had this been 1997 and e-books were new and novel, it may have been a sleek practice — but now it only serves to make you look dumb.

Instead, leverage urgency not in terms of time, but in terms of what will happen if the user doesn't act right now. What might they be missing out on by choosing to take no action at all? That kind of thought could even potentially lead to the fear motivator above.

We humans like our comfort zone and are none too keen to step out of it. By pushing the boundaries and showing life *(or a great offer)* passing us by, we're urged to step up and claim it. Some sites, like Groupon, use both time and offer urgency to create compelling deals:

▸ *You have X hours/minutes/seconds left to buy*

▸ *X number of your friends or other people have already bought this deal (what are they getting that I'm not?)*

▸ *X number of coupons have already been sold out of Y available*

So you see, not only do they use time itself as a motivator, but also the sense that *"you'll be left out"* if you don't act now.

The Disney Vault is another example of this practice at work:

Periodically, Disney films will be made available and then put in the vault for several years, until it is re-released *(usually in another format, such as Blu-Ray or 3D)*.

Although they could technically make and sell an unlimited number of movies, they voluntarily choose to limit the amount of time a specific movie is available, thus increasing its scarcity and in turn, its value. Thanks to the internet, people have bought up several copies of movies headed to the vault, and then resold them on auction sites like eBay for an extraordinary amount of money when they're no longer available in stores.

What If I'm Selling a Digital Product?

In both cases because they're selling tangible items, they can successfully set a limit on the number of coupons or movie availability. For digital products, most people assume that there will always be an unlimited number available, so it's worth testing your landing page's urgent call to action to kindle whatever issue caused the user to search for and find your page in the first place.

Last-Minute Deals
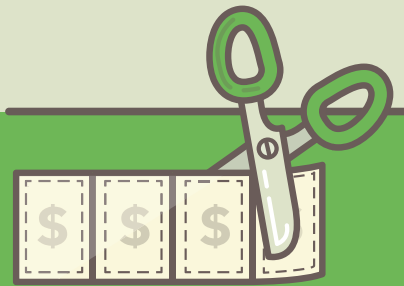
Another popular choice for landing pages is the last-minute deal. Netherlands travel site *Kras.nl* discovered this when it split tested two choices on its sidebar — one for the most popular vacation destinations:

And one for last-minute deals:

"Last Minutes" outperformed *"popular vacations"* by **58%**, however, because last minute deals are typically inexpensive, revenues for Kras.nl only increased by 2%. Still, had the site been an affiliate-based landing page, the click-through and conversion rate alone would have made it a definite winner.

With all the Groupons, Living Socials and Disney Vault-style promotions out there — customers expect to find last minute savings — and if you don't give it to them, they'll simply try to find it somewhere else.

Results are a Powerful Motivator

Knowing what to expect is a powerful motivator against uncertainty or a lack of confidence. Too many times we become disappointed because a landing page's promises deliver a product that doesn't live up to the hype. You can blame this on over-zealous promotion or simply a flaky offer, but the end result is the same — the customer is not satisfied.

That's why showing results *(either in the form of experience, social proof or testimonials)* can be so valuable. Just by knowing that others have been where you are, had the same questions, or came from the same starting point gives us a feeling of calm and comfort.

Case in point — Wikijob is a site that helps prepare people for real life careers through aptitude testing. They wanted to split test whether or not testimonials made a difference in sales. The first page *(seen below)* had no testimonials, while the second one did. Could a few lines really make that much of a difference?

Simple praises like those had a staggering effect on sales – to the tune of an increase in sales of **34%.**

Although there were no names, photos or user IDs associated with the testimonials, their quick, up-front style showed that people using the site were getting the desired results, without having to gush on and on about how great the site is. Certain long-form testimonials like those can actually backfire if you're not careful!

So with this in mind — results are a key factor in motivating people to act, whether it's:

- *Social proof*
- *Testimonials*
- *Before/After Photos*
- *Earnings statements*
- *Charts and graphs*

All of them are a testament to the solidity and value of your offer, and should be tested to see how your audience responds.

Of course, once you get people sufficiently motivated enough to click-through, there's the rest of the sales funnel they'll inevitably fall into. A great deal of care often goes into getting that click — but what's the next step?

It's All About Relevance

Fortunately, optimizing at each stage for the most relevancy not only has a great ripple effect on your search engine rankings, but also ensures that your visitor finds themselves nodding affirmatively to everything you're writing — as if you wrote it just for them. And that's exactly the kind of impression you want to convey!

SO HOW DO WE DO IT?

Optimizing the Sales Funnel

With landing page optimization, it's time to take a serious look at your sales funnel and where visitors may be slipping through the cracks. The typical sales funnel looks something like this:

AWARENESS

INTEREST

CONSIDERATION

INTENT

EVALUATION

PURCHASE
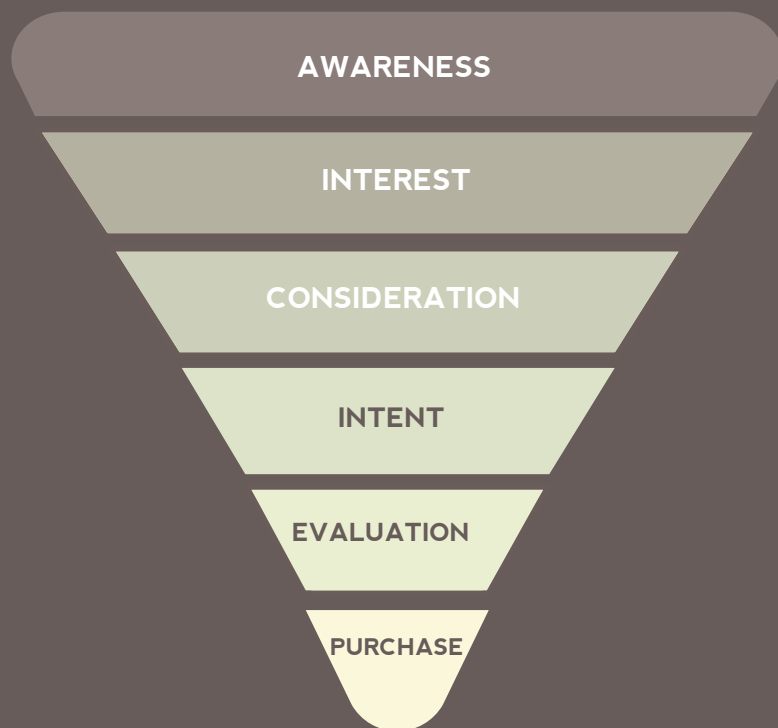
Having landing pages for each step of the process is vital to capturing the largest share of targeted customers no matter where they are in the buying process:

Awareness

At this point, the potential customer is just learning about your brand or your site. Maybe they heard about you through another blog or link. They don't have an opinion one way or the other about you. The goal of your landing page should therefore be to demonstrate your expertise in a way that can benefit them and help them with their question, concern or frustration.

Leveraging any existing trust that the customer has brought with them from the referring site *(for example, if it's a well-known news site or a leader in your industry)* can be definite plus, since that built-in authority carries over subconsciously and gives you a much warmer reception with the prospect than if they had simply found you through a search engine.

Interest

By this point, the customer has heard of you and may be in the market for your offer, but they haven't started to seriously weigh the pros or cons or decide either way. So far, however, your headline or your ad has captured their attention — so you now need to build it up with bullet points that are easy to scan and pull the customer deeper into your site.

Your landing page could entice them to do this through a free trial *("no credit card required" is a great confidence booster here)*, a download or some other high quality giveaway that gives them just enough information to whet their appetite and take them through to the next stage, which is...

Consideration

The prospect has learned about you, and they're interested in what you have to offer, so at this point they're seriously considering doing business with you or otherwise taking the action you want. So far, it has been green lights all the way — so your landing page will need to carry on these feelings by mentioning any security/service/transaction safety seals, your guarantee and any other points that will make them more comfortable and confident.

Intent

At this point, the customer knows that you're the one they want to do business with. They may be looking to make sure their decision is a valid one — so your landing page for this segment should incorporate testimonials that convince them to take that coveted action.

Be sure to let them know what happens after they order, as many *'thank you'* pages fail to do more than just thank the customer. Do this **BEFORE** the thank you page. Answer questions like:

▸ *How soon will my order be shipped?*
▸ *If it's a digital product, how do I download it?*
▸ *What should I do if I have questions?*
▸ *What if I need to cancel my order?*
▸ *How do I get started with it? Is there a tutorial?*

These things will put their purchasing mind at ease and give them some direction as they proceed to the next step, which is:

Evaluation

The customer has moved on from deciding to take action, and is actively comparing your solution to others in the market. This is the point at which you want to handle comparisons very carefully.

Oftentimes companies will bash their competitors in a one-to-one comparison chart, but this can backfire — since, if the prospect has tried the competitor, it may be perceived as an insult to their decision — and that can in turn hurt the confidence you've worked hard to build up to this point.

A better idea is not to compare or compete on things like features, but to share what makes your solution stand out. Here again, easily scanned bullet points with *"just the facts"* will let customers know not only how you're different, but will do so without you ever having to mention your competition.

Purchase

The final step — and the one everybody wants more of — the purchase! You've worked hard up to this point, crafting landing pages that get the prospect to learn about, compare, decide and ultimately move forward with an order.

Now is the time to deliver on the promises you made back at the Intent section of the funnel — going beyond the *"thank you"* page to keep the customer informed and education every step of the way, so that they will hopefully find themselves among the glowing testimonials that you've presented to other visitors who are still in the *"just looking"* phase.

Optimizing Your Keywords / PPC Ads

Now that you understand how to create landing pages for each stage of the sales funnel, you'll need to make sure that your keywords and paid ads reflect the phrases customers in each stage of the process.

Let's say for example that your site reviews mobile phones, and you want to encourage customers to click through your ads, check out the reviews, and ultimately buy the right phone for their needs.

To do this, you can create a simple PPC ad testing matrix with keywords and ad ideas to split test for each type of landing page *(see below)*.

For Awareness and Interest — Your keywords and ads will need to be broader and include information such as the best phones for _____, *(current year)* smart phone reviews and more. At this point, people aren't sure which model will suit their needs, but they need to decide whether they want a phone for work, play or family — and what kinds of features they want in it.

For Consideration and Intent — Visitors likely already know what features they want in a phone, so at this point they're looking for reviews, comparison charts, versus for specific models, pros and cons and any potential issues to watch for.

For Evaluation and Purchase — The buyer has spoken. They now want to know who has their favorite model in stock for the best price, fastest shipping or even no-hassle returns if they don't like it. Specific pricing and customer store ratings *(via rich snippets in Google)* will go a long way toward creating ads that convert.

SALES FUNNEL STEP	AD A	AD B
AWARENESS		
INTEREST		
CONSIDERATION		
INTENT		
EVALUATION		
PURCHASE		

The plain lead generation form

OR

The more graphics-heavy lead generation form

If you thought that plain forms always won out over their more aesthetically-pleasing counterparts, in this case, you'd be incorrect. The graphical form actually converted better — with **23% more** completed form submissions than its plainer variation.

Of course, this wasn't a true split test, since several things were changed including the step numbers, the instant quote button and the images at the right. It would have been interesting to see whether or not each change would have had a marked effect *(increase or decrease)* on the form submission rate.

It's worth noting that an architectural school had the opposite effect on their landing page form. They created two versions — one highlighting student work to increase the odds that prospective students would submit an interest form, and another without the link to student work:

The plain Request Information landing page

The student work galleries request information form

The version without a link to student galleries increased form submissions by nearly **57%** — proving that the less distractions you incorporate on your landing page, the better. In this case, while it may have been an interesting link to prospective students to browse the work of others at their potential university — the request information form simply wasn't the right place for it.

THE BOTTOM LINE? IT'S ALWAYS WORTH TESTING TO SEE WHAT YOUR VISITORS RESPOND TO.

Optimize Your Emails

Even if a subscription form isn't part of your landing page, optimizing your emails to speak directly to your subscribers is an important step in proper landing page optimization. There are all kinds of segmentation options to consider, and depending on the email marketing software you're using, there may be more sophisticated branching and if/then options to truly narrow down specific users and their goals — for example:

Behavioral Segmentation

You can segment your lists depending on the actions a user took while on your site. For instance, if they spent X amount of time on your pages or visited Y pages, they're in more of a buying or information-gathering mode than someone who just haphazardly came across your site from a simple search.

This can, in turn, help you understand where each user falls in the sales funnel, and craft emails that correspond to their location in the decision-making process.

B2B marketing platform Bizo ran an email split test to encourage downloads of a whitepaper on their services. They split the test between a more marketing-focused design vs. a plainer *"article style"*.

FIRST IS THE MARKETING-STYLE DESIGN:

Bizo's marketing style design email

Notice how this version maintains common best practices, including putting an image and the download now button above the fold, plus making the headline a more dynamic color — compare this to the second version:

Here the layout is much plainer, the headline blends in more with the content, and the download button and image are below the fold. **Which email would you choose to download the product from?**

Would you be surprised to learn that the second variation beat the first by increasing whitepaper downloads by **63%?** That's no small feat — but it's also surprising, since the first email takes into account all the *"best practices"* we hear about — above the fold, large call-to-action, product image, noticeable headline, etc.

This just proves yet again, that even though you have a hunch that one creative will outperform another — that you should always test and have your audience decide. In this case, when marketing emails look a bit too much like marketing, customers opted not to click through because they didn't want to feel like they were being *'sold'* to.

Job Title Segmentation

Another method of segmenting users is by job title. A CEO is going to have different needs and expectations than someone working in the sales department. As such, if you're attracting a broad base of users, it's a good idea to email them periodically and let them know that you want to connect with them and make sure you're sending them information that they find useful and actionable.

With this in mind, it's easy to create a simple survey with a few specific questions such as their job title, industry and other non-personal questions *(no asking how much money they make or their highest level of education — unless it's directly related to your industry, they would likely rather not say).*

ASK ONLY THE QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO GET THE ANSWERS YOU NEED AND NOTHING ELSE.

Social Media Segmentation

With the explosion of Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social networks, email list management programs have had to scramble to offer more segmentation options through these channels. If a user came to you through Facebook, for example, they may be more interested in visual emails that share stories as opposed to a user coming from Twitter, who might expect more quotable snippets.

Even beyond how they found your list are their own interests as influencers and participants in their own respective social media spheres. Klout has done a good job creating categories that most social media participants fit into, and turned it into a matrix, where there is no one *"right"* way to interact and engage:

	SHARING ⟷ CREATING			

SHARING ⟷ CREATING

PARTICIPATING

Curator
You find the most interesting info & share it widely. Filtering through massive content, you surface with the nuggets that your audience truly cares about & they appreciate your hard work.

Broadcaster
You broadcast great content that spreads like wildfire. An essential source of info. in your industry, your audience is wide, diverse and values your content.

Tastemaker
You know what you like & your audience likes it too! Sure you know the trends, but you aren't one to simply follow-the-crowd. You walk your own path & have earned your networks respect.

Celebrity
You are the height of influence -for better or worse. People hang on every word & share your content like no other. You are probably famous in real life & your fans can't get enough.

BROAD

Syndicator
You keep tabs on what/who is "HOT" & important to watch. Focusing on a specific topic or targeted audience, you share the best trending info & save followers from having to keep up on their own.

Feeder
Your audience relies on you for a steady flow of focused info. Your audience is hooked on your industry/topical updates and secretly can't live without them.

Thought Leader
People look to you to help them understand the day's developments in your industry Sharing relevant news/opinions, you know what's important & your audience values that.

Pundit
You don't just share news you create the news. Your opinions are wide-spread and highly trusted. You are a leader in your industry. When you speak, people listen.

LISTENING

Dabbler
You may be just starting out with the social web, or you are just not that into it. If you want to grow your audience, try engaging more & share more content.

Conversationalist
You love to connect & always have the inside scoop. Good conversation is an art. When you are witty, your followers hang on every word.

Socializer
You are the hub of the social scene & people count on you to find out what's happening. You connect people & readily share your social savvy. Followers appreciate your network and generosity

Networker
You connect to the right people & generously share your network to help followers. You know what content is important to your influential audience & have high levels of engagement.

FOCUSED

Observer
You don't share much, but you follow the social web more than you let on. This could just be your style, or you are checking it out, before jumping in full force.

Explorer
You constantly are trying out new ways to interact & network. You are exploring the social web & making it work for you. Your activity & engagement shows you "get it" & will probably by moving up soon.

Activist
You've got an idea or a cause to share with the world. You've found the perfect medium for your message & your audience count on you to actively champion your cause.

Specialist
You may not be a celebrity, but in your area of expertise your opinion is 2nd to none. Your content is likely focused in a specific topic or industry. Your audience is also focused & highly engaged.

CASUAL ⟷ CONSISTENT

Although you shouldn't segment your social media-based email marketing list from this chart, it will give you a good idea of the different types of users you'll encounter and how to converse with them.

A Note on Personal Involvement...

SmartBear.com, a software development company specializing in tracking and monitoring tools, conducted an email split test wherein they sent out a typical mailing about their software, versus a mailing that appeared to come personally from an account representative. Here was the first, more traditional message:

A common email promoting TestComplete from SmartBear
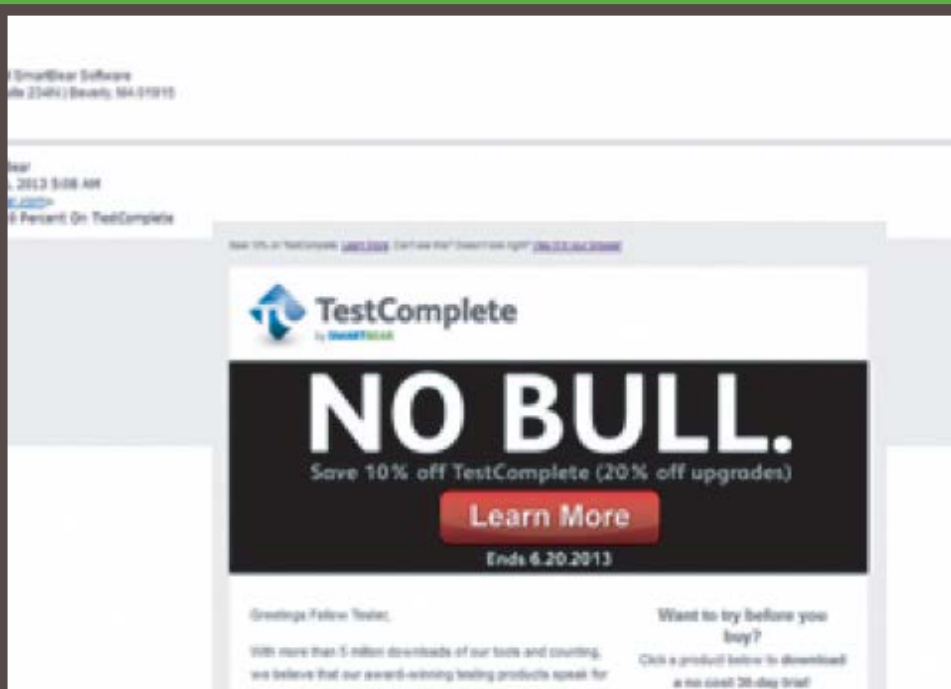
An email which appeared to be forwarded from an account specialist

This test generated some astonishing results:
- *9.3% higher open rates*
- *114% higher click-through rates*
- *102% higher click-to-open rate*

It even won an honorable mention from WhichTestWon's 2013 email marketing awards.

But before you go jumping into adding RE: or FW: to your email marketing subject lines — you should know that sometimes it can decrease opens and clickthroughs — like in <u>this study</u>.

Adding RE: or FW: to an email subject line
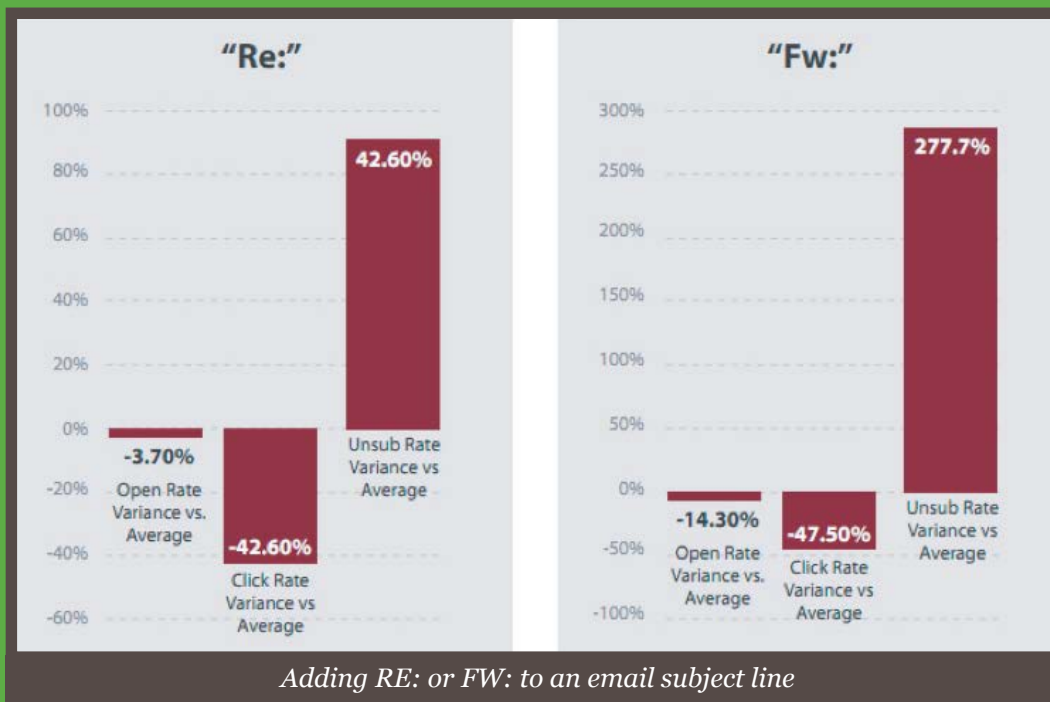
Notice the whopping 277%+ unsubscribe rate versus industry average. So why did SmartBear's forward work so well? It's likely because they had already established a relationship with their customers and the customers had tested out their software, so receiving an update via a *"forwarded"* message wouldn't exactly be unexpected.

However, once you've got your emails properly segmented and optimized, there's still the content of the offer itself. Many of the same strategies that apply broadly to landing pages work just as well for the copy on the page.

Here are just a few ways to make sure your copy is doing its job without putting too much pressure on your readers and turning them off of your landing page.

(Note: Images source: Marketing Experiments Blog / Copywriting Clinic)

Question Headlines with No Initiative or Value

In the image below, the question is "**Why Try Britainnica Online?**" and although the bullet points supplement the answer with lots of features — the reader's instinctive answer to the question is:

"I don't know, why?"

As you can see, there's no initiative to keep reading or want to know more — even though the bullet points might do a phenomenal job of explaining:

When you present a clear value proposition — including what customers get as a result of reading, they'll be more likely to continue on and see how your bullet points and features further reinforce the main offer in the headline.

A Lack of *"Power Words"*

Power words are action-verbs like *"Get", "Download" "Access"* and more. Compare these to weaker, more passive words like *"Find", "Learn"* or *"See"*. *"Click Here"* tells the reader nothing. *"Click here to get your free download"* is much more powerful. The word alone won't change thing — *"Get Whitepaper"* for instance, will likely not increase your click-throughs and conversion rate as much as *"Get a Free Whitepaper that Shows You How to Boost Business by 150%"*.

SIGN UP NOW!

69% IN CONVERSION

GET YOUR FEED NOW

TAKE A FREE TRIAL

103% IN CONVERSION

GET INSTANT ACCESS NOW

CLICK HERE

201% IN CONVERSION

GET FREE ACCESS

Not Knowing When to Shut Up

This is a common problem for many landing pages — because people mistakenly think that the landing page has to really lay the sales and information on thick — since there's no page navigation or other details that will lead the customer on to wanting to learn more.

So in their zest for putting everything on the table, they quite literally throw everything on one page:

The truth is — when a user clicks through to your landing page after searching for widgets, they don't need to be convinced that you've got the best widgets in town. They'll make that decision after they weigh your offer with others (*see the customer actions pyramid*), so your only job is to give them what they want — as quickly and effortlessly as possible.

Not Sharing Enough Information

Right up there with not knowing when to stop talking is the complete opposite of this problem — not giving people enough information to make a well-informed decision. In the example below, people clicking through to this landing page likely know what Forex is — but they don't know the details about specific trading. That's where more information can truly help them take the next step.

Of course, there's no guaranteed outcome that if you make your landing page too wordy or not informative enough that conversions will rise or tank — it's all a matter of testing to determine what resonates best with your audience, and how closely your offer matches what they're looking for — no matter where they are in the sales funnel.

Disconnect Between Your Topic & Audience Expectations

When your customers receive your messages, they expect to be spoken to a certain way. They expect to get right to the point and then evaluate what you have to say. By throwing in terms they're unfamiliar with or unaccustomed to, you run the risk of alienating them from whatever you were trying to share.
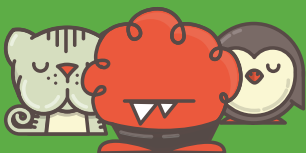
A perfect illustration of this disconnect comes from MarketingExperiments' own email list. The first email talks about a Porsche vs. a Corolla — definitely not something you'd expect when the topic is landing page optimization, right? The second email is much more on target:

NOT THIS

Subject line: MarketingExperiments—A Porsche or a Corolla?

Take the MarketingExperiments Landing Page Optimization Certification Course . . . and change gear for ever.

Dear MarketingExperiments Subscriber,

Ask yourself a question.

Think of one of your company's key Web site pages and ask yourself whether it's more like a Porsche 911 or a Toyota Corolla.

Is it a high-performance page, fully optimized to maximize conversion rates?

Or is it a Corolla . . . to which you have been adding cup holders and new upholstery in the hope that these little tweaks will enhance its performance?

BUT THIS

Subject line: MarketingExperiments—An increase of 541%

Take the MarketingExperiments Landing Page Optimization Certification Course

Dear MarketingExperiments Subscriber,

Page Optimization Certification Course for sites begins on April 26, 2007.

test will impact your business and personal important ways:

1. The study and application of all that you learn, including our unique Conversion Index, will help you increase revenues for your business almost immediately.

2. When you pass the course, you will receive a Certification Certificate which you can add to your résumé and use to advance your career.

↑29% IN CONVERSION

Too Much Information

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, your landing page copy will be overwhelming — especially when it's combined with a lot of visual elements. The very things that are supposed to attract people to take action are only serving to distract them.

Look at the example below, of a site selling email leads. It's not clear what path they want visitors to take — should they watch the video first or fill out the form? What about those bullet points in the sidebar, are they important?

NOT THIS

BUT THIS

↑201% IN CONVERSION

Contrast that with the second version which offers a much easier-to-follow eye-tracking flow, a cleaner opt-in form and a real order and direction to the content.

Generic Images that Pull Away from Your Offer

When writing content for your landing pages, your images should always strive to add to and embellish the content rather than pull the user away from it. Case in point — using stock photos, as in this version:

No matter how great your email marketing campaign tool may be, as this example shows, actually showing pictures of the templates being used will do far more to sell users on the idea than a generic stock photo. Always look for ways to position your product in such a way that it gives users a glimpse of what's possible when they take that next step.

Optimize Your Call-to-Action Buttons

Although it's a tiny part of your overall landing page optimization plan, your call to action button is nevertheless one of the most powerful elements on the page. Done right, call-to-action button optimization can have a staggering affect on click-throughs and conversion rates — to the tune of 30% or more.

Use Actionable Language

Just like with copy optimization, your landing page button should use action-oriented language and include a reference on what it is the customer is getting — for example *"Download Your Free Email Marketing Template Now — Instant Access"* is far more compelling than *"Learn More"*.

The button at the bottom on the left version reads "Find Out More" versus the button at the bottom on the right version, which reads "Click Here for More Info"

And just in case you think your customers won't care what your call-to-action button says, just look at a test run by Monarch, in the U.K.

The *"Click Here for More Information"* version got 97% more clicks and 16% more page views than the generic *"Find out More"* version.

Admittedly, they could have used more actionable, dynamic wording rather than testing between the weak and all-too-common *"Find Out More"* vs. *"Learn More"*, but nevertheless, the most interesting finding here was that people really will scroll all the way to the bottom of a page and decide to take action *(or not)*, based on how persuasive that call to action is.

Align Your Action with the Offer

One of the most common mistakes people make when optimizing their call to action is failing to align it with the offer itself. For example, if you're giving away a free course on how to improve your dating skills, you don't want to refer to it as an ebook in the copy — otherwise there's a disconnect between what you're offering, and what your copy says you're offering.

In the copy itself, make it abundantly clear what people will get as a result of clicking that button. How will their lives be improved? How will their business efforts pay off? How soon can they get started? These are all questions that can be answered in the single sentence that compels them to click the call to action button.

Optimizing the Button

The button itself shouldn't be overlooked either. Make it look like a button — give it depth with gradients, drop-shadows or both. Incorporate words that denote urgency such as *"now"* or *"starting today"*.

Another common mistake is to make your call-to-action area blend in with your website. While you can use the same elements of your existing color scheme, it's a good idea to give your button and the background of the page area where your offer is, enough contrast to where they immediately draw the eye in to read more.

Pitchbox, an online marketing and optimization platform, ran a split test for two calls-to-action — one featuring *"Join Our Private Beta"* and another *"By Invitation Only"*

The call-to-action button itself also tied in with the offer command:
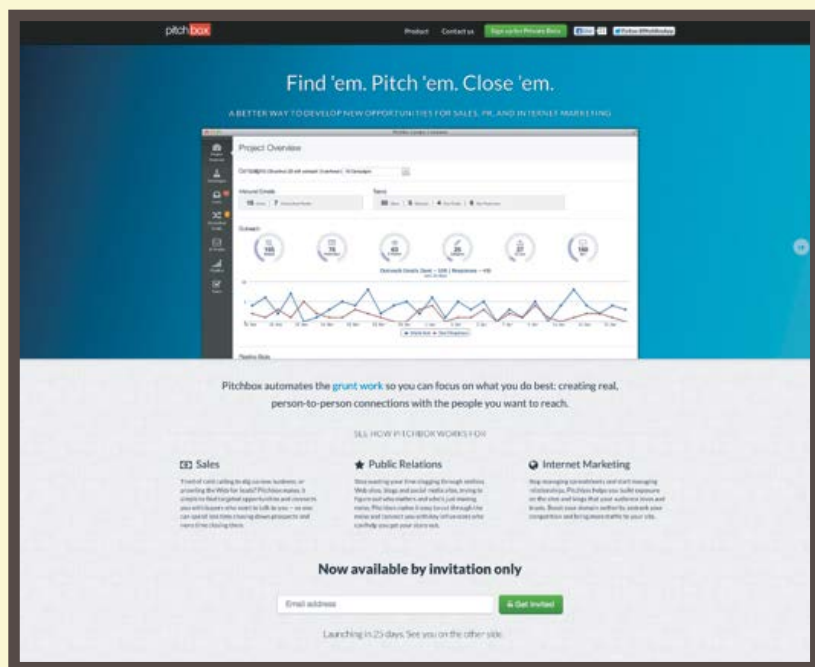
The *"Now Available by Invitation Only"* version increased sign-ups by **over 273%** — likely because it sounds more exclusive, whereas *"join our private beta — we need your help"* comes off as desperate and begging.

A beta can also mean, especially to more technical users, that the product is still under construction and may not be trustworthy or may still be full of errors and other issues.

Don't Forget to Test!

It may sound strange to test your call-to-action — after all, it's just a sentence or two and a button, right? But as you've seen from the Monarch example, unusual and sometimes surprising results can come from testing different elements — ranging from button color to the actual text used on the button.

Once you have your message and all the elements that go into your landing page properly optimized — it's time for the tests. These tests are often the make-or-break point for landing page optimization, since many people start with small tests that don't really move the conversion needle much, and then get discouraged when their conversion rate barely changes.
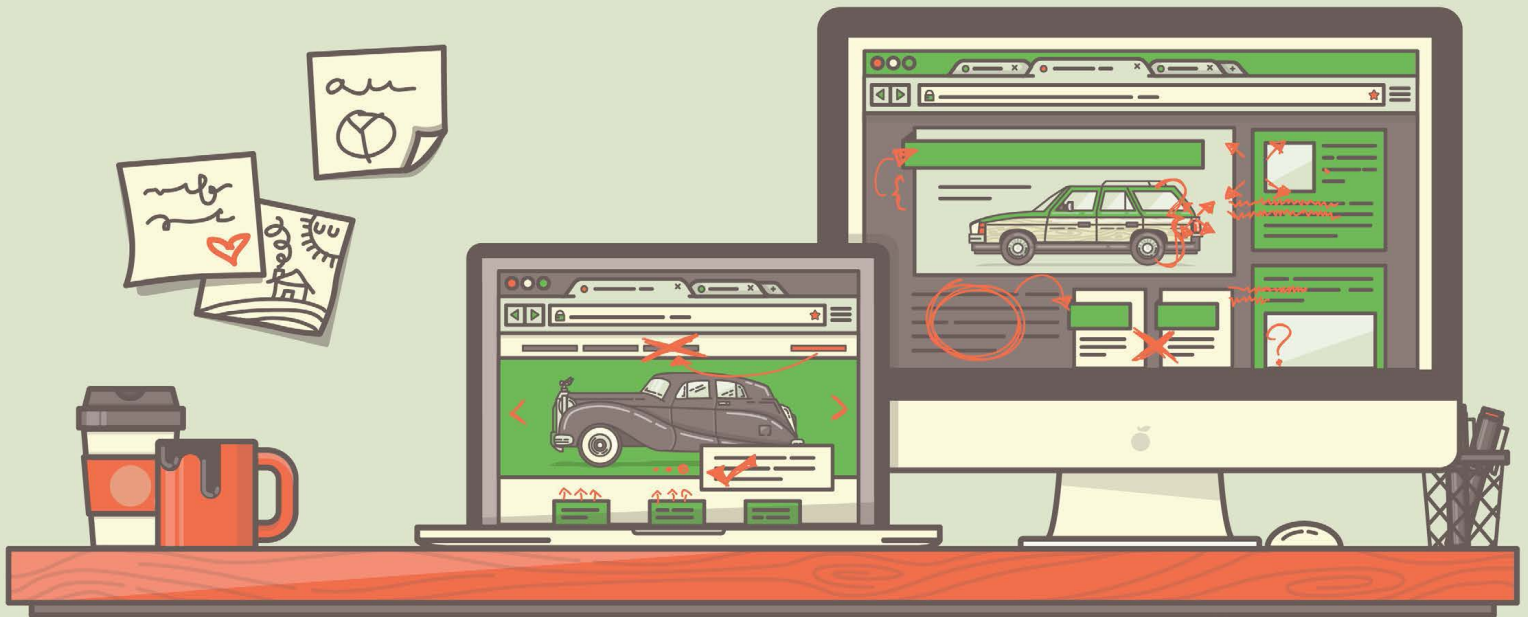
Fortunately, in the next chapter, we'll be looking at how to craft landing page optimization hypothesis on what to test, how to measure results, what area of the page can gift you larger lifts in conversions and click-through rates, and much more.

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER THREE

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER FIVE

DOWNLOAD PDF

Landing Page OPTIMIZATION

WRITTEN BY NEIL PATEL & SHERICE JACOB

CHAPTER FIVE

Putting Your Skills to the Test

Tests are the backbone of landing page optimization — after all, if you don't test, you won't know how to further refine your pages so that they continue to convert well. You learned how to set conversion goals in a previous chapter, so now it's time to take that baseline data and create some testing hypotheses.

Testing Hypotheses

Rather than testing based on your *"gut instinct"*, you'll ideally want to test based on what your website data is showing you. For example, if you use eye-tracking heat maps and you see that a great deal of visitors are leaving the page before they get to your lead generation form further down, it's a good idea to test moving that form above the fold to see if it increases engagement.

Other tests might include changing the call-to-action, the headline on the form or even what the form is offering in exchange for a name and email address.
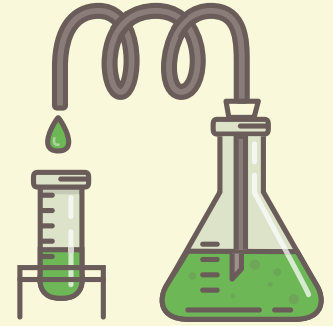
It's Not All About Conversions

Many conversion rate optimization professionals will talk solely about increasing conversion rates, and we've talked about it considerably in this guide — but that shouldn't be your only focus. What you truly want are more sales — either greater revenue per purchase or a higher order volume — and those are the kinds of conversions you'll want to look at boosting. Remember, click-throughs and subscriptions can only take you so far.

Now, before we jump into the tests themselves, there are a few instances that you should know of where testing will actually hurt your marketing efforts before you're even out of the gate. The first is, understandably, if your site is still under construction or your web host has a planned outage. If only a few people can get through successfully, it will skew your testing data and give you an incorrect result.

A second issue is if you've just launched your site and you're still trying to get traffic:
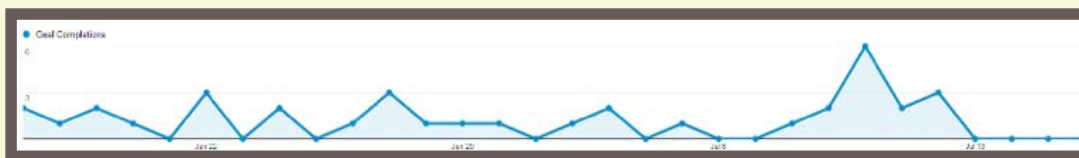
If you're not even getting a successful 10 conversion goals a day, it's best to wait until you have more traffic before going ahead.

That's because landing page optimization and the conversion optimization that comes with it are all about statistics and probability. Not having the sheer numbers needed to be able to make an informed decision will just cut all your efforts short. If your analytics graph looks like this, work on traffic first, optimization second.

Finally, there's the rare case of seasonal traffic skewing results: Here's an Alexa ranking showing 1800Flowers and their relative traffic around Mother's Day *(May, in the U.S)*.

Daily Global Rank Trend
1800flowers.com
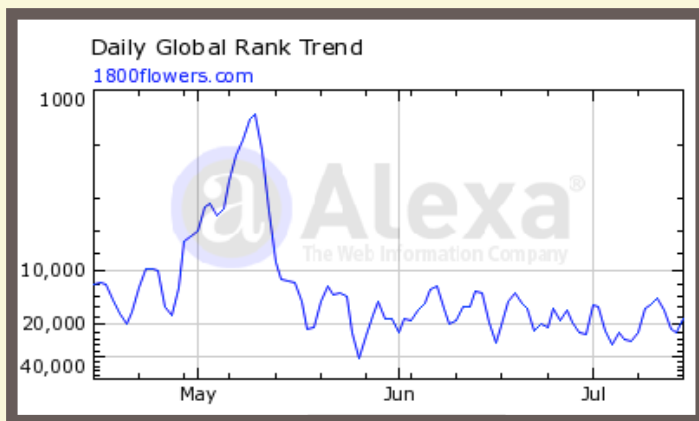
In the days leading up to and even after Mother's day, you have some very different segments of users coming to the site. Before the big day, you have the planners — the people who want to ensure their gift is affordable and nicely package. Right up to and following the holiday, you have the last-minute shoppers who are rushing around to find a good gift for mom before the deadline. They don't care *(as much about)* how neatly the product is arranged or how much it costs – they just want it to get there on time.

So as you might imagine, you've got two different subsets of shoppers placing an emphasis on two very different features at two different times. This wouldn't be the time to try a hot new marketing tactic or make tweaks to the site — it's the biggest shopping season of the year for your business, and your customers need to know that they can count on you and not be surprised by sudden changes.

With those things being said though, if your site doesn't match any of these issues, it's a safe bet that you can start optimizing your landing pages right away and see noticeable improvements in a relatively short amount of time. Let's start by taking a look at the first step — determining which pages to test.

Selecting the Right Page to Test

The first area to analyze is the page itself. To find poorly converting pages, you'll want to note things such as the bounce rate or the conversion rate *(from the conversion goals we set earlier)*.

To find your bounce rate in Google analytics, go to **Content** > **Site Content** > **Landing Pages** — then click on *Comparison View* from the icons at the top. Finally, choose Bounce Rate *(compared to site average)* from the drop down menu:

An example of bounce rates in Google Analytics
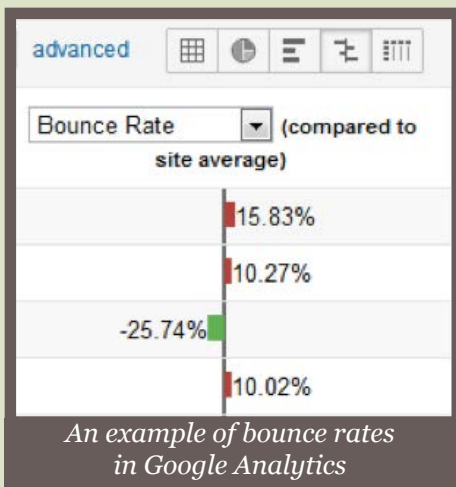
Now, keep in mind that a high bounce rate isn't always a bad thing. If you have a user manual on your site that deals with trouble-shooting or instructions, for example, a user may find exactly what they need, print it out and leave the page. But if you have a call-to-action and aren't getting many people past that click — it's time to take a serious look at the bounce rate.

Beyond the bounce rate, you can also consider points from analytics including:

▸ *Average Visit Duration (how long are people staying on the page?)*
▸ *% New Visits (how many people are brand new visitors?)*

Avoid the HiPPOs

One surprising reason behind a lack of proper landing page optimization *(which usually manifests itself at this point)* is the **HiPPO** — or the Highest Paid Person's Opinion. Maybe your marketing manager or VP is reluctant to run tests because they don't want to alienate visitors by showing them a remarkably different version of a specific page, for example.

Fortunately, you can overcome this objection and get everyone on board if you limit the sample size of the landing page optimization tests you're running. Most split-testing software will let you serve your optimized pages to X number of visitors — so making sure you have a proper sample size to split test between is important. Plus, this way, it will also relieve some of the anxiety your team's HiPPOs are feeling about new marketing initiatives.

So once you've discovered the poorer performers from among your pages, it's time to put them in for an overhaul.

Selecting the Right Area of the Page to Test

This can be tricky, since you're likely feeling eager to test the whole page at one time. But too many changes, too soon, will give you mixed results without ever giving you any definitive answer on what really worked.

WITH THIS IN MIND, THE MOST COMMON AREAS OF A LANDING PAGE TO TEST INCLUDE:

The Headline

Your headline is going to have to do the heavy lifting when someone first comes to your landing page. A weak, uninspiring or bland headline will never convince users to give the page another second of their attention.

The Body Text

This is the *"meat and potatoes"* of the landing page. Short, simple and to-the-point. You don't need to elaborate on your business backstory or all the things your business does. Remember, these people are looking for a solution or an answer — they don't have time to sift through a huge block of content that doesn't immediately give them what they want.

The Call to Action

As you've seen, a strong call-to-action can propel people forward into the beginning of your sales funnel, whereas a tepid call-to-action will just cause them to click close and go elsewhere.

The Form

This is more than just changing a background color or a button — testing your form means taking more extreme steps to make the offer as plain as day to the prospect. Case in point, SecondWave, a mobile phone recycling service, split tested two very different landing pages. Notice that the form fields themselves didn't change, but the design was immediately recognizable and the customer knew precisely which action to take based on these visual cues:

The original cell phone donation form

The updated donation form

The newly designed form got a **53% increase in donations** with no extra spent on ads, the ad budget, or the bids themselves.

The Offer

If you're not getting the response you'd hoped for from your offer — why not try a different offer? For example, if you're giving away a free ebook, what about turning it into a slideshow-based video presentation instead? Different offers will resonate with different people, and by shaking things up with what you're presenting and how you're presenting it, you could make a significant difference in getting and keeping their attention.

Plus, it's worth noting that things like video or courses have a higher perceived value than generically branded *"ebooks"*.

Trust Seals

Trust seals are more than just security buttons and badges. They can span a whole spectrum of *"flair"* designed to notify customers in a split-second that your site is a safe place to do business.

Examples of common trust and checkout seals

Is your business accredited? Are you a platinum-level seller? Do you have high user ratings or authentic testimonials? Do you accept specific forms of payment? These are all areas where a trust seal can make the difference between completing an action or not. Here again, it's worth testing since some industries show mixed results with these types of seals.

Directional Cues

This is a unique type of test in that it's not commonly included among the *"lists of things to test"* that you often see when it comes to landing page optimization. Directional cues are points that incorporate a face, arrow or other embellishment that directs the user's attention toward the call-to-action, the headline, the body copy, or all three.

Here's an example from CrazyEgg:

The arrow forces the user's eye to pay attention to the pricing area
– particularly the free trial button

When used sparingly, arrows can direct our attention visually and encourage more people to follow where we want them to go. By the same token, our minds are instinctively wired to follow a person's gaze as well. Here are two different page heat maps that show a baby — one looking at the viewer, the other looking at the headline:

Eye tracking — red areas show intense focus

Notice how much more intently the user's gaze was focused on the content when the baby's gaze was also focused on it?

Live Chat

Live chat can also increase conversion rates — but only when it can be staffed during normal business hours. Showing them that you're *"unavailable"* during regular hours will lead them to unfortunately conclude that you might also be unavailable for them should they proceed with an order — and that's definitely not the impress you want to give them!

In one split test, EZTexting.com wanted to see if the option of having live chat *(shown in the lower right corner of the screen)* would have an impact on their sign ups. Here is the version before the live chat was implemented:

EZ Texting's sign up form before the addition of live chat

And here was the same page after the live chat option was added.

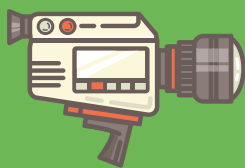*EZ Texting with Live Chat*

Nothing else on the page had changed — but with the addition of live chat, the number of free sign ups increased by **31%**, winning them a gold ribbon in 2012 from Which Test Won's annual testing awards.

Try Video

Video is another option that, when done right, can have a significant impact on conversion rates. Here again, having a video that's professionally shot and produced will do far more to convince a customer to take action than a shoddily shot home movie made with someone's cell phone. Explainer videos also do a great job of selling in ways that simple copy cannot.

One site, BuyRealTwitterFollowers, wanted to test the addition of video on their own site, so they created a simple explainer video along with a *"How it Works"* section beside it. This in turn shifted down what would have ordinarily been *"above the fold"* on their website — things like expert advice, along with the security and confidence customers can have if they buy Twitter followers online.

Here was the original page with the content appearing above the fold:

Buy Real Twitter Followers' above the fold content includes guarantees, common questions answered and information on why to choose their service

The video page used the same content, except for adding the video file, and the **"How it works"** section. Nothing else on the page was changed:

The Buy Real Twitter Followers page with the video and
"how it works" *sections added*

When this test was conducted, it was discovered that the video and *"how it works"* section increased sales on the site **by 216%** — an enviable number by any standard. It also proved that what the Buy Real Twitter Followers site team thought was the most important content *(the guarantees, security notes and common answers)* was actually not that important to visitors in the end — further emphasizing the point that one should always **test, test, test!**

Selecting How to Measure Results

There are two common ways to measure results, depending on what you're testing and how much traffic you're getting. The most common method, and the simplest one to get started, is the A/B split test. There's also multivariate testing, which is more complicated, but if you have a lot of website traffic, can give you more results in less time. This graphic *(source)* illustrates the different types of tests:

A/B Testing
Tests one whole page against another, with one distinct change to a single element between the two, i.e. a different headline.

Multivariate Testing
Tests multiple elements on a page against each other in different combinations, i.e. different headlines AND different buttons.
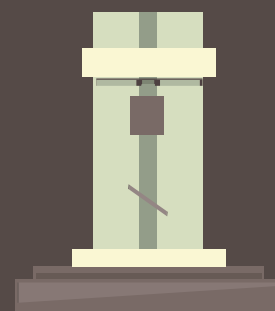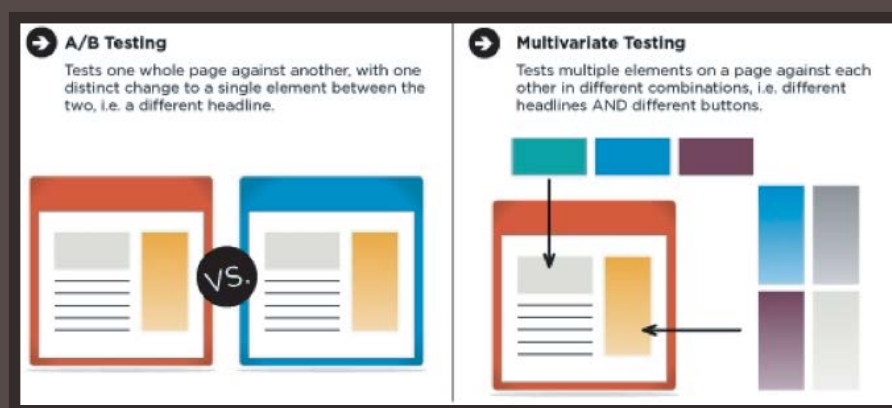
A/B Split Testing

This is the most common method of testing landing pages and lets you compare two different versions of a page *(ideally with a single thing changed)* against each other to see which one converts best. If you change too many things on the competing landing page, it will be difficult for you to tell which change actually increased the conversion, which is why it's best to change one thing at a time.

To set up an A/B split test using freely available tools, you can use Google's Content Experiments. This is like split testing on steroids — and it's free.

If you're already using Google Analytics *(remember the conversion goals we set up earlier?)* then you'll be glad to know that Content Experiments can be found in the same area. Simply login to your Google account, go to the Behavior section, and click on Experiments in the sidebar.

If you've created content experiments before, you'll see your current experiments here. If this is your first time, you'll want to click the Create Experiment button.

There are several simple form fields to fill out when you create an experiment:

Name for this Experiment — *Give it a name you can easily track and remember.*

Objective for this Experiment — *This is the goal or outcome you want. You can use this to analyze existing analytics metrics or ecommerce metrics, or create a new goal entirely.*

Percentage of Traffic to Experiment — *How much of your site's traffic do you want to leverage in this experiment? The higher the number, the quicker you'll see results.*

Email Notification for Important Changes — *Do you want to be notified by email if there are major shifts in your experimental test? (the answer to this is YES!)*

Minimum Time Experiment will Run — *What is the least amount of time you want your content experiment to run? During this time, Google Analytics will not declare a certain page as a "winner", since you want to reach statistical significance with your numbers.*

Confidence Threshold — *How sure do you want to be that a certain page is the winner? Keep in mind, a higher number here will take longer, but it will also increase the certainty with which you know that a page increases conversions, sales or signups.*

Once you've filled out all these sections, you'll be taken to a page that looks like this *(image source).*

Defining the pages for an A/B split test

What's interesting here, is that you can add up to five different variations — so if you want to change five different elements on your landing pages and pit them all against each other, this will give you that option. You'll also see thumbnails of the pages you want to test, helping you to be sure you're testing the right pages against each other.

You'll then be taken to a step wherein you can either implement the code yourself, or send an email to your webmaster and have them do it for you. Google will also take the extra step of validating that your code is working. If it isn't, you'll get an error message. You can skip validation, but it's recommended that you not skip it *(particularly if you're getting an error)* since there's some kind of disconnect between your site and the content experiments code — and that could skew your testing results.

You'll then be taken to a success page if everything checks out:

Success! Your A/B split test has launched
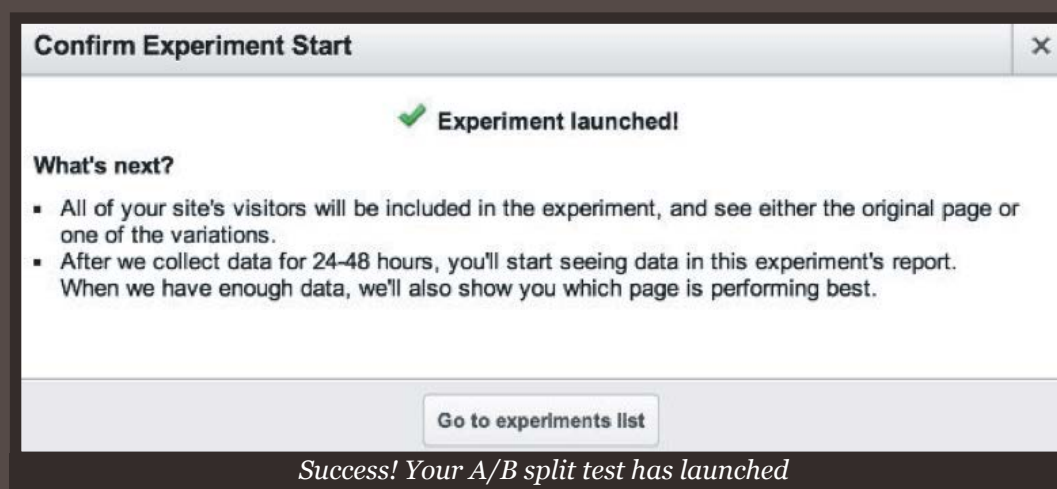
Once your experiment is running, you'll see these options:

*Conversion Rate — The conversion rate of the landing pages, based on the criteria you specify as a "**conversion**".*

Stop Experiment

Re-Validate

Disable Variation — Turn off one or more of the variation landing pages that you're testing against.

Segmentation — This particular option is very valuable — it lets you see how a specific landing page is performing for a certain segment of your audience.
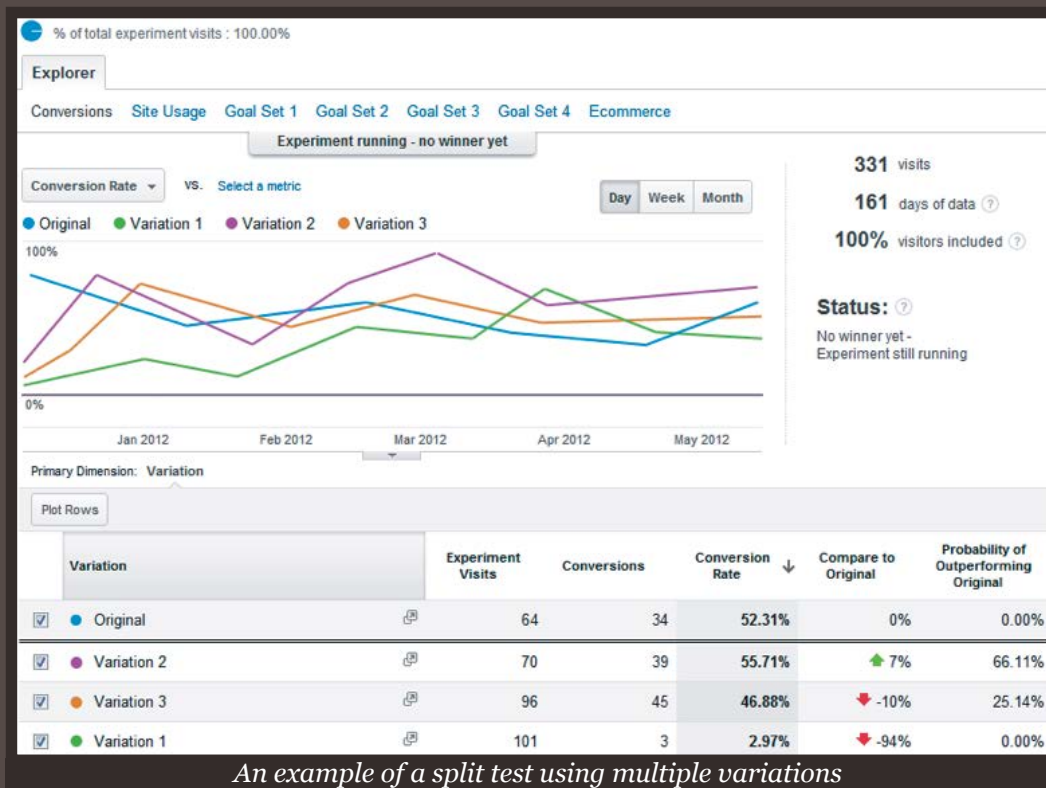
An example of a split test using multiple variations

As you run more tests, your tests and their results will remain visible in your Content Experiments dashboard:

From your content experiments dashboard, you can also see the status of different tests

Multivariate Testing

Multivariate testing is more complicated than your typical A/B split test, but has the potential to give you results even faster — particularly if you want to test several elements on one page at a time.
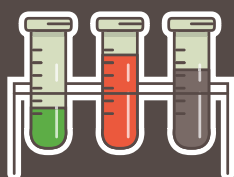
Multivariate simply means that there are many variables being tested at once. It's possible to do a type of multivariate testing following the same steps above with Google Content Experiments, in that you can test multiple pages with a single element changed among each one, however it may not give you the control or the results you want.

The truth is, it's very difficult to honestly recommend multivariate testing unless you're getting massive amounts of traffic where you'll see gains *(or losses)* in a relatively short amount of time. For most sites just starting out, the premise of multivariate testing sounds great *(more testing results in less time!)* but the truth is, your results will have very little statistical significance in the time it takes to actually reach the numbers you want.

With that being said, if you want to set up a true multivariate test, you can do so using web analytics services such as Optimizely or Visual Website Optimizer.

Creating a Value Proposition

Why is a section on creating value down in the *"how to"* section of setting up, testing and tracking landing pages? Because in the midst of all the code, technology and tools, the core reason of why people visit a site and elect to stay is all in the value you're creating — and it's easy to forget that part.

But the real question is — how do you define something intangible like *"value"*?

What Is a Value Proposition?

A value proposition, at its core, is your promise of delivering value *(such as having a problem solved)* to your customer. This is typically done through your headline, your subheadline and your first three bullet points. You can also add a visual to convey things that limited words cannot.

There are three major types of value propositions — including:

▶ *Giving your customers reasons to buy from you, instead of your competitors (delivering value based on your differentiation from everyone else).*

▶ *Delivery of specific benefits (by a quantifiable amount – i.e. "You'll lose XX lbs by the New Year or it's FREE).*

▶ *Shares how your product or service will solve the customer's problem in a way that's relevant to them.*

Perhaps most importantly — **this is not the time to use marketing jargon.** Your customers don't care if your *"solution"* has *"synergy"* and offers a *"collaborative experience"* to *"streamline"* their *"sales cycle"*.

Imagine that your value proposition is your elevator speech — your 30 seconds or less to tell someone exactly what it is you do *(and why they should care)*. **Could you imagine telling them using any of the terms above?**

Didn't think so.

This is why, when creating a value proposition — you have to use the words your customer would use. Tell people what you do in their language, not yours. It all boils down to three distinct answers:

▶ *What are you selling?*
▶ *Who are you selling it to?*
▶ *Why should they care?*

In one landing page test, Sytropin, makers of an **HGH** *(human growth hormone)* spray, wanted to test which landing page would increase their sales — except that they changed numerous points on the landing page *(so a multivariate test would likely have been a better option here, since it wasn't clear what specific option increased sales).*

The first version features a happy, fit couple along with the product image, together with different benefits in the subheadline, and more text, along with clear, notice-able sub-headlines, while the second one features a peaceful waterfall together with the product image and more checkmark bullet-points rather than several para-graphs of text.

There were definitely a lot of changes to consider between both of these tests...but which one do you feel communicated more value overall to the customer?

The first version, with the happy couple and sub-headline outperformed the water-fall version by turning nearly 85% more visitors into buyers. The traffic source, offer, the product itself, and the copy beyond the subheadline all remained the same.

Why do you think this version converted so much better? Here are a few ideas to think about:

▸ **Noticeable guarantee** — *Positioned to the right of the copy immediately attracts the eye as opposed to the guarantee being lost in the sidebar*

▸ **FDA approved** — *carries a much higher weight and confidence level among U.S. shoppers*

▸ **Guarantee** — *Specific timeframe (90 days) versus satisfaction guaranteed.*

These are all points to consider when crafting your value proposition — as they are all facets that matter to consumers who are interested in this type of product. What sorts of statements would your own customers identify with? What would strengthen their confidence in buying from you?

What a Value Proposition is NOT:

With that point being said, many people think they instantly **"get it"** and jump right in crafting their value proposition with gusto — but you should know that a value proposition is **NOT** the same as:

▸ **A slogan** — *It's not meant to be cute, catchy or clever*
▸ **A hype-fest**- *It's not an opportunity to seize on how great you are*
▸ **A positioning statement** — *like the "number one, doctor-recommended brand"*

Here's a perfect example of a great value statement from Shopify — makers of web-based shopping cart and ecommerce software:

USE SHOPIFY TO CREATE YOUR ONLINE STORE

Everything You Need to Start Selling Online — Today

This is also not an opportunity to dance around the issue or problem that you solve. Customers don't want to have to guess — or get half way through signing up or checking out to learn that your service isn't right for them.

Another test that involved using copy to increase perceived value came from an Australian e-commerce site known as Deals Direct.

An example of a solid value proposition

The first version included a background overlay under the **"Your Shopping Cart"** text, along with text that informed customers of the site's security and payment options. It also included links to information about the site's online safety as well as its return policy:
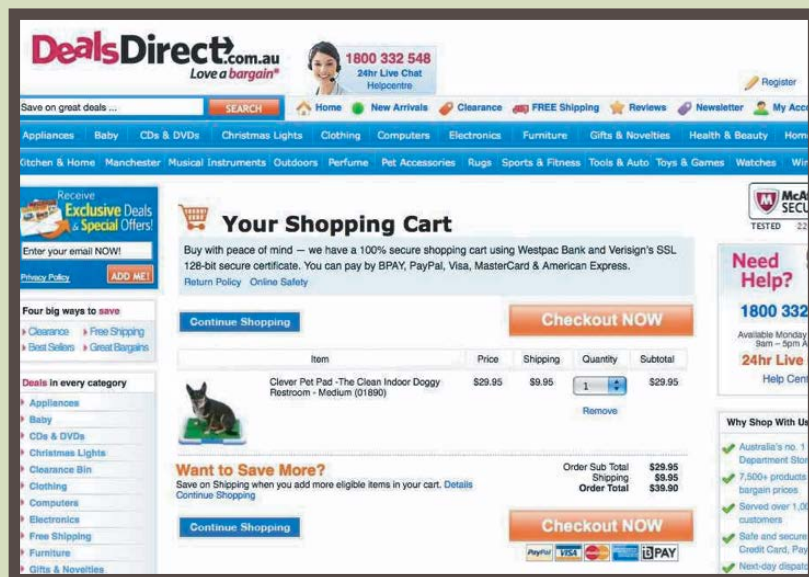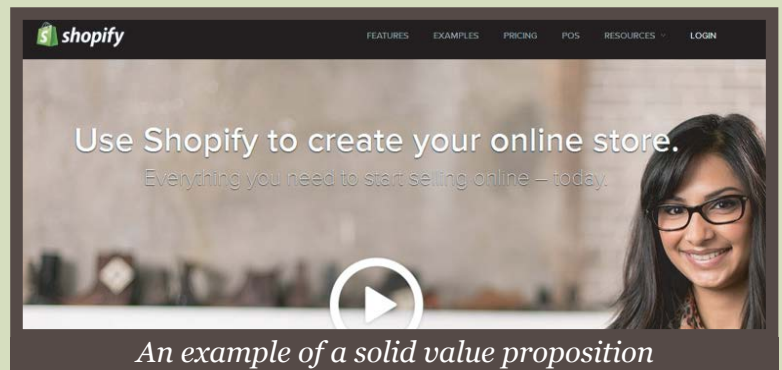
The second variation *(with the different headline — View Cart)* explained how customers can check out. It did not include information about online safety or returns.

As you might have guessed, the first version, with an emphasis on secure shopping, accepted payment methods and return policies, outperformed the first by increasing completed purchases by **nearly 3.60%**. That may not sound like much, but on a large ecommerce site like this, added hundreds of thousands of dollars to the company's bottom line.

Writing Your Value Proposition

So with that being said — how do you create a memorable value proposition that actually gets noticed?

Make it Clear What Problem You're Solving

Don't tip-toe around the problem. State it outright and let people know how you're going to solve the issue.

Share How You're Different

Don't just tell people that you're better than your competition — show them how. Price isn't the only factor. You have a solution that's different than anything else out on the market. Even if your values are the same as your competition in every way but one — you need to capitalize on that ONE thing that makes you different. It could be relatively simple, but that's okay, because people need to know about it.

Don't Forget the Numbers
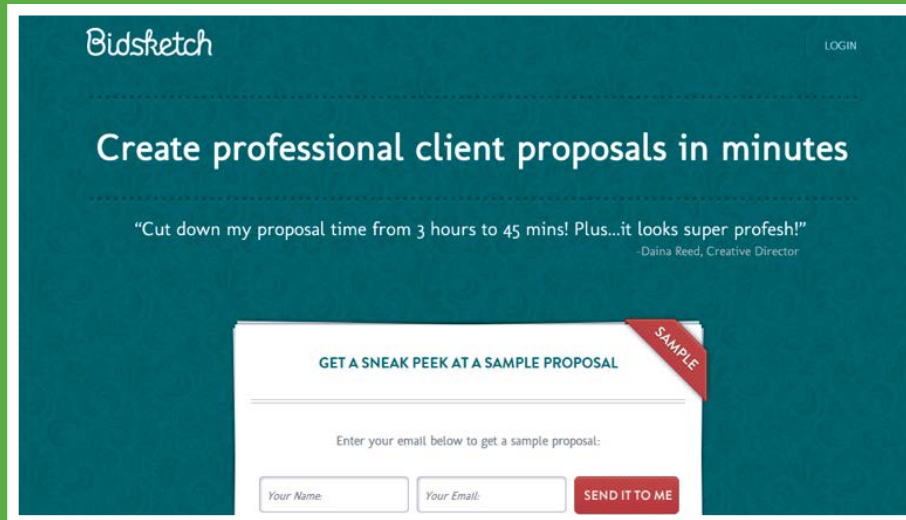
Making your value proposition quantifiable is important to giving the customer a time frame or a reference as to how soon they can expect to see a resolution of their problem, or how much money they can expect to save. Car insurance commercials have latched onto this by trying to outdo each other on how much their customers can save. They do this because, quite simply, it works.

Let Other People Add to Your Value Proposition

You're not alone in sharing your value proposition with potential customers — especially when your previous customers have already added to it for you. Social proof, specific guarantees, testimonials, famous customers or brands, and media placements — all of these things will bolster your proposition by doing the selling for you by extension of their own reputation.

WANT MORE EXAMPLES TO LEARN FROM? CHECK THESE OUT!

What's Next?

Now that you know how to set up landing page tests, it's time to let them run. Once you've got data coming in, the next step will be to properly analyze it. This is often a place where people make mistakes. There are a few common pitfalls that plague even the most beautifully designed and structured landing pages.

In the next chapter, we'll take a closer look at how to evaluate your landing page results, and what to do if your conversions go stagnant. You'll also learn about common issues that can hinder your landing page tests, and how to correct them so you can get back on track quickly.

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER FOUR

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER SIX

DOWNLOAD
PDF
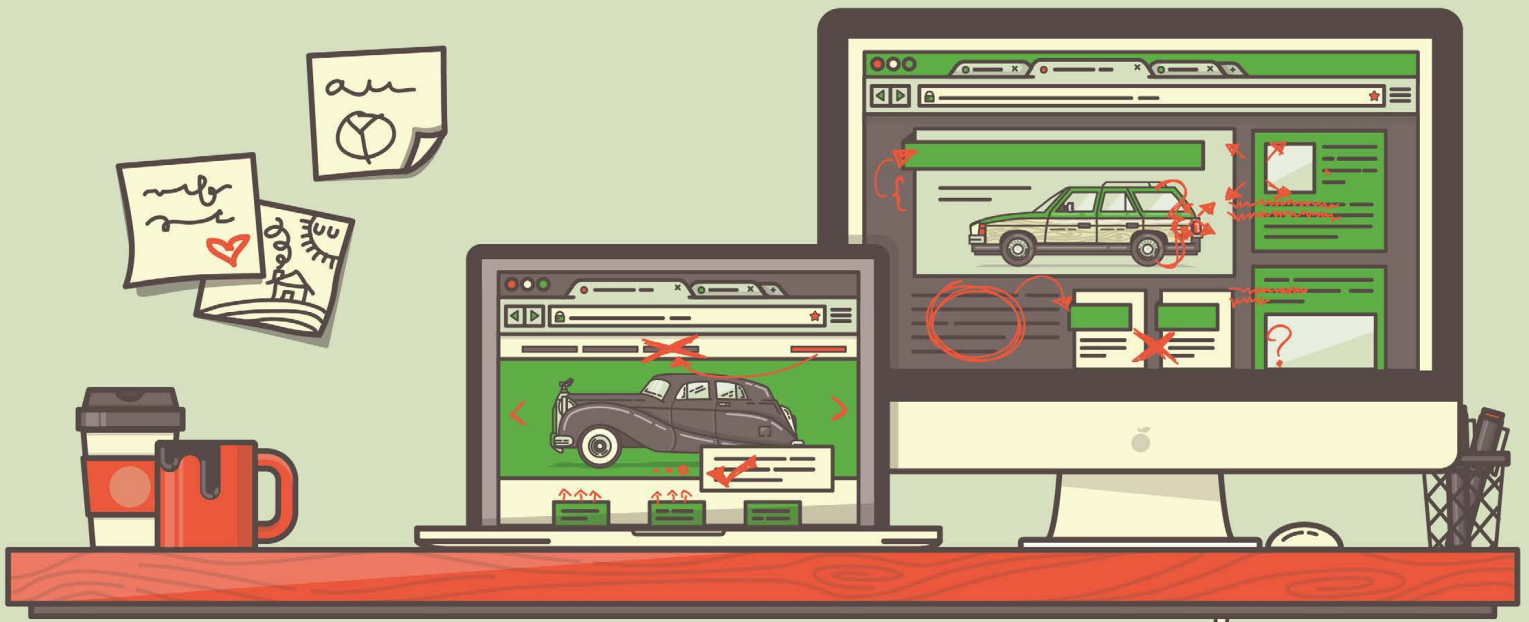
Landing Page OPTIMIZATION

WRITTEN BY NEIL PATEL & SHERICE JACOB

CHAPTER SIX

Read. Review. React.

When analyzing your landing pages, there are going to be four major categories you'll want to look at in your analytics:

Bounce Rate
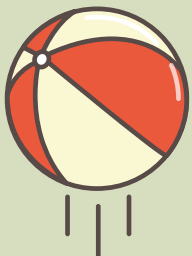
We've already covered the bounce rate quite a bit, but if your bounce rate is **75% or higher**, it's a clear indicator that visitors aren't finding what they're looking for on your pages. There could be a disconnect between your ad copy and your landing page, for example — one promises one thing and the result delivers something entirely different.

User Behavior

User behavior can give you some interesting insights that pure data alone won't. For example, you might know what keywords you're targeting and how many visitors you're getting to click on your ads — but user behavior, either through an online testing service like usertesting.com or mouseflow.com or a heatmap service like CrazyEgg.com will show you precisely what the user's actions were and where they might have gotten hung up in the process.

Understanding user behavior is crucial to uncovering any unforeseen bottlenecks in your landing pages that could be keeping users from progressing to the next page. These could be as serious as technical errors or as simple as *"muddy"* content that isn't clear on what the offer is, or why the user should care *(see "Creating a Value Proposition" at the end of chapter 5)*.

Traffic Segment Variance
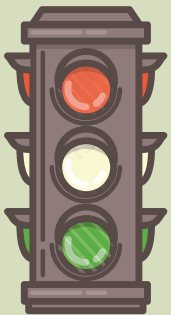
This is just a fancy way of saying *"traffic that comes from different referrers."* For example, users that are coming from Twitter may expect something short, sweet and to-the-point, whereas users from Facebook or Google+ may be looking for a more informative article. Understanding your traffic segments, where they're coming from and what they expect can give you invaluable information on crafting landing pages that look as if they were custom built just for that particular users' needs.

Conversion Rate

We've also covered conversion rate quite a bit in this guide, but looking at your analytics will let you compare two pages side by side to see which has the higher conversion rate, and what element on the page might be causing that increase. In some cases, your conversion rate might also drop as a result of changes. The only way to know what works is to test and track!

How to Conduct a Landing Page Analysis

Analyzing your landing pages is about much more than looking at the four categories above and making a decision. Granted, each of the points above does play a role in how well your landing page does its job, but to truly see how your pages are performing, it's wise to start with the right data.

First, you'll want to see how your landing pages are converting based on organic search results. In Google Analytics, navigate to **Content** > **Site Content** > **Landing Pages**.

In our case, we just want to see how landing pages performed based on organic searches, so we'll want to filter out paid search traffic. From the Advanced Segments section, choose *"Non Paid Search Traffic"*.

Then, sort by visits to see which landing pages attracted the most traffic from organic search. As a *"secondary dimension"* you can also see which keyword users typed in to arrive at your landing page:
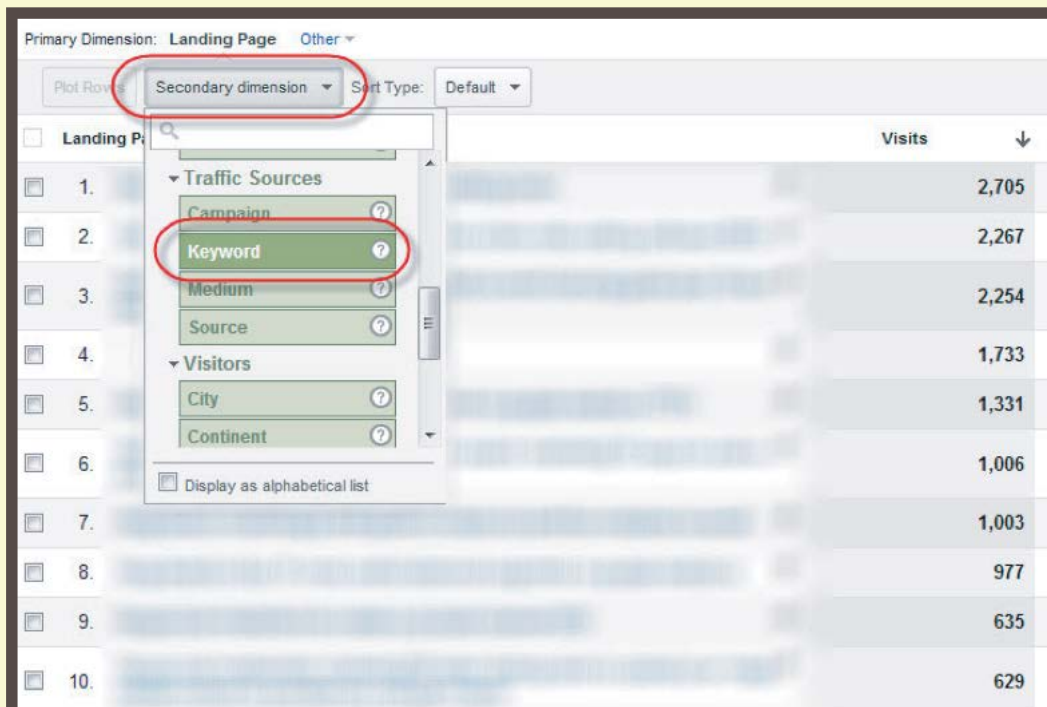
An example of a landing page with "keyword"
as the secondary dimension (image source)

Remember that it's also entirely possible that the same landing page will come up when different keywords are used.

Here again, bounce rate can come into play. Notice in the image below that landing pages 4, 9 and 10 have lower bounce rates while 2 and 6 have higher ones. You'll want to consider the differences between your specific landing pages to determine what could be causing these points of friction with your users. We've also addressed some of the more common issues in this chapter.

Conducting a Link Analysis

While it's true that most landing pages don't *(or shouldn't)* contain links, that doesn't mean that you can't link to them from other pages in your site to give them some much needed organic SEO exposure.

Traditionally, we were taught that incorporating keywords in your link text was the way to go, and to put links in our site footer to encourage the search engine robots to delve deeper into our site map and index all our luscious pages.
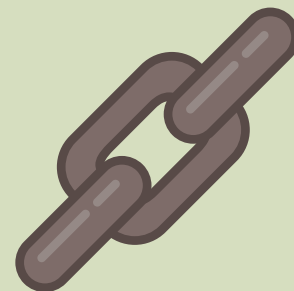
These days, search engines have evolved and adapted — and while linking still matters *(perhaps now more than ever)*, the way to go about it to make sure your landing pages benefit from maximum optimization clout is a bit different than you might expect. **For example:**

▸ *If you have two or more anchor links on your landing page, only the first one carries any kind of **"link juice"** in it.*

▸ *External links from other sites provide more optimization clout than internal links (that means you can get rid of the overstuffed site footer!).*

▸ *Anchor text links are more valuable than alt-text-added image links.*

▸ *The higher a link appears in the HTML code, the more valuable it appears to be.*

▸ *With that in mind, links in the body of the website have more value than links in the header, sidebar or footer.*

▸ *Linking to highly-relevant content is far more beneficial than just throwing out a link to something that may or may not be truly relevant to the user's query.*

What About Google Hummingbird?

When Google made major changes to some of its algorithms a few years ago *(known in marketing circles as "Penguin" and "Panda")*, marketers scrambled to try and recover. Most of the sites that were penalized were *"content farms"* that deserved the demotion that they got. Just recently, Google rolled out a new variation, called Hummingbird. But what does it do — and how is it different than Penguin or Panda?

MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOUR LANDING PAGES?

In a nutshell, Danny Sullivan of Search Engine Land calls Hummingbird something like a replacement engine for an old car. Everything might work fine on the car, but it's not built to accept unleaded fuel and other modern enhancements – so the engine gets replaced. Hummingbird is essentially like a new fuel-injected engine – it's a modern upgrade on an older but still perfectly fine-running system, whereas Penguin and Panda were more simply algorithm updates.

What does that mean for your landing pages?

It means that Google is shifting how it returns search results, in its bid to deliver even more relevance to users. In Google's own language, it means that the search giant is placing more of an emphasis on *"conversational search"*. In one example, a user might type into Google *"Where can I buy an iPhone 5s close to my home"* — and a traditional search engine would return online electronics sites with *"buy"* and *"iPhone 5s"* in the title.

Hummingbird tries to understand the intent behind the question and, if Google already knows your location, could possibly provide you with a map, citing stores near you that might have the iPhone 5s in stock.

In another example from Google, a user might search for *"acid reflux prescription"*, which would traditionally bring up a list of drugs that treat the issue. Now, it brings up educational articles that discuss treatment options — to the point where a user may learn that they might not even need a prescription at all.

More to the point about specific landing pages, it means that you should now be:

▸ *Using your landing pages to understand the intent that users have when searching for the word or phrase you're trying to rank for*

▸ *The provider of actual answers to the questions people have rather than trying to be a catch-all "solution" for everyone and everything.*

▸ *Able to leverage social signals, knowledge graph, semantic search and other alerts beyond keywords that deliver a more personalized result to the user.*

What About Keyword Data that Comes Back as (not provided)?

Around the same time as Hummingbird was rolled out to all Google searches, many SEO professionals started noticing that keyword data became 100% *"secure search"* oriented — meaning it was hidden from marketing and analytics tools. Users' keyword searches went from a few *"not provided"* queries, to complete *"keyword blindness"*.

Keyword (not provided) from Google Traffic (image source)

Google searches now redirect users to a secure Google site for their results pages — effectively rendering organic keyword research as we know it extinct. Of course, Matt Cutts, a Google engineer, essentially told SEO professionals not to panic — that, so long as they concentrated on delivering a good experience, they'd continue to succeed in the search engines.

Paid search users were also not affected, since paid results still return the keywords that users searched for to land on that specific ad or landing page.

For example, optimization and research criteria that was once available, including:

▶ *Conversions by keyword / keyword tag*
▶ *Keyword traffic patterns by URL*
▶ *Long tail keyword traffic patterns*

And other analytical data is gone — however, you can still measure the truly important factors that go into landing page optimization, such as:

▶ *Overall organic search traffic by engine*
▶ *Total conversions from organic traffic (by URL)*
▶ *Search rankings for critical terms / page tags and types / keyword tag*

So, essentially, the major measurements are still there — just the way they're reported has changed and shifted to meet the demands of an ever-increasing and technologically-savvy audience.

So rather than trying to find out what keyword led someone to a particular page, the question then becomes…

That's why continuing to analyze, refine and update your landing pages is so crucial to the overall optimization and improvement strategy. It's not a one-off thing... it's a continuing series of changes that lead to more of what you really want:

More conversions...more customers...more profits.

How Do I Do Keyword Research for My Landing Pages if the Keywords Come Back as (not provided)?

The days of easy keyword research are over — the emphasis has instead shifted to smart keyword research. Of course, your analytics data is the primary goldmine of potential long-tail keywords, but you can also use:

▶ *Pay per Click and Paid Search Data*
▶ *Google Keyword Planner (formerly known as the Google Keyword Suggestion Tool)*
▶ *Third party tools such as SEMRush, Wordtracker, etc.)*

In a sense, you can still uncover valuable keywords — you just have to **dig a little deeper** to find them. For example, although you can't see the keywords that are driving people to come to your landing pages, you can correlate what they might be searching for along with the keywords your landing page is trying to rank for and make some informed decisions that way.

You can also still use **Google Webmaster Tools** to discern potential keyword data, as well as Google trends to see if any major keyword/search shifts have occurred within a specific timeframe.

Beyond the keywords themselves, it's important to maintain the right focus when determining what to optimize on your pages. Every conversion can be broken down and categorized into two sections: macro conversions, and micro conversions.

Optimizing for Macro Conversions

Many times when we talk about conversion optimization, it's all too easy for professionals, even with the best of intentions, to get bogged down in testing all the little things that can contribute to a slight conversion uptick.

These "little things" are known as micro conversions, and can include:

▶ *Viewing a product page*
▶ *Proceeding to checkout*
▶ *Connecting via social media (following on Facebook/Twitter, etc.)*
▶ *Time spent on site over a certain amount*
▶ *Number of page views over a certain amount*

Newsletter subscription — an example of a micro conversion (image source)

"But Neil, I Thought Those Were the Very Things We Wanted to Increase!"

They are — but they only lead to marginal increases overall. Instead, you want to optimize for macro conversions.

These are the BIG things that lead to major conversion shifts over time — like:

▶ *E-commerce order completion*
▶ *Paid membership sign up*
▶ *Contact form submission*
▶ *Phone call from a prospect*
▶ *Inquiry form submission (for lead generation)*

These are the major drivers of conversion-based revenue — the bottom line that every profitable website strives to increase.

You can think of macro conversions as large, revenue-boosting changes, while micro-conversions are like guideposts along the way.

How to Track Micro Conversions in Google Analytics

It's important to track micro conversions, because these will give you a sense of the level of engagement your customers have with your site *(which can, in turn, power the macro-conversion engine)*.

In Google Analytics, you can track micro conversions depending on the type of conversion you want to track:

Email Subscription Goal

You'll want to create a URL destination goal — with your *"Thanks for subscribing!"* page as your goal page. You'll need to establish a value for this goal, which can be tricky — but consider it like this:

Since the average visit value is going to be calculated from this number, you'll need to consider how often visitors who reach the goal page ultimately become customers. For example, if 10% of your subscribers ultimately make a purchase, and your average purchase price is $50, you might assign a value of $5 *(10% of $50)* to your goal.

Created an Account

Similar to setting up an email subscription goal, you'll want to set the Account Creation Completion page as your URL destination. You should also set up a funnel for this goal, in case any prospects drop off along the way in the account creation process. This can help you uncover hidden bottlenecks or points of friction that are keeping them from completing the goal.

Number of Pages Browsed per Visit
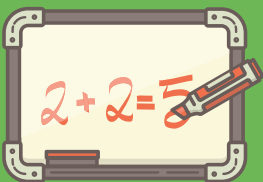
If you want to track the number of pages visited beyond the normal threshold, you'll want to create a pages/visit goal. Ask yourself what you consider an extensive visit according to your existing analytics data.Take the average number of pages a customer visits before they buy and use that as your guide.

PDF Download

This is a bit trickier. You'll need to create an event in Google Analytics and then edit your site's code to add an *"OnClick"* element to your download link. The event needs to call a special command called **_TrackEvent** so that Google Analytics can track it accordingly. From Google's own help file, an example of such a link might look like this:

```
<a href="http://www.example.com/specSheet.pdf"
onclick="_gaq.push(['_trackEvent', 'category', 'action', 'opt_label', 'opt_value']);">
```

How to Track Macro Conversions in Google Analytics

This is a bit more involved as many macro conversion steps involve editing your website's source code to include the appropriate Google Analytics pieces that enable tracking.

You can also add individual shopping cart tracking depending on what goal you want to measure. For example:

▶ *Obtain transaction information via shopping cart*
▶ *Obtain product information via shopping cart*
▶ *Add e-commerce tracking code via the Completed Sale page*
▶ Add code that connects a third party shopping cart to your domain

Remember you'll want to make optimization changes with the big, macro conversions in mind — but don't neglect the little things either!

What to Do When Your Conversions Flatline

So, let's assume up to this point that you've done everything right. You've created true-to-life personas of your ideal customers. You've diligently set your conversion goals. You've created pages that are clean and clutter-free — but people still aren't clicking.

Before you start wringing your hands in frustration, let's take a closer look at some of the most common reasons that conversions turn stagnant, along with examples you can learn from.
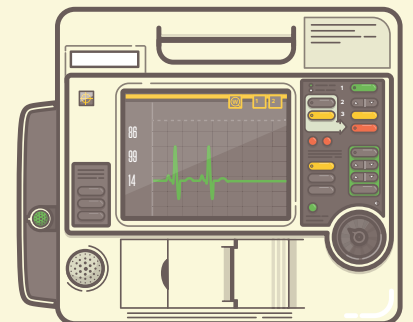
Too Many Calls to Action
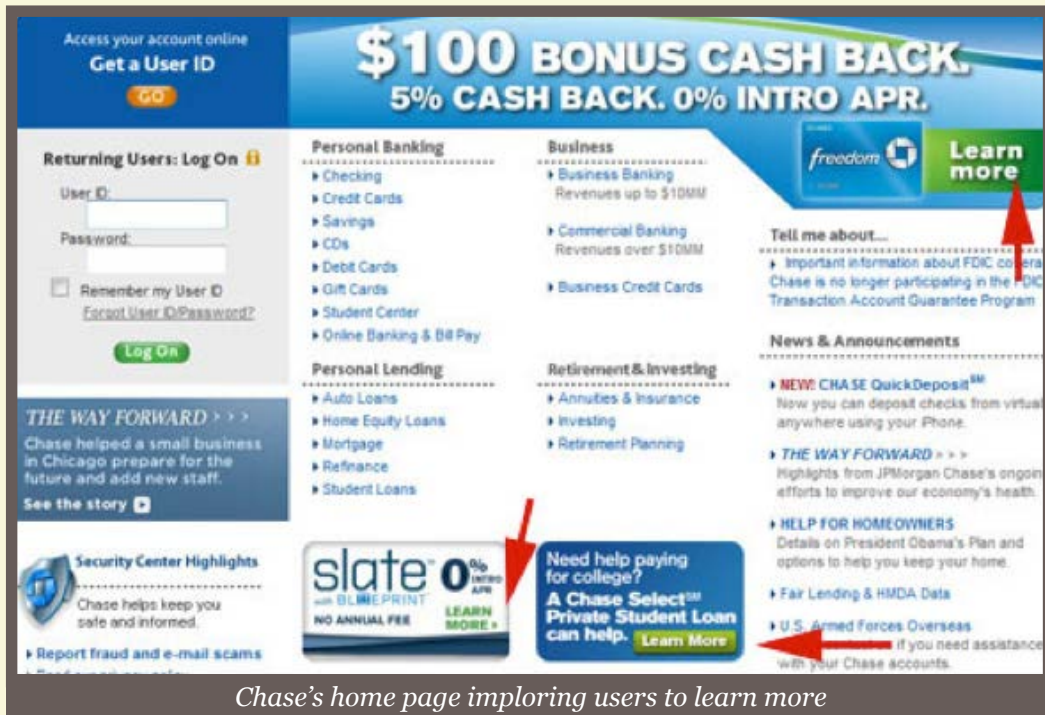
Chase's home page imploring users to learn more

Having too many calls to action is a sure sign that you've got a lot of products or services that you know people will love — but you aren't sure which one they'll click first, so why not introduce them to a little of everything?

It's a well-intentioned goal but far too many links and far too many calls to action will only backfire — causing the user to be distracted and spend an inordinate amount of time trying to figure out which product or service it is they wanted in the first place.

Although you ideally want a single call to action on the page, there will be times when you need multiple calls-to-action. If that's the case, you should emphasize the main one by way of a color change and larger button, and de-emphasize the lesser important actions:

Mac software Ember's free trial button immediately attracts the eye with its contrasting color scheme as opposed to the App Store download buttons

Wrong Call to Action

This is the landing page equivalent of *"what do you want me to do here?"* You may have a lot to say and a relatively small space to say it in. The wrong call to action doesn't give your prospect any motivating reason to want to click.

Even well-known companies struggle with this — especially if they have multiple branches or product offerings. Check out **Starbucks' coffee gear site** and see if you can figure out what action it is they want you to take first:

Lots of different directions (and distractions) for potential customers landing on Starbucks' coffee gear website

If your landing pages are guilty of this, one way to remedy it is to have a *"New? Start Here!"* link with a little tour through the different areas of a site. This will help new users get acclimated to what your site has to offer without overwhelming them with choices. Otherwise, you can create individual landing pages — one for each type of product that you sell. For example, different types of apparel, gift cards, coffee deals, etc.

Too Much Text

This is a problem that plagues many landing pages — particularly if it's not entirely clear what their offer is about.

Check out this landing page for IBM's DB2 database platform — and all the text on it:

The text is segmented well — but it doesn't answer the core question: Why should I care?

This is one of those cases where the landing page doesn't answer the core question on the customer's mind — namely, why should I switch my current database software for this? Or even, why should I pay attention to this offer at all? The headline ***"industry leading performance, scale and reliability on your choice of platform"*** is just a gaggle of marketing buzzwords with no real substance.

The first paragraph simply restates the headline while the sidebar encourages a quote request, a free trial, and a case study *(finally!)* showing the benefits of the platform. Although it's understandable that database geeks can make out the alphabet soup of content here, it doesn't provide the user with any compelling reason to switch, much less consider switching at all.

Title/Content Mismatch

Speaking of compelling reasons to do things, Lowes had about seven of them earlier in the fall when most home improvement projects are in full swing. Upon entering the homepage, the user was assaulted with a variety of discounts — everything from doors and windows to water heaters and greenhouses.

This is a classic case of *"throw everything at the landing page and hope some of it sticks"*.

For the record, I was looking for a generator...

I actually clicked on an ad to see a selection of generators they had on sale, when I was presented with this page, and while discounts are almost always welcome — it was the wrong place, the wrong time, and even the wrong page to be showing me. Whenever you have a big disconnect like this, it's almost certain that even if you were offering *"Free Money"*, users would bounce right off again, not seeing an answer to their inquiry.

Too Many Ads

This issue was more-so a problem when Google Adsense and paid text ads were hot. Thankfully, the frenzy has died down some, but there are still sites, particularly affiliate landing pages that will follow in the footsteps of discount-loving brands like Lowes and throw a heap of ads at the user, hoping that they'll get at least one click from them.

What often happens here is similar to the issue of too many calls to action. Rather than deciding on one path and taking it, the user will leave the page completely. As with site navigation, remove ads from your landing page that could distract your user from taking the action you want.

Too Much Information Requested

Lead generation sites are particularly guilty of this one — and it's actually understandable. In order to deliver the best possible service, they need to know a lot about the person they're hoping to reach out to. But these days, people are leery of scams, spam and other issues, and don't take kindly to getting pressuring sales pitches from telemarketers.

So it's easy to see why they don't feel comfortable parting with much of their personal information, even if they could save several hundred dollars on their car insurance.

If you're asking too much of users on your landing page, try to dial back what's really required. Depending on what you're offering, this will vary. For highly personal information that's absolutely needed to deliver on your offer, you'll want to incorporate secure form processing *(ask your web host about setting this up)* so that the information they submit is fully encrypted, just as a payment transaction would be.

Beyond that, incorporate many well-known trust and authority seals to showcase that you're serious about protecting your customers' personal information. See the section on trust seals in a previous chapter for some of the better and more well-known options to choose from.

You should also try asking for more information at a later date, when you've earned the customer's trust *(by providing valuable information to them over a period of time)*. They may be more willing to part with a few more details than if you had just *"met"*.

Putting it All Together. . .

So far, we've looked at a wide variety of landing page techniques for getting the most optimization out of every change you make. But this doesn't mean you have to do everything alone!

The good news is that there are plenty of tools, services and websites available to help you with everything from creating landing pages, to setting up heat maps and tracking your improvements over time. In the next chapter, we'll look at some of the best tools to help you accomplish these goals.

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TAKE ME TO CHAPTER FIVE

TAKE ME TO CHAPTER SEVEN
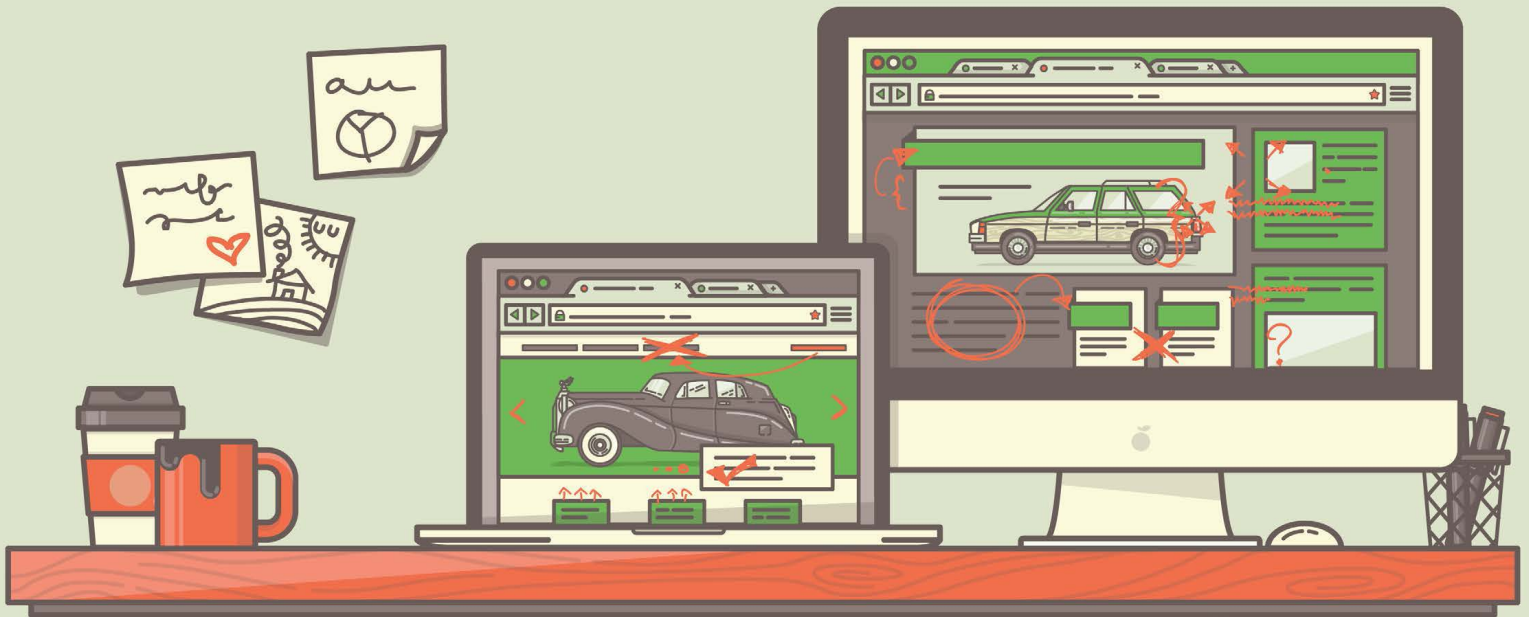
Landing Page OPTIMIZATION

WRITTEN BY NEIL PATEL & SHERICE JACOB

CHAPTER SEVEN

Tools of The Trade

Many marketing professionals have the best of intentions when it comes to creating landing pages, but sometimes their aspirations fall flat for one simple reason:

THEY DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START.

It's all too easy to get bogged down in analytics, sales funnel creation, keyword research, persona development...and forget about the core reason why you're doing all those things.

Thankfully, you don't have to be a web designer, programmer or even have any HTML or programming knowledge to create your landing pages. There are also tools beyond Google analytics which can help you track and test your pages more efficiently.

LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT EACH ONE AND HOW THEY CAN HELP:

Landing Page Builders

These are typically websites or web-based services that let you build a landing page by using an HTML editor or drag-and-drop functionality. Some will give you a basic editor with different landing page templates to choose from.

Unbounce
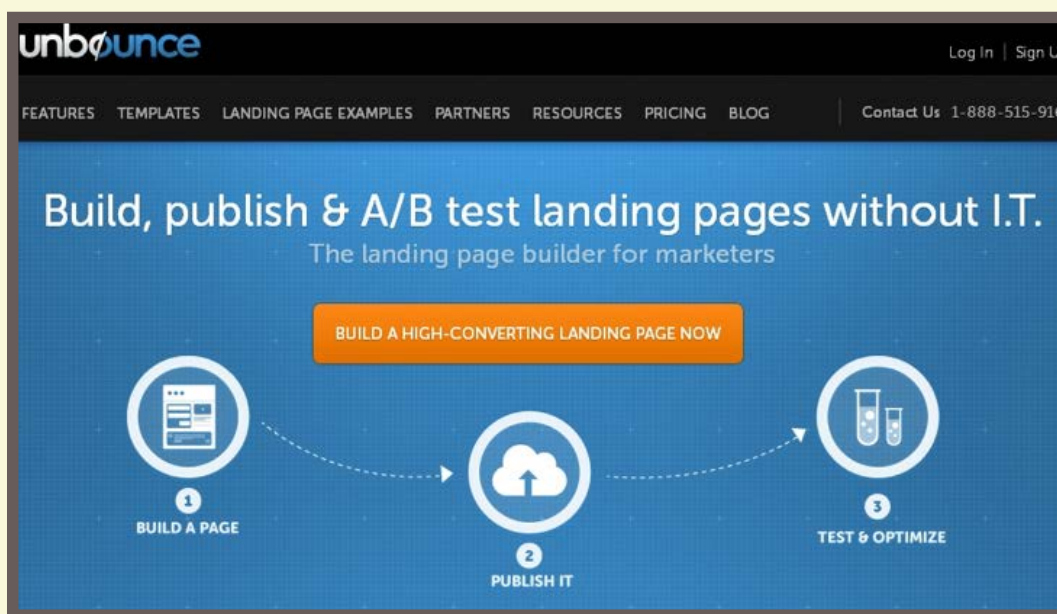
Unbounce is one of the most well-known landing page builders simply because it was one of the first web-based services that allowed people to build and test landing pages without relying on the IT department. Pricing starts at **$49/month for sites getting up to 5,000 visitors**, but that's where the features end for beginners. More advanced accounts allow multiple users/clients, and integration with full marketing platforms such as Salesforce or Hubspot.

On the bright side, you can test as many landing pages as you want, and Unbounce offers a variety of templates for web-based, email and social media landing pages.
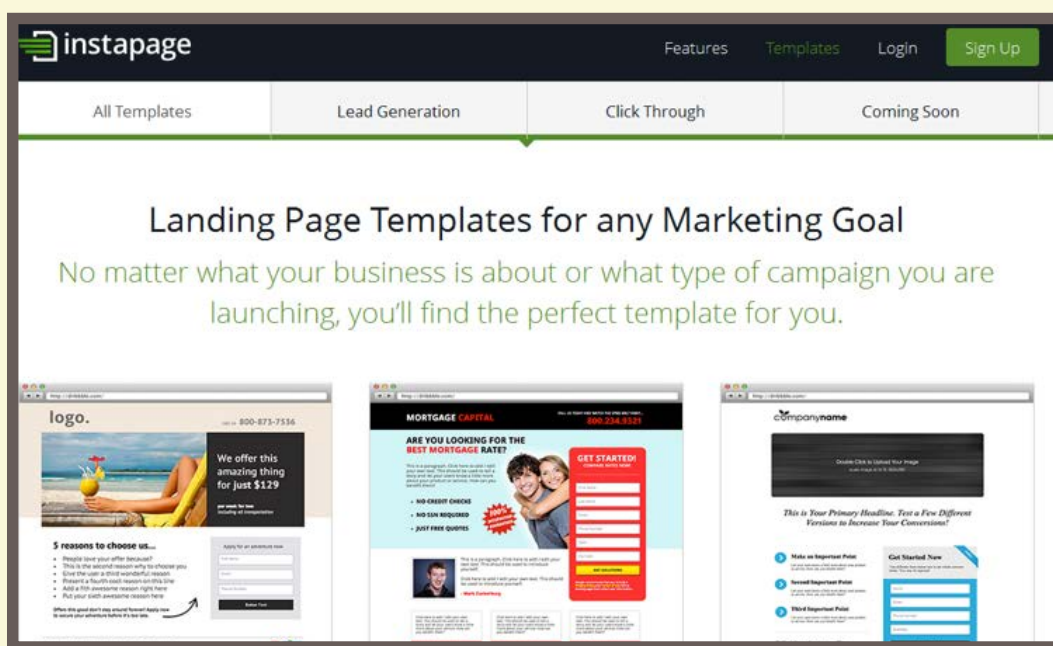
Instapage

[Instapage](#) is a bit different than your typical landing page builder in that it does come with a variety of templates for different uses *(lead generation, click-through and "coming soon" pages)*, but what sets it apart is that it learns based on the visitors that come to your landing pages. You can view real-time analytical data and easily determine the winners of your split tests, while tracking a variety of conversion types from button and link clicks, to thank you pages and shopping cart checkouts.

Instapage also integrates with a variety of marketing tools and platforms, including:

- *Google Analytics*
- *Mouseflow*
- *CrazyEgg*
- *Mailchimp*
- *Aweber*
- *Constant Contact*
- *Facebook*
- *Google+*
- *Twitter*
- *Zoho*
- *And more*

A free option is available if you'd like to try it out, and a Starter package makes landing page creation and testing a bit easier on the wallet of startups and new entrepreneurs. Real features like the aforementioned integrations start kicking in with the Professional package at $79/month, but if you'd like to get landing pages up and running quickly, it's hard to beat the stylish templates that Instapage provides.

Launchrock

[Launchrock](#) is not so much a landing page builder as it is a social and list-building placeholder. Combining **"coming soon"** pages with list building capabilities, Launchrock also includes some interesting social features that encourage users to share the page with others. For example, get X people to sign up, you'll get Y. It also includes basic analytics and the ability to use your own domain name or a Launchrock branded subdomain *(yoursite.launchrock.com)*. You can customize the page via the built-in HTML/CSS editor if you know how to code.

Launchrock is free and requires only an email address to get started.

Wordstream
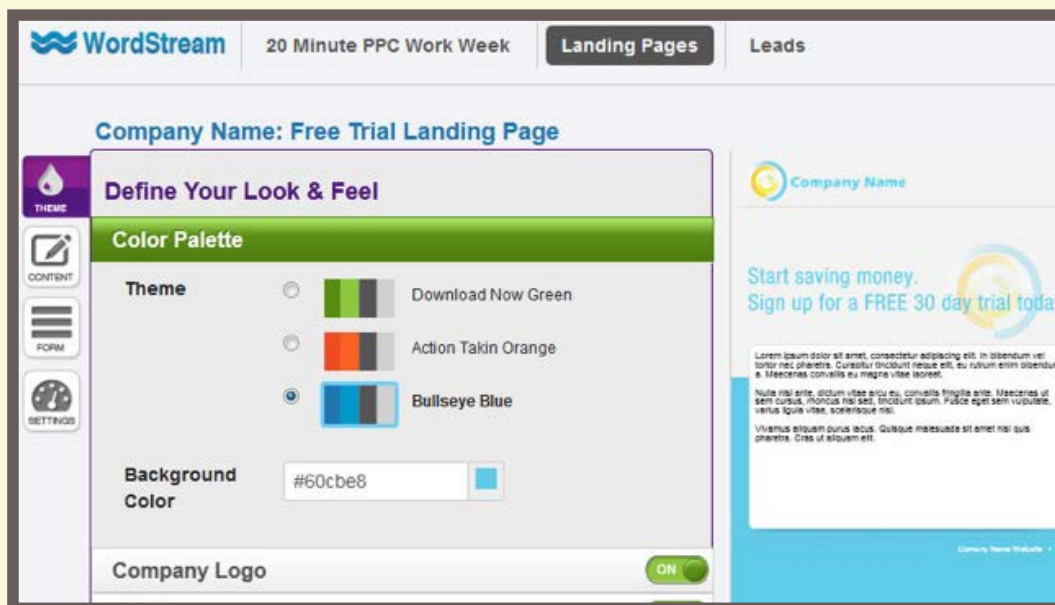
Originally focused on pay-per-click, Wordstream just recently announced its own landing page builder which incorporates both landing page elements and a form builder for lead generation and list building. Its page creator lets you add content, choose different themes to split test and build your own form.

Although the basic setup is rather rudimentary for landing pages, sometimes simple is really what gets the job done. The form builder, however, is where Wordstream's landing page builder really shines:

With it, you can customize all aspects of your form, using a basic drag and drop editor. The builder will walk you through the process of including a form header *(or not)*, as well as defining a call-to-action button and a thank you page, and then making sure you have everything set up correctly so you can hit the ground running when you launch.

An example of a Wordstream form

Although the creation process is very straightforward, Wordstream also attempts to offer *"helpful"* advice, such as incorporating the email form with the suggestion that *"our best practices suggest you should always include this field in your form."*

It can be a bit too beginner-friendly for those of you who are advanced landing page designers, but for those new to landing page creation without the development resources to hire a web designer or full-time staff — the landing page builder eliminates a lot of the frustration and obstacles that first-time optimizers face.

Helpful suggestions from the landing page builder
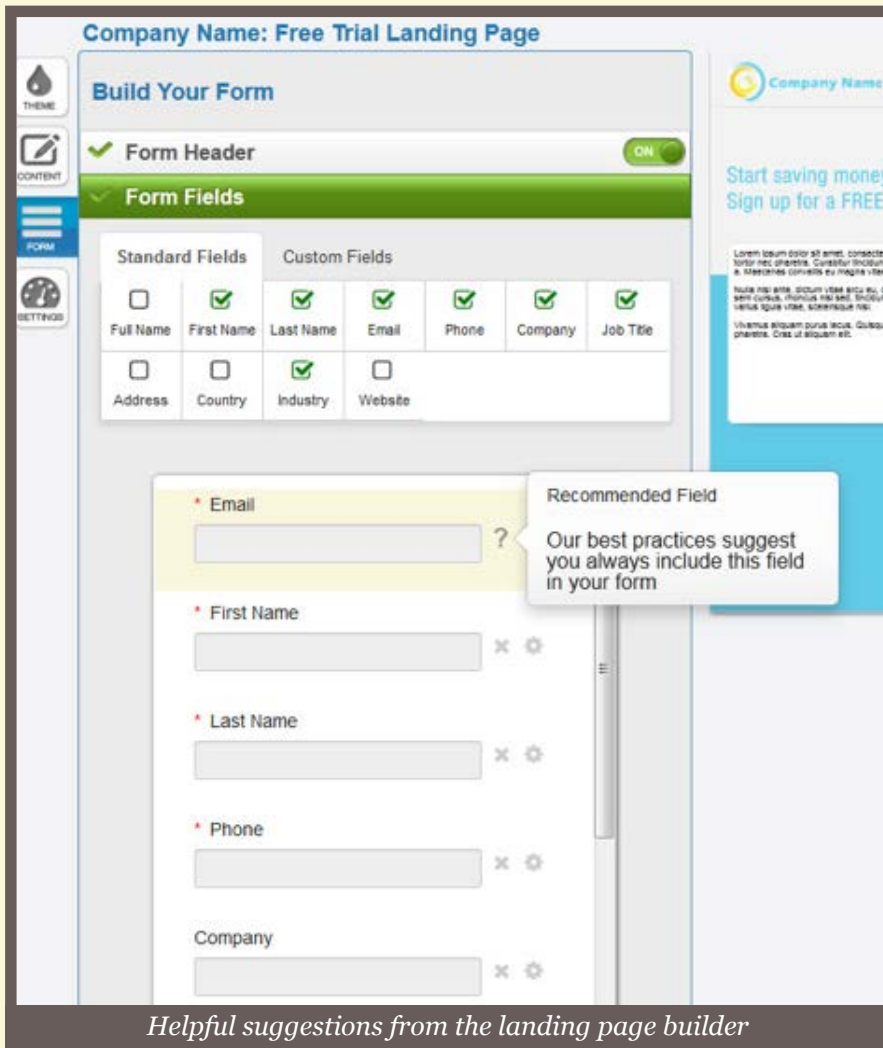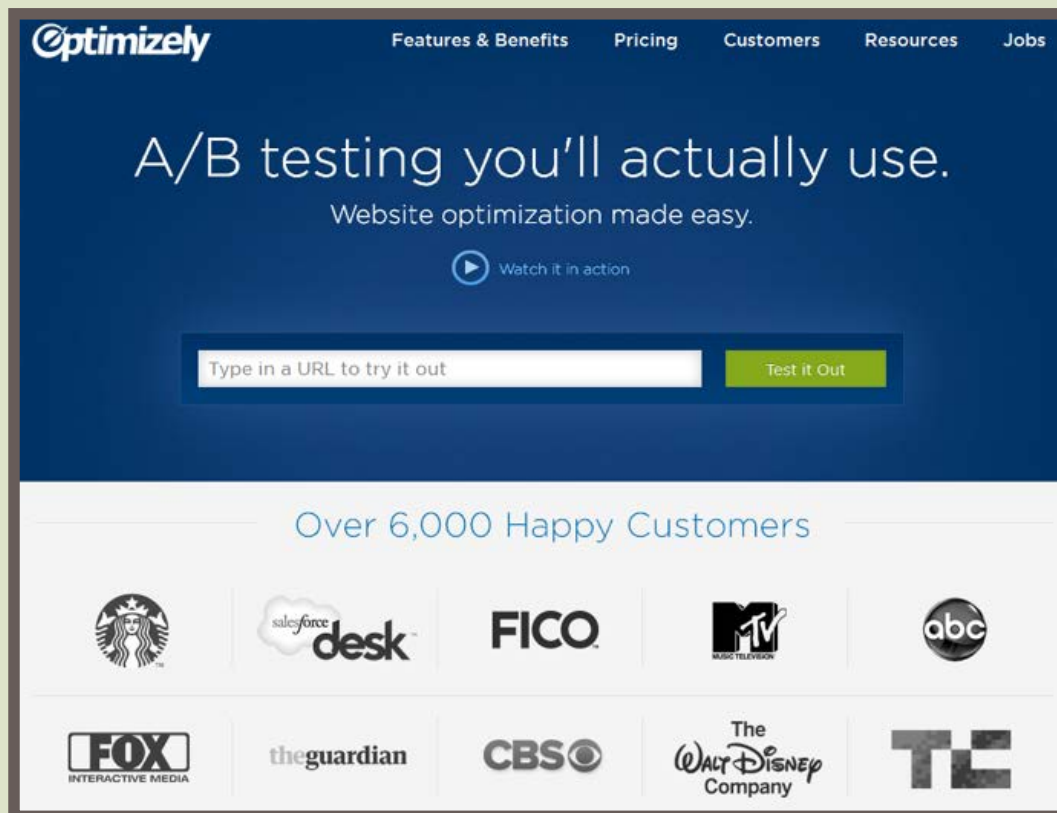
It should be noted that Wordstream's landing page builder only works with pay-per-click campaigns, and doesn't include all the bells and whistles of the other building and testing packages, but what it does, it does extremely well as Wordstream has become known for its PPC expertise over several years.

In order to use the landing page builder, you need to be a subscriber of Wordstream's PPC Advisor. Prices for this service vary depending on your needs.

Landing Page Testers/Trackers

While many landing page builders also include testing and tracking, they usually do one or the other well, but not both. Of course, when you're just starting out, it's a good idea to take advantage of free trials and see which service works best for your needs. Here are a few of the most popular ones available for testing and tracking your campaigns:

Optimizely

[Optimizely](#) is often touted as a good entry-level product for when you're just starting out and working toward upgrading to something bigger and better as your business grows. But with prices starting at $17/month and a free 30 day trial period, it's a powerful product in its own right.

There are some limitations with the lower level packages. For example, multivariate testing is not available at the Bronze or Silver levels. It only becomes a feature at the Gold level, which will set you back $359/month.

On the upside, Optimizely lets you conduct an unlimited number of tests and also allows for mobile testing and personalization. Although you do get an unlimited number of experiments, you can also edit these on-the-fly, but doing so will also cause you to lose count of which version of which page you were working on. It can also leave some things to be desired when it comes to integration with Google Analytics, for example, it's not able to segment custom data *(like PPC traffic)* or advanced analytics segments.

You can also tell Optimizely what you consider as ***"goal"*** points on your website — ranging from email subscription to buying and checkout, and it will track those items independently. Overall, it does a great job with a simple and intuitive user interface and is ideal for those just starting to optimize their landing pages.

CrazyEgg

(Full Disclosure: CrazyEgg is owned by Neil Patel)
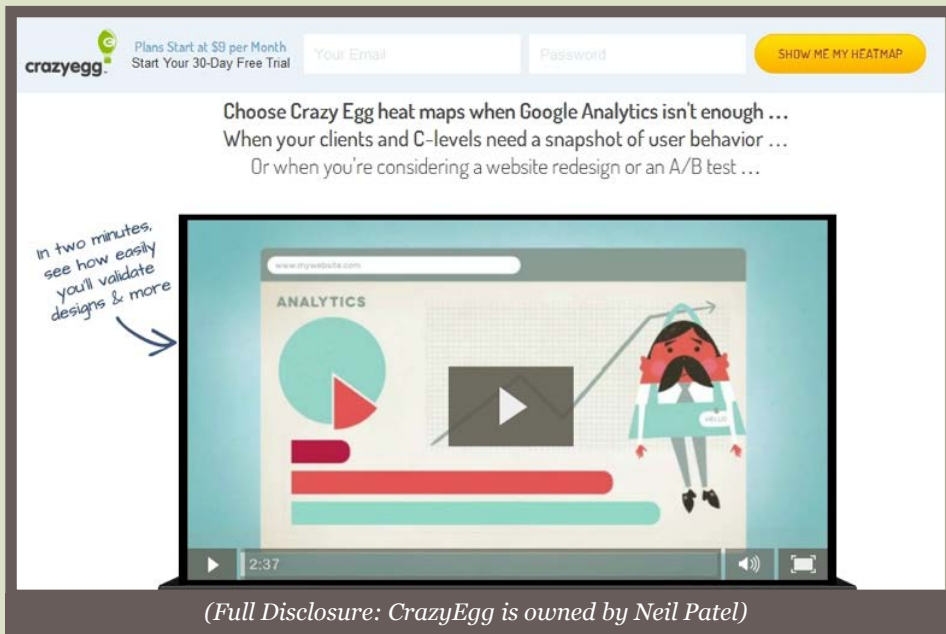
[CrazyEgg](#) is the definitive heat map and visualization service to help you better understand how your website visitors are interacting with your landing pages. Reports are available as **"confetti"** style, mouse clicks/movement tracking and scrolling heat maps. This gives you an all in one picture to see where your visitors are engaging with your pages *(and where you could improve that engagement)*.
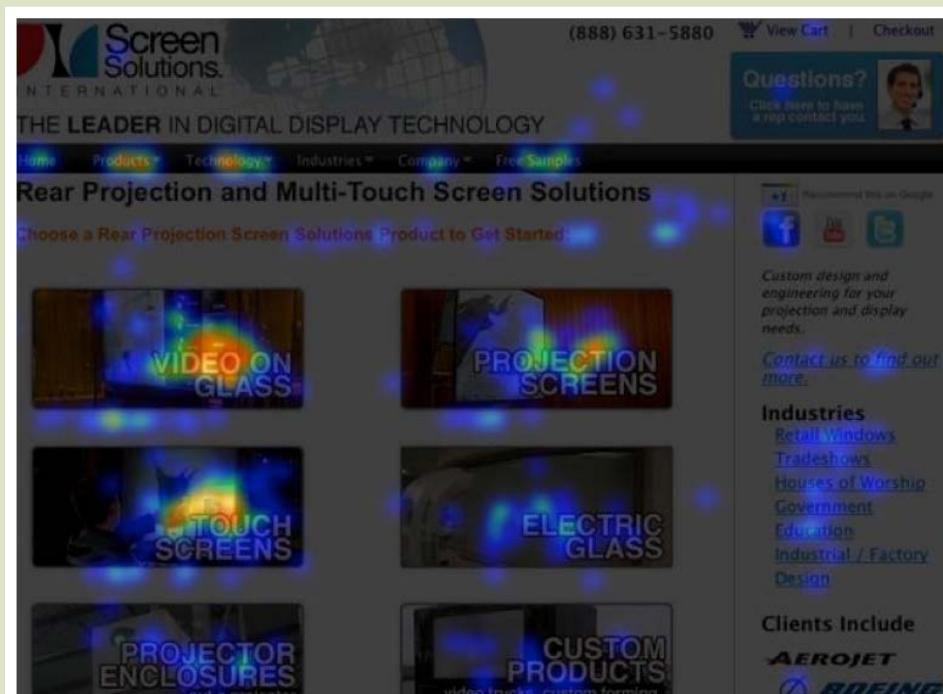
An example of a CrazyEgg click heatmap. Warmer colors indicate more activity

Although CrazyEgg doesn't consider itself a landing page testing and tracking solution, it does take you beyond the core information that Google Analytics gives you to show you actual user behavior on your landing pages. Pricing starts at $9/month for up to 10,000 visitors with 10 active pages and daily reports available. A 30 day free trial is also available.

Hubspot

More than a tracking/testing service, [Hubspot's](#) landing pages offer extremely customizable elements that let you tailor each page to precisely match your customers' needs. This lets you devise alternative segments for each *"persona"* you've created — driving engagement and conversion rates even higher.

The packages are pricey *($200/month starting out)* for first-time landing page optimizers, but larger companies and organizations will see the value built in to the platform. Beyond its smart segmenting, Hubspot also offers a drag and drop landing page builder and form builder. This is all in addition to its existing analytics, email marketing, SEO and other platforms.

Visual Website Optimizer

If you'd like a more creative, hands-on approach to your landing pages, along with fill in the blanks simplicity, Visual Website Optimizer is as good as it gets. Where this package really shines, however, is through its multivariate testing. It also offers behavioral targeting and usability testing along with heat maps, so you can see precisely how your visitors are interacting with your landing pages, and make changes accordingly.

You can also use the built-in WYSIWYG *(what you see is what you get)* editor to make changes to your landing pages without any prior knowledge of HTML, CSS or other types of coding. Results are reported in real-time and as with Hubspot, you can create landing pages for specific segments of customers.

Pricing for all of these features is in the middle of all of the contenders, with the lowest available package starting at $50/month. Still, it's a good investment for an *"all in one"* service where you don't need the advanced features or tracking that other products provide.

Ion Interactive
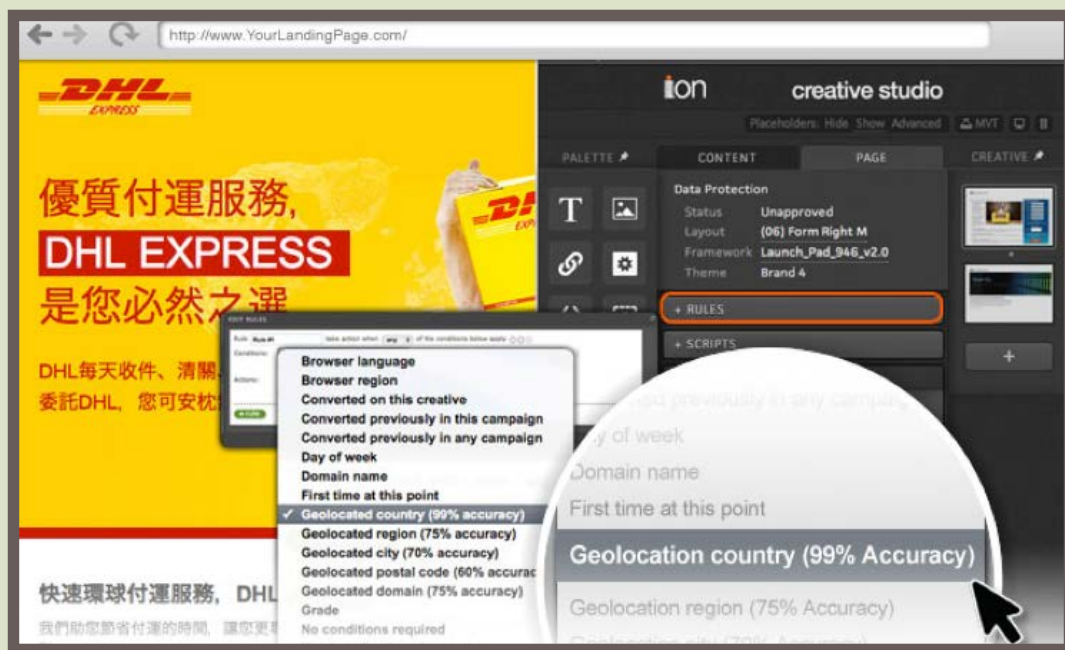
Ion Interactive's landing page testing solution, could set you back several thousand per month, but it's one of the most feature-packed options available, letting you create multi-page microsites, different touch-points of engagement, and completely scalable options with a variety of dynamic customizable options.

If you'd like to take the service for a test drive, you can have it *"score"* your page based on an in-house 13-point checklist. A free trial is also available, as is the opportunity to schedule a demo.

Of course, once you've decided on the best building, testing and tracking solution, there's still work to be done. Before you formally launch your new landing pages, it's a good idea to get feedback and first impressions — not just from your marketing or design team, but from real, actual people who will be using your site for the first time.

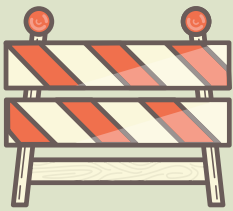## HERE ARE A FEW TOOLS THAT CAN HELP YOU DO JUST THAT.

Usability Tools
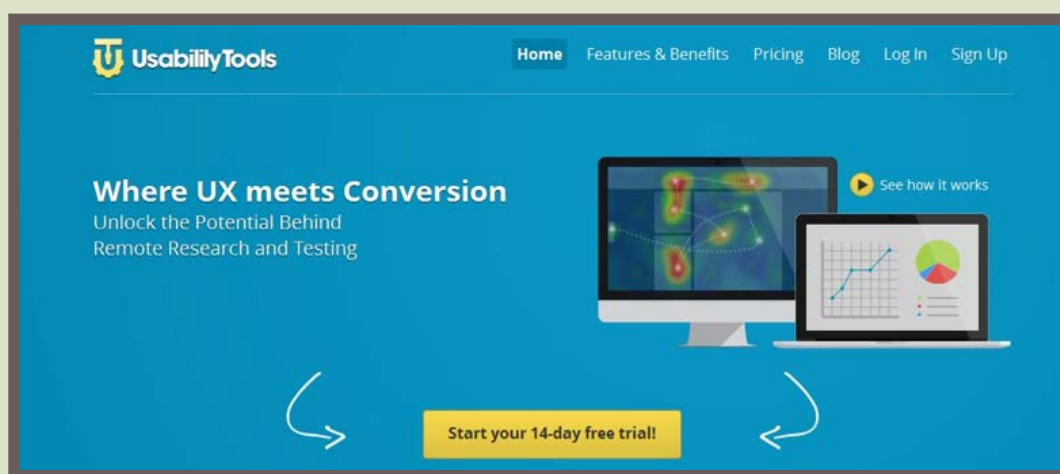
Usability Tools are broken down into two sections — user interface tools and conversion tools. Both are invaluable for optimizing your landing pages. For example, through the user interface suite, you can engage visitors through click-tracking *(see where their attention goes)*, try the Persona Creator, have them take a survey and more.

Through the conversion section, you can conduct a split test, test your forms, track clicks and even record visitors' interactions with your web page.

A 14 day trial is available and pricing depends on whether you need one package or both. You can also choose to pay-as-you-go or buy a monthly or yearly package. Although it doesn't have the same robust testing options as a standalone split testing system, Usability Tools is nevertheless a great way to get visitor feedback and insights before you launch.

Optimal Workshop

Optimal Workshop actually consists of three different tools. OptimalSort lets you see how users would sort your navigation and content, while Treejack lets you find areas that could lead to page abandonment when visitors can't find what they're looking for. Chalkmark lets you get first impressions from users when uploading wireframes, screenshots or other *"under construction"* images.

Through these services, you can assign tasks to users to determine where they would go in order to complete them. You can also get basic heat maps to see how many users followed a certain route to complete the task.

You can buy any of the three services individually, or purchase the whole suite for $1,990/year. A free plan with limited functionality and number of participants is also available if you'd like to try before you buy.

Usabilla

Usabilla allows you to immediately capture user feedback on any device, including smartphones and tablets – a feature that sets it apart from most testing services. Improvement is done via a simple feedback button which can be fully customized and encourages the customer to help you improve your site by reporting bugs, asking about features or just letting you know about the great shopping experience they had.

Usabilla also lets you conduct targeted surveys and exit surveys to determine why a customer may be leaving a page. They also offer a service called Usabilla survey which is similar to other *"first impression"* design testing services and lets visitors give you feedback on everything from company names to wireframes and screenshots.

Pricing starts at $49/month and a free trial is available.

Intuition HQ

Intuition HQ is a usability testing service that works with both computers and iPad, and provides confetti-style click heat maps along with specific tasks for users to complete. Users can choose where they would be most likely to click, or choose to skip the task if they cannot complete it.
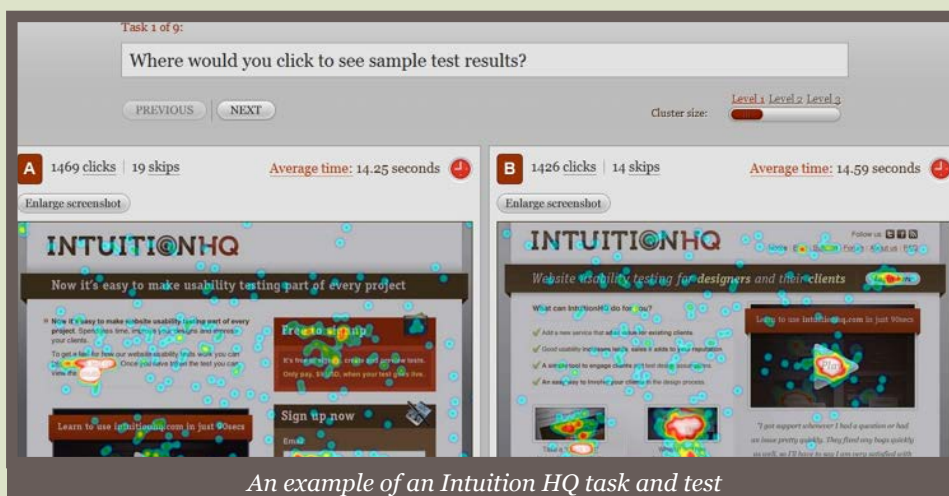
An example of an Intuition HQ task and test

You can also see approximately how long it took the user to complete the aforementioned task. Share the test online to encourage participation, and save the results in a report to show your clients the importance of engagement and interactivity, as well as specific areas that could benefit from changes. Intuition HQ is a definite tool that belongs in the arsenal of any serious landing page designer.

A free account is available upon signup which lets you conduct a test with unlimited questions, 350 participants, and up to 10 live tests. You can also see your results via an iPad app *(installed separately)*.

5 Second Test
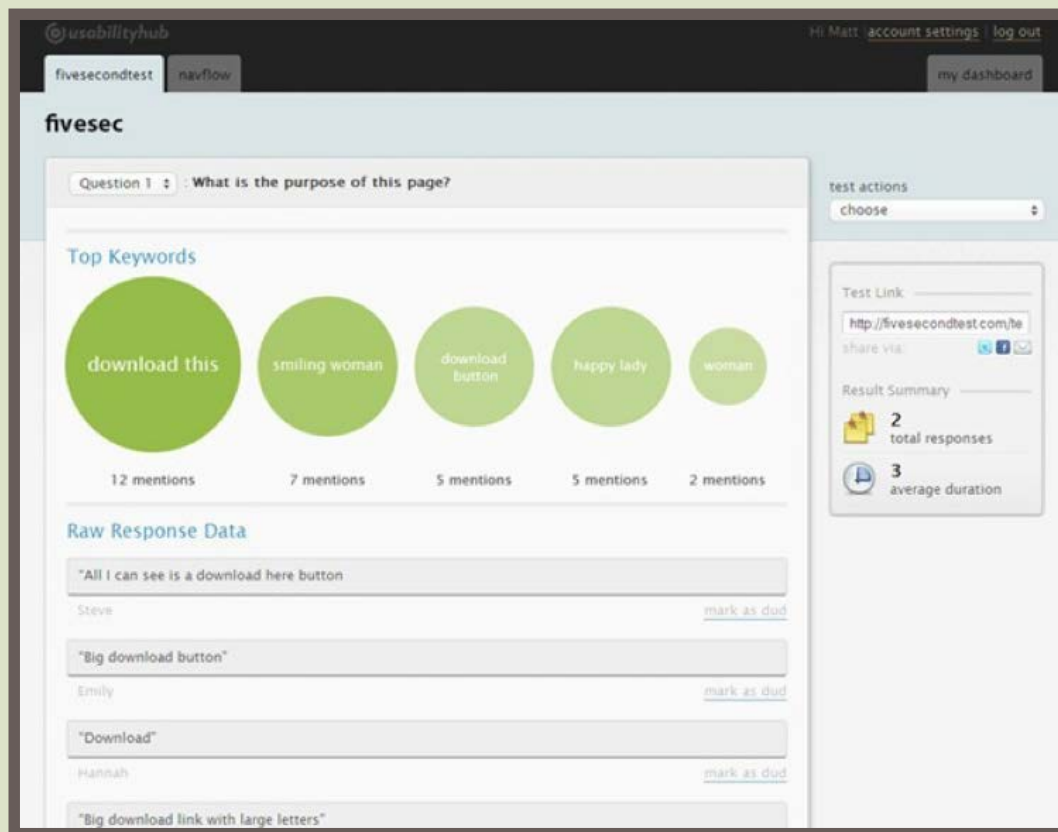
Imagine you want visitors to determine the point of a certain page. What if they could only look at it for five seconds and then give you their opinion? Five second test makes this possible and it's incredibly quick and easy to set up. Case in point — you can try a sample test to see what a typical user would see. In my case, I was asked my first impressions of an app named *"WedSpot"* and what I'd expect to find by using such an app. It's simple questions like these that can actually give you some invaluable insights – and that for just five seconds of your users time.

It's free to conduct and participate in user tests through Five Second test.

Other Helpful Tools

Beyond usability testing and user experience videos, there are a few other tools that your landing pages can benefit from:

Site Readability Test

Juicy Studio has released a readability test that uses three of the most common reading level algorithms to determine how easy or difficult it is to read the content on your site. You'll need to match the reading level with your intended audience but these tests will give you some insight on simplifying your language and making your pages more reading-accessible to everyone.

You simply type in your URL and get your results in seconds. You can also compare your results to other typical readings including Mark Twain, TV Guide, the Bible and more.

Pingdom Website Speed Test

Page loading time is a huge factor in your website's bounce rate and lack of conversions. Simply put, if your page loads too slowly, visitors won't wait around for it to finish. They'll simply leave and potentially go to your competition. Using Pingdom's website speed test, you can see how fast *(or slow)* your website is loading.

Beyond the speed of your website itself, the service will also calculate your heaviest scripts, CSS, images, or other files that could be slowing down your pages. You should note that testing is conducted from Amsterdam, the Netherlands, so depending on how close or far your server is from there will also factor into the equation. It's free to test your site on Pingdom.

Browser Shots

Although this is the last entry in our series of helpful tools, it is by no means any less important. Testing your landing pages in a multitude of browsers on a variety of operating systems is crucial to your pages' overall success. Fortunately, BrowserShots.org makes this process incredibly easy. You can test your pages on all current versions of the web's most popular browsers, as well as older versions of those browsers.

It does take time for browser screenshots to be taken and uploaded for you to see the results. You can sign up for a paid account and see them faster, but for a free tool, it's no problem to wait a little while and see just how accessible your page is to visitors on a variety of operating systems, browsers, and browser versions.

Summary

By now, you should have started, or be close to starting your landing page optimization tests. You've learned how to research keywords, craft compelling personas, write persuasive content, design and split test your pages. You've got a variety of tools to help, and you should now be able to launch, track and update pages with ease.

You learned the difference between creating landing pages, and doing normal search engine optimization. You discovered the different types of landing pages and when to use each one for optimal results. You found out all of the best ways to get traffic and how to create ads that magnetically target and *"speak to"* your ideal customers.

You learned how to do a landing page analysis and what facets to track should your landing page tests grow stagnant or fail to perform. You now know how to troubleshoot pages for the most common pitfalls that cause them to fail, and get your testing efforts back on the right foot again.

Remember that landing page optimization is not a once-and-done process — it's a continuing cycle of refining, improving and growing as you find out what best serves your audience and builds your company while creating relationships with the very people you want to reach. Landing page optimization, at its core, is a continual path of growth and improvement, and is one of the few measurable website sciences that can deliver a true return on investment.

From here, we encourage you to sign up for a few free trials to get to know the systems and styles that work best for you and your business objectives. Put the tips and techniques in this guide to work and evaluate the results with confidence. Keep an eye on the big picture and try not to get bogged down in micro-conversion analysis paralysis.

The most important thing you can do is to take that all-important first step. **Today.**