

The most important factor in online sales  
(How to optimize landing page conversion rates)

Add useful resource links to each section

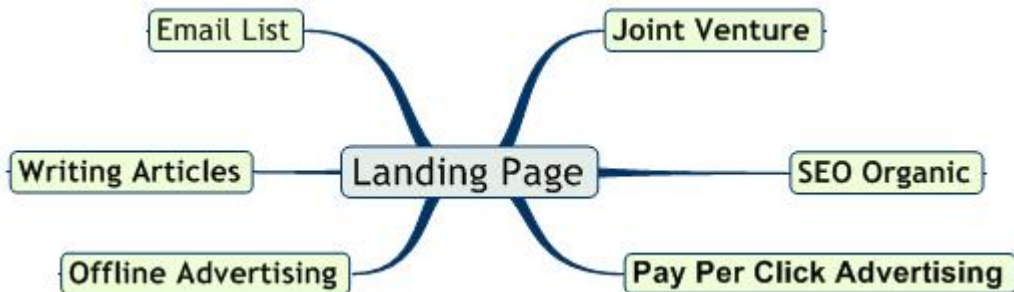
A note about the length of this document:

Every recommendation in here has been verified by at least 3 different sources.

It is common knowledge among successful (>300k/year) infopreneurs that fewer than 1% of product purchasers actually implement the information presented. In an effort to increase this percentage, we have strenuously worked to reduce this document to its present size(the original document was 470 pages). In creating this distilled, extremely useful resource, we have gone through over 3000 research pages, 14 books, 200 studies and reports, as well as thousands of hours of personal testing.

Why is your landing page important?

The top 2 critical factors for web businesses are **good** traffic and landing page conversion rates.



By improving any one of your traffic generation sources(email list, online ads, search engine results, etc), you can marginally improve your profits; by improving the conversion rate of your landing page, you increase the sales generated by each source of traffic. The landing page is the focal point for all your sources of traffic and the one thing that will yield the greatest increase in sales for a slight improvement in quality.

What should you expect, on average, when you do everything right?

| Source of Visitor | Landing Page Conversion |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
|-------------------|-------------------------|

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Search Engines and PPC(free offers)     | 4.1%  |
| Search Engine and PPC(buy now offers)   | 1.58% |
| Emails to House Lists(Free offers)      | 10.7% |
| Email to House Lists Buy now offers     | 6.6%  |
| Email to 3rd Party Lists Buy now offers | 0.91% |

A website visit from the clients perspective:

A potential client entering your site has 4 different questions they go through as they convert. If your site answers these questions well, your site will convert better.

Question 1: does this apply to me?

% of visitors that leave: 50%

How long the visitor stays: 0-7 seconds

Decision Factors:

- Headlines, hero shots, and your caption are the most critical elements.
- At most, visitors will read 15 words before answering question 1.
- Registration forms with lots of fields to fill out will look like work and visitors will leave.
- Wording in your headline and its relevance to that specific visitor(have a dynamic headline or multiple landing pages each focused on 1 headline).
- Graphics that apply directly to the key benefit of the page.
- Overall length of copy, combined with perceived readability (font size, column width, words per paragraph).
- Page design: The visitor wants to know if this is a mprofessional, clear, easy to use site.

Question 2: Should I buy this?

% of visitors that leave: 43%

How long the visitor stays: 7-120 seconds, the majority of those are 10-20 seconds.

Decision factors:

- Copywriting.
- Multi media: mp3s, videos, pdfs, etc.
- Testimonials

- Credentials
- Guarantees

Are there enough details to make a decision? Is each possible reservations answered? Each demographic has a very different idea about how many and what details are needed.

Question 3: Is this easy to buy?

% of visitors that leave: 1-2%

How long the visitor stays: 20 seconds to 2 minutes

Decision factors:

- Required fields in forms, especially phone number.
- "Clear form" or "reset" button which might be mistakenly clicked instead of the submission button.
- Inadequate shipping information
- Price information confusion
- Links to other pages/resources (focus on 1 thing)
- Lack of email privacy information directly next to the email input box.
- Lack of alternate modes of communication/conversion (email, phone, IM).
- Cart hang-ups and post-click error pages.
- They've got money and they want to give it to you; how hard is it for them to give you money? You can still lose the conversion at this stage, especially if it's an impulse item that visitors don't desperately require. During this time visitors are actively typing information into forms, searching for click links, order buttons, or contact information.

Question 4: What do I do now?

Optimal conversion success 5%

Bravo, the visitor has taken the most desired action. They've bought, signed up for a newsletter, pdf report, etc.

What are your clients next steps?

If you've sold them a downloadable product, how do they download it, use it, where can they ask questions? If it's a newsletter, should they check their email now for the current issue? Put yourself in their place, ask other people what questions they would have at this point and answer those questions on your thank you page (the page the

client goes to after they convert). How you interact at this point affects this sale (returns) and future sales.

This is also an excellent point to upsell or crosssell your client. The client will never be more motivated to buy from you than now, their trust and responsiveness is at an all time high.

Optimal page conversion considerations:

**WHAT IS YOUR MOST DESIRED ACTION?**

What conversion activity do you want to take place on your page? A landing page conversion might be:

Buying a product

Getting a lead

Relationship building option to receive emails

Subscription based membership

Or some other specific behavior you want the visitor to perform

**Start with 1 and only 1 conversion goal.** At a later time you can experiment with adding others and then measuring the results i.e. after making 50 sales from a site, you may want to try including an email option and measure the results.

Elements of a Landing Page:

**CHOOSE A URL AND HOSTING:**

Have a readable and fairly easy to type URL, even if you have PPC or similar traffic sources.

This is a bad URL:

<https://ads.firefox/fhdg/firefox?client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official>

This is a good URL:

[www.coolhandbags.com](http://www.coolhandbags.com)

Readable also means distinct words in your URL should be capitalized in your copy i.e. [www.CoolHandBags.com](http://www.CoolHandBags.com).

Do not include:

- misspelled words
- strings of numbers longer than five characters
- dashes
- odd characters
- anything after the ".com"

If you include a folder after ".com" you'll get more visitors to your home page rather than the landing page

If you use PPC i.e. adwords, searchers often use your URL to decide whether to click at all.

To pick a great URL use google:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

to find the most common search terms for your subject and include those terms in your URL. You can verify your choice by using a similar site name in adwords and pointing your ads to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party site to measure the click through rate.

## HERO SHOT

- The hero shot will get the most focus of any page element after the headline.
- Place the hero shot to the left of your text.
- Don't put copy over or across the Hero Shot (it confuses the eye).
- Use captions. the most-read content on your page are headlines and hero shot captions.
- If your hero shot is a headshot of a seminar speaker or author, caption with their name and why they're pictured.
- Duplicate your action text in the caption.
- Make your hero shot clickable (8% of visitors will click it). Have a pop up window appear with a larger version of the image and a short offer summary.
- If you have a service, you can use a picture of your staff, graphs, client logos, or an award icon. Do not use clip art, a bad photo implies a real person and can actually get a higher conversion rate than a polished picture.
- Does the picture show or describe what they get?
- Limit your hero shot to the main product or element of the page. Multiple pictures tend to reduce results because visitors want to focus on a single item.
- The page title and hero shot can express the same idea.
- The only thing most visitors want to know is: Does this product/service match the precise need I'm trying to fill right now?

## HEADLINE

- Your headline should match the headline of the traffic source (or search engine keyword term a visitor used to find you) as much as possible. Verbatim matching is far better than a close

- match. The headline should be in harmony with the source copy of the visitor; if the user clicked on an ad that said “Big Beautiful Barbies” then the headline on the landing page should say “Big Beautiful Barbies”.
- There are some visitors who simply want to confirm that they are in the right place, and that the action they are about to take is what they thought it was. For these people, the headline may be the only thing they read before taking action.
  - The headline should boil down the compelling idea that has brought someone to the page.
  
  - Avoid metaphor or imagery. Be clear, not clever.
  - You can also change headline copy for various prospect demographics while keeping the rest of the copy on the page pretty much the same.
  - The second most important headline is your call to action on the hotlinked text-line and/or submit button itself.

#### CALL TO ACTION TEXT

Call to action text is on the link or button that initiates the conversion (“buy now” vs “start making money”)

You may want to test matching this with your headline. Copy tests here can give you the second highest response change, after headline change.

#### BODY COPY

- Your body copy should stay on target. It's meant to explain the headline and conversion offer. Do not talk about your company or other products. If you lose focus, you lose conversions. It's that simple.
- Generally you will write copy that is longer than necessary. No excess words, no extra sentences and no long winded introductions. That's impossible on the first try. So don't bother. Instead, write everything you'd like to say, then go back and boil it down. Don't lose any of the points, just cut excess verbiage. Many 500-word landing pages that convert at fairly low rates could be boiled to 200-word landing pages that convert very well.
- Don't start by saying, “Welcome”

- Instead of talking in terms of features and benefits, talk in terms of what your visitor can use your products for.
- Simpler is better.
- the landing page exists for a very specific task, and every element should focus the user on that task. Extraneous links, text or images only serve to distract the reader. As the reader scans the page, they should easily be able to pick out the major points of information.
- Make sure that your major points are highlighted, whether it's by position, bold text, white space, color, font, size or graphical emphasis.
- It may be counterproductive – to have detailed copy on a landing page.
- If you do write detailed copy, it should mirror the major points, and should be obvious to the reader in the first sentence of each paragraph which of the major points it refers to. This is a place to differentiate yourself, you could provide a company story.
- Features are important, but chances are that every competitor in the space has similar features, or say they do. To separate from them, get away from superlatives and give examples of what the product or service can do, and how specific people are benefiting from using it.

## LONG COPY VS SHORT COPY

- Copy length depends entirely on the situation.

Generally speaking, longer copy is appropriate to higher level sales - products costing over \$500. The other main benefit of long copy is that it is somewhat more likely to accurately pre-qualify leads generated. Long copy may imply the conversion decision is a big one and that one needs a lot of information to make a decision. On the other hand, the presence of long copy for a paid offering may be extremely reassuring to shoppers, even if they don't read every word before converting. They feel safe that your site really understands the product or service, and that their questions will be answered. The types of consumers who like to carefully read labels before making selections in the grocery store may leave a brief-copy landing page quickly because they can tell at one glance it won't have enough information for their shopping style. Long copy readers represent about 20% of your visitors.

- Shorter copy is better for free offers, a sentence or two. Short copy implies that the decision is an inconsequential one.
- The optimum body copy is whatever can be read at one glance - 25 to 30 words max.

## SUMMARY

This can be a paragraph or bullet points. After reading the summary, the visitor should know what your page is offering and what actions can take place from here.

## Copywriting Tips for Landing Pages

- The average person reads about 50 words online in 20 seconds - if they aren't distracted by other graphical elements.
- Studies have identified 300 words as the first threshold for reading comprehension. After that, many readers are comfortable up to 3,000 words. So start with a critical info summary of no more than 300 words, and keep them above the fold.
- Get a copy of Tested Advertising Methods by John Caples and treat it as your copywriting bible.
- Don't use words such as "we" and "our" use words like "You" and "your." It's natural to write your first copy round from the perspective of your company - we are great, we do this, we do that - but it just turns off incoming readers. They are selfish; they just want to know about themselves.

## Test:

The We-We Calculator - a fun (and effective) free tool: Go to this Web page, paste your landing page copy into the box and click submit... you'll find out instantly if your copy is not customer-centric enough.

<http://www.futurenowinc.com/wewetext.htm>

- People read the first three words of paragraphs and bulleted items and then move on to the next paragraph and/or bulleted item. Try reading your copy that way; do you have critical words close enough to the start of sentences so your copy is persuasive without reading on?
- People read the tops and bottoms of things before they read the middles (if they bother to read the middles at all). Your first

- and last paragraph, and your first and last items on lists will be the most read.
- Keep your first paragraph short - no more than one-two lines long. Then alter lengths fairly regularly, so a fat paragraph would be followed by a on-line one. This makes copy vastly more interesting and accessible to the eye.
  - No paragraph should be longer than 4-5 lines; ever.

You can include:

stories

bulleted lists

guarantees

testimonials

descriptions, etc

Only 20% of your visitors will read much, if any, of the body copy.

Remember landing page success depends on doing several things right, not just the top few.

Copy should be as short as possible without leaving out important/effective information.

## TESTING

Backup, Experiment, Analyze, Repeat

This is the single most important activity in developing a high converting landing page. If you ignored the other information here and only did this you would eventually create a high converting landing page; by using the information here, you compress your time frame from 6-18 months down to 2-6 weeks (depending on your website traffic).

### BACKUP

Save your page before you change it, name it something like index32, then index33, etc.

### EXPERIMENT

Change 1 element in your page, i.e. only the hero shot or only bullet items or only the caption, etc.

### ANALYZE

Analyze the results after an appropriate number of visitors or conversions: 3000 visitors or 30 conversions.

## REPEAT

Do this process again and again for each element of your landing page.

Creating multiple landing pages 1 for each major keyword/need will optimize conversions  
95% of the page content will be the same.

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

Example: Palo Alto Software by testing a series of design tweaks, many of which seemed fairly inconsequential on the surface, on a conversion page with complex information, it raised online sales by 41.3%

## Guidelines for Graphics

There are seven types of graphical images that play a role in landing pages.

1. Hero shot of offered product or a representation of the service
2. Page/site logo and associated graphics (tagline)
3. Clickable buttons/1M ks
4. Form fields
5. Color blocks, arrows, and background "screens" to guide the eye around the text
6. Informative content such as charts, tables, cartoons, testimonial photos, etc.
7. Icons indicating trustworthiness and safety

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

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

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

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

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

Charts may work better than text

## COLOR CONSIDERATIONS

Want more info on color choices and Web sites? Here's our favorite resource site. It's fairly technical, but useful for designers:

<http://www.Websitetips.com/color/>

Best practice is to use a white background for the majority of your text, including your headline and registration form (if there is one). you can use a colored "screen" as background for some segments of your text, for example a bulleted list of features

80% of men say their favorite color is blue. More 50% of women say the same.

Bright, vivid colors, such as pure red and blue are energizing and outwardly focused.

Extremely bright, electrifying colors, such as lime green and fuchsia, are festive and dynamic.

Muted, gray-based colors, such as taupe and blue-gray, are sophisticated and reserved.

Dark shades, such as deep forest green and navy blue, are dignified and professional.

Light shades of most colors, such as pink and light blue, are delicate and ethereal.

Be careful with the color green because American consumers associate it with money and paying a price. Unless you are an environmental group or an information site not making a sale, green may not be right for you.

Your page should have one dominant color, with other colors drawing the eyes to particular areas of the page. The eye can pick out very subtle variations in color. If all you want to do is emphasize a piece of text, a small variation may be all that is required.

For a harmonious feel, choose colors from the same family as your dominant color. Pick two or three colors in different shades of the same color. For a brighter image choose complimentary colors - colors opposite each other on the color wheel, for example blue and orange.

## FONTS and TEXT

As long as you don't make blatantly stupid color choices, such as colored or white type on a colored background, color choices are not hugely significant in landing page conversions.

Make your textual copy as easy to read as possible. Many visitors will leave just because it looks "like work" to read.

Top 5 rules to follow for easy-to-read type

Use 10 point or larger font.

Captions, names of form fields, "fine print" copyright and legal, and possibly some chart content and tech specs can be smaller.

No matter what type-size, text should never run more than 52-60 characters across the screen. If you make your typeface smaller, your columns must also be thinner. People's eyes simply can't read wide columns easily. (That's why major newspapers have such thin columns.)

This means you'll need to tell your Web designer to keep the columns fixed width, so they don't expand when someone views the page with a wider browser window.

Pick a font that you see used widely online by high traffic sites. Just like colors online, not all typefaces appear the same (or even are available for display) on all computers. So you'll need to use Web-safe fonts. Our favorite practical resource for typeface choices in Web design is an article by Daniel Will-Harris at eFuse.com. Go to [http://www.efuse.com/Design/web\\_fonts\\_basics.html#WebSafeFonts](http://www.efuse.com/Design/web_fonts_basics.html#WebSafeFonts) With the possible exception of a one-line headline, all your text should be flush left and *\*not\** centered.

Your headline should be significantly larger in type size and possibly bolder than the rest of the copy on the page. However, your subheads (if any) should be as close as possible in size to the regular body copy; otherwise readers are likely to read just the subheads and not the text under them. So, use bold for subheads but not larger font sizes.

Don't underline text for emphasis. Underlining has come to communicate that the underlined text is a hyperlink. It's confusing or off-putting for readers to click on static text. For the same reason, stay away from blue text.

Don't use italics if you can help it - these are very hard to read on a computer screen.

Use colored, bolded, or "highlighted" text for selective informational highlights, not for verbal emphasis. Many copywriters make the mistake of bolding or coloring words they would put verbal emphasis on if they were reading the copy out loud.

However, visitors are never reading every word on your screen, and certainly not reading every word in the order you wrote it. Their eyes are skipping

about. Your bolded or colored words will catch their eyes so much that these words may be the first read on the page - or the only read words on the page.

Review the copy you've bolded or highlighted. If those are the only words on the page that someone reads, do they summarize the points you need to get across? Are they enough to cause a

conversion, or to at least sell the reader on going back and reading more of the regular-font copy?

4. Make sure your pages show when links have already been clicked.

5. Be very careful of using colored or white text on a colored background for anything other than navigation bars or break-out boxes. We spoke to several designers who said that while it should work with contrasting colors, they've rarely seen good implementations. Yellow text on a blue background is particularly hard to read, and communicates a low quality offer.

#### Interactive items in the content

Often these are rich media elements, but they can also be quick calculators and tools. On the rich media end, you have your choice of audio and/or video clips.

The key for interactive audio success is that you allow it to be interactive. Don't blast audio at every visitor. Instead put a "click to listen" button on your page, explain briefly what people will hear when they click, and then sit back and let visitors play with the button. This is especially important for sites catering to people over 30 and anyone at work because these demographics probably don't want their computers to start blaring unexpectedly.

You may also want to include a photo of the person who'll be speaking in the clip. It's another way to increase believability.

Quick personality test to get email address?

## FOR FORMS

### Step #2. Use nine best practices in form design

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

1. Use a small bit of technical savvy to have the cursor floating in the first box of the form field. Also have the cursor jump to the next field in places where it's known that a certain number of keystrokes means someone is done. For example, the phone number field or zip code. Also, allow people to tab from one field to the next.
2. Provide any help that the user might need to fill out the field. For example, putting a sample date in front of the date field to show the format.
3. Match the field to the information that it will accept. If it's too long, users will wonder what they're missing. Too short and they won't be sure if it's accepting their data.
4. Number questions only if they go beyond the current real estate to another screen, or scroll down the page.
5. Spaces inside form fields should be white - not colored or grey.
6. Make sure the user's information is saved as they go, so they won't lose their data if they hit their back button or move forward prematurely.
7. Clearly indicate which fields are required by bolding the field names and/or putting an asterisk next to them and a note at the top.
8. Avoid drop-down boxes if possible; many people just don't "get" them. If you must use them because otherwise a list of options is too long, reevaluate whether you really need that long list (for example, if you have zip, you don't need state name).

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

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

lists with like sounding entries, such as a series of printers, use alternating colors for each entry.

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

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

Last but not least, even if you can't do a real usability test, at least get a few people who aren't involved with the page or company to run through the form while you watch. It's the quickest way to catch the biggest mistakes.

### Tips on Collecting Email Addresses

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

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

If you must request email, here are some guidelines:

#1. Add brief, reassuring text immediately next to the form. A brief statement in small type could read, "We value your privacy" or "Your email is secure" or "Your email will be held in strict confidentiality" or "Your privacy is assured" or "Your email will not be shared or rented."

This statement can link to your privacy policy, or you can add a privacy policy link at the bottom of the page.

However, under no circumstances should you omit privacy information from a landing page that requests email.

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

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

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

Step #3. Put some thought behind your submission button

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

Biggest mistake to avoid: DON'T ADD A "RESET" OR "CLEAR FORM" BUTTON.

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

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

Every form expert stresses the importance of what buttons say. Most often, it is the wording of the submit button that makes a difference. One of the buttons below outperformed the other in a test by almost 40%. Can you guess which?

Click to qualify - It's Free      Am I Eligible? Find Out Instantly!  
(The winner was the one on the right.) To figure out your wording, go back to the main selling point of your landing page, and put it into an active form on the button.

Anecdotal evidence suggests matching exact words from your headline can boost results.

Add to cart is better than buy on a button, because buy implies a bigger commitment than the user may be ready for. Baby step your way to yes.

### Adding Phone Numbers to Landing Pages

Telephone numbers can help your landing page conversions in two ways. Firstly, some consumers simply prefer to call in. Perhaps they have questions they need answered, or they just want to make sure there's a "real human being" behind the virtual presence.

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

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

### Lesson #1. Visitors briefly scan - not read - pages.

People don't read landing pages carefully, and they certainly don't read the words in the order that you copywrote them. Landing pages are not read like articles, letters, or book pages. People glance at them, flick their eyes in a fairly uniform pattern, and then move on fast.

During the first handful of seconds, people are looking to see if the page is relevant to them. They give a fleeting look to the page logo to see if they are in the place they expected to be, skim a few words (but not all) from a headline, and perhaps glance at any large images that are above the fold.

That's about it. So, that's all the content (and time) you have to favorably impress a visitor enough so they'll consider reading on... let alone actually converting.

### Lesson #2. The upper left corner is always looked at.

Nearly every participant at some point glanced at the top left corner of each page - the spot where your site logo generally is. But their

glance didn't just look at the logo, their eyes drifted down a titch to give close attention to the spot immediately below the logo.

Lesson #3. People look at people.

This is one of those "duh" lessons. If there's a human face anywhere above the scroll on a landing page, all of your visitors' eyes will be drawn to it - probably well before they bother to read your copy. In fact, human faces can prove a real distraction from the conversion message.

So, if you are considering adding a human face to your landing page, be aware of how magnetically powerful it will be. If you have great copy to put around it - such as a real-life testimonial or a webinar, invite them to hear that person speak - then you may have a homerun winning landing page on your hands.

Lesson #7: Hotlink wording can affect page-readership and conversions.

If visitors see that you've underlined or colored any text blue (to indicate a hotlink), you better make sure that text contains copy so powerful that it stands out on its own and can make conversions happen without any of the other body copy on the page being read. That's because visitors will probably look at hotlinked text first, and then use the copy to decide if the rest of the page is worth reading. They treat the hotlink less as a thing for clicking and more as an informational tool - "Oh that's what this site is about." They may convert then and there, or click on the hotlinks, or just bail because the hotlinked points aren't terribly relevant to their particular needs. So the text within hotlinks becomes a bail-or-no-bail decision factor possibly secondary in importance only to your page's headline and hero shot. If you're using bland wording, such as "Click here for more information" or "Read on..." in your hotlinks, you are missing the boat. You had the eye's attention, and you blew it.

We also noticed that some people tend to read less copy on a page that has hotlinks on it. It's as though the hyperlinks tell the eye, "There's more reading elsewhere, so don't bother to read the stuff on this page, it's just intro blah-stuff."

Pages without hyperlinked text got much closer examination. We suspect people felt all the answers they needed were right there so they should look for them.

Does that mean you should yank hyperlinks? Probably not. Some demographics, such as men who love Google, prefer a super-clean page with quick info they can make a decision on easily. While others, such as women coming from MSN Search, tend to prefer much more information in order to make an informed decision. If your page has to serve both, hyperlinks may be the best workaround. You'll need to test to be sure.

Warning: Search engine spider traffic is not always a good thing. If you are running campaigns with landing pages that appear to be nearly identical, either to each other or to existing pages on your site, we urge you to check with an optimization expert to make sure you're not going to get in trouble. You see, some search engines (Google most notably) may think you're posting "mirror" pages on purpose to fool their spiders into giving you higher rankings. Any duplicitous action like this can hurt your rankings.

So, many marketers we know ask their landing page team to add code to the pages that tells the spiders not to index them. The protocols for excluding, or allowing spiders, are simple and available on many developers' sites, as well as search engine resources. In a nutshell, there is a file called robots.txt, which spiders look for in your root directory. Once they find the file, they check to find specific characters that include or exclude files, file types, and folders.

To universally allow spiders:

User-agent: \* Disallow:

This one keeps all spiders out:

User-agent: \* Disallow: /

Paid search landing page tips

In the meta tag, just put nofollow no index instead or as well

Add good/bad screen shots, video mp3 examples

Your headline is by far the most critical element affecting paid search ad results. We've heard ample anecdotal evidence about this, and then were delighted to see it backed up with study results from Atlas D.

If you match the landing page headline to the exact same search term used, conversion rates should increase by more than 70%

Some marketers construct a new landing page for each term. But, if you are managing hundreds of keywords this may prove onerous, so you may want to invest in a bit of programming to generate landing page headlines dynamically (in an automated fashion) to match that search term.

You'll probably still need a few groups of landing pages - so the bullet points and offer copy under the headline roughly match the headline. The less generic your copy, the better your conversions will be.

Example: Software marketers at Pronexus discovered their generic paid search landing pages generated a .5-1% average lead generation conversion rate. Highly targeted landing pages with very specific headlines got as much as a 7.1% conversion rate for the same offer. There wasn't much difference between the two sets of landing pages, except for some copy changes, especially in the headlines.

Build a landing page for each audience

Prospects will convert far more readily if they think your offer is very specifically targeted to their needs. They like to see their job title, "Job tips for CFOs," or their industry, "What credit unions need to know about computer security," on a landing page offer.

Any offer pitched "for business executives" is doomed to under perform. No one identifies with a generic business exec.

#### OTHER PAGE ELEMENTS:

Logo

Conversion action link or button

Quick offer explanation

Longer product/service explanation

Links to more information

Deadlines

Forms and descriptive tags next to each field

Tagline describing what your brand does or stands for

Security and reassuring elements such as the Better Business

Bureau icon Testimonials, which might be textual or include photos or audio/video Technical specifications

## Guarantees

Rich media elements (streamed video/ audio, Flash)

## SOME ELEMENTS TO TEST

multiple sites for each product?

at They Tested

- Copy length
- Image heavy vs. copy
- Simple page w/few graphics
- Multiple paths to conversion
- Offers and pricing
- Paths to and through conversion process
- Graphics and language
- Single vs multi-step page
- Strong sales language vs soft sell
- Headlines -Call to action
- Copy -Images
- Graphics -Button look
- Button text-Button location
- No links -Press quotes
- Testimonials -Pricing
- Flow through process
- Personalization based on name and geographic location
- Personalization based on pervious education needs
- Increasing number of landing page from 10 to 100 to personalize to source.
- Headlines
- Headlines
- Body copy
- Offer
- Amount of data requested (many fields vs fewer fields)
- Headlines

- Single link (to action event)
- Large type
- Prominent phone number
- Product and offer testing
- Left hand vs centered image
- Cartoonish logo
- Headlines
- Primary vs pastel colors
- Wording of privacy policy summary
- Bullethead vs paragraph copy
- Shortening body copy
- Reorganizing benefit copy to single page
- Removing buttons
- Headlines
- Headlines emphasizing benefits not features
- Shorter copy length
- Different people pictured on page

A MarketingSherpa article dated January 2004 stated that after adding new website conversion strategies and testing against their current conversion rate, Personalcreations.com increased their conversion rate from 4% to 7%.

What is the bottom line?

4% conversion rate

Est. Visitors 20,000  
 Conversion Rate 4%  
 Average Sales Price \$100.00  
 Revenue \$80,000.00

7% conversion rate

Est. Visitors 20,000  
Conversion Rate 7%  
Average Sales Price \$100.00  
Revenue \$140,000 .00

End result a \$60,000.00 increase in profits!

Because each traffic generation strategy accesses a unique pool of visitor demographics and psychographics the website conversion strategies that attract and motivate them to act (and therefore increase your conversion rates) vary. As such, your website layout, copy and other elements should change to specifically address the visitor nuances from each traffic generation strategy.

How is this accomplished? – By using custom landing pages. This white paper does not go into detail about the advantages and specific strategies for using custom landing pages however, below you will see that conversion rate affects caused by using custom landing pages for your traffic generation strategies.

## Understanding Website Conversion Rates

“What gets measured gets managed. It’s hard to hit improvement targets you can’t see. Are your key goals / strategies / priorities reflected in your measures?”

MarketingSherpa ([marketingsherpa.com](http://marketingsherpa.com): a must-have resource for all marketers) has published many case studies on the significant increases generated by businesses who developed and tested custom landing pages. In one particular case study presented in a March 2004 report, a company increased their conversion rate from 4% to an average of 10% -11% by implementing and testing custom landing

pages.

For retailers the high end can go up to 8% but this is exceptional and only the case for the very best pure-play retailers.

- 

For a 'clicks to bricks' e-commerce site targeting consumers you would more usually expect between 1% and 2% of visits to culminate in a sale with 5% representing "best in class".  
Fireclick Index Survey: December 1, 2003 to March 1, 2004;  
ClickZ ROI Marketing "Benchmarking an Average Conversion Rate" June 4, 2004

- 

Catalog

6.1%

- 

Specialty Stores 3.9%

- 

Travel

2.1%

- 

Home & Furnishings 2.0%

- 

Sport/Outdoors 1.4%

- 

All Retail Verticals 2.3%

What are your businesses 5 critical success factors

Use clicktracks for click analysis

#### SITE CHECKLIST

Is the type easy to read?

Font should be 10 points or greater

Do you have a navigation bar or outside links?

If you links to other pages/sites, visitors will use them and be less likely to convert.

Does your call to action text work?

Have call to action text that engages the visitor i.e. "begin a new life" not "buy now", "click here to add to cart", ...

Do the graphics on the page relate directly to the conversion?

An easy way to find out is simply to show someone the graphic(without a caption) and ask what it is selling.

Are all page elements related to the topic, product, offer?

You can have an email optin and a product pitch on the same page, but they both have to be for the same topic.

Is your landing page in harmony with the source of traffic?

If from a PPC ad, does the page title match the ad title?

If from an email with graphics, does the page picture match the email picture?

Your landing page is just a bigger version(with the exact same topic) of the source of your traffic(email, ad, article,etc).

## LAYOUT

The visitor may consider horizontal white space the bottom of the page.

Don't put any extra white space horizontally across your page in an area that might be near a fold for a viewer. They will assume that the white space means they are at the page bottom, and either there's no content left to scroll down to or no reason to scroll.

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

- Fine print at bottom (copyright, legal)

Next move each element about your page, seeing how each it affects the others and how the eye might travel between them. In practice it's a bit like deciding how to arrange lots of furniture in a new room that lots of half-blind people will be racing in and out of.

If you want to have fun, make proportional paper cutouts of each element and move them around as you would when deciding where to put furniture in a new house.

Content must be organized so it's very easy for the visitor to figure out what to look at, in what order, and how to take the conversion step when they are ready.

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

Why? It's the only way you'll be sure that 98% of visitors can see (and act on) critical elements, even if they are using browser bars and navigation aids that block part of the screen at lower resolutions.

Remember that the first screenful of visible content a visitor sees is what they make their first bail-or-not conversion decision based on in the first few seconds. Your screen must convince them not to bail.

67% of people use 1024x768

21% of people use 800x600

### The Fold, Scrolling, and Paging

Put enough content above the fold (20-300 words, critical images, conversion click link) so visitors can make a conversion decision without scrolling or visiting more pages.

Warning: Don't make text-copy columns too wide or typeface too small in order to keep content above the fold. The human eye is happiest reading text in 10+ point typeface that's no more than 52-60 characters across. With few exceptions, if your copy is smaller and/or wider, it won't be read no matter where the fold is.

Fewer than 50% of people will scroll down a page no matter what the content is.

Make sure the conversion activities are above the fold add to cart button etc.

1 very long page is preferable over other smaller pages. A university study showed that people have an easier time scrolling than going to another page

3 design tips for one-page landing pages

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

The language of online marketing success:

Read through these terms, learn them, they are the language of internet marketing success; every successful online business owner knows these words.

Above the fold

Copy that appears in the window screen without the viewer having to scroll down. Fewer than 50% of people will scroll, so above the fold space is the most important.

Conversion action

The desired action you want the user to take. A good landing page has one focus and one goal. It may be buy a product, email optin, fill out a lead form, or a variety of others.

Below the fold

The part of a webpage that can only be seen by scrolling down. Copy below the fold is not appear in the window when the landing page first loads.

### Clickthrough

The act of a person clicking on a banner ad or link, which brings them to more detail and specific information about the subject they clicked on. A conversion process might be something like:

10000 impressions of an adwords ad

100 clickthroughs (1% clickthrough rate)

5 products sold (5% conversion rate)

### Conversion rate

The number of visitors, viewers(email et al) divided by the number of people that acted on your offer(converted). An example would be:

10000 emails(buy offer) sent out to house(your) list

2000 people view the email ( $2000/10000 = 20\%$  conversion rate)

500 people click on the link in the email to your landing page

( $500/2000 = 25\%$  conversion rate)

25 people buy your product ( $25/500 = 5\%$  conversion rate)

### Database query

A question asked of an organized collection of information. Common examples are:

Google search

Credit card swipe

Searching on a web website

### Dynamic landing pages

A page whose content or portion thereof is instantly generated and dependant on how the visitor arrived at the page. Examples are:

A page title that is the same as the visitors search term that led them to your page.

A new page that is generated based on the visitor filling out a form.

A Page that is generated with the clients name as part of the url through an email link.

### Flash

Flash is a software program developed by Macromedia that creates moving images on your Web site, including images that dissolve, turn into other images and slide across a screen. We've all seen them. You type a URL into your browser and instead of the home page, you get a sort of commercial for the company's Web site you're visiting, and you can either sit and watch or click "skip intro." That's Flash. The biggest problem with Flash when it comes to marketing efforts is search engines do not index Flash, which means if your landing page is built in Flash, search engines will not pick it up. We're told that some leading search engines are looking into getting the capability, but it's not available yet.

#### Hero shot

A hero shot is a picture or graphic representation of the item being marketed, including such things as a book or newsletter cover, a photo of a seminar speaker, or a company logo. Hero shots increase brand recognition and can also increase response rates as a result.

#### Landing page

A landing page is the final page a person "lands" on before they convert (buy, fill out a form, etc). It is the location at which the buy, no buy action is taken.

#### Live support

Live support is the ability for a Web site visitor or landing page recipient to access a live customer support representative while he or she is interacting online.

#### Microsite

A collection of pages centered around a single theme or event. Unlike a landing page, a microsite may be focused on more than a single conversion or action item. Microsites are often largely independent of site navigation and design.

#### Navigation bar

The navigation bar is a "dashboard" of main category buttons or links that help a visitor drill down deeper into your Web site to find the information they need or are interested in. It usually contains such headers as "Products, Services, About Us, Contact Us," etc. In general, navigation bars reduce conversion rates.

### Pop-ups

Secondary windows that open either upon entry to a site or as a result of an action a visitor takes. Note that software is available by Google, Yahoo and possibly others that blocks pop-ups.

### Prepopulate/Autofill

The ability for a Web site or form to automatically identify a customer or prospect and fill in certain boxes of customer information based on what already exists about that person in the company's database, for instance, their name, account number, address. The form must be integrated with a company database to enable prepopulation.

### Radio buttons

Radio buttons are common with multiple choice questions. Think about an online question such as: "Do you agree with President Bush's reasons for going to war?" The selections might be yes, no, maybe, or not sure. That would be four radio buttons. Usually, with radio buttons, only one answer can be selected. This is unlike check boxes, where you can select as many as apply.

### Redirect

A redirect occurs when a person goes to a url and is automatically redirected to another url. It may be done for a variety of reasons:

To have a smaller initial url

The resource has changed locations

Send the visitor to a different location depending on where they came from

### Rich media

Videos, audios, ebooks, reports, etc. They often use Flash, PDF, QuickTime, Windows media player or some other plugin software.

### Rollovers/Mouseovers

A rollover is an image or graphic that appears to enlarge or change when a mouse is moved over it. It is used to help visitors see where they are on the page or view images more clearly. For instance, when a mouse moves over a navigation bar button, the button might appear to change color or become larger. In actuality, the image is being replaced with a new image. Once the mouse moves off the button, it

automatically moves back to the old image, but that function is invisible to the viewer. Rollovers are also common in online catalogs, for example, to enlarge a picture of a shirt or book cover.

### Search engine optimization or SEO

The art and science of getting search engines to notice and rank your site higher in their organic listings (based on content and links to your site).

### Splash page

A page size image the user sees before entering a site.

### Stylesheet

A stylesheet is a centralized location for storing all your HTML coding and formatting so that if you need to change something, such as a font or color, you can do it in the style page, and the item will automatically be updated for every page that point is on, rather than having to change each HTML file individually.

### Usability

The science of the clients ease or difficulty in performing specific actions on a page. An example study would be:

Give a list of 5 common tasks to several people to perform on your site (buy, determine price, determine delivery time of product, etc.)

Without interacting with the subjects view their actions.

Invariably you will find your site needs drastic changes.