43 SPLIT TESTS / THAT [ALMOST] ALWAYS BOOSTS CONVERSIONS

Digital Marketer Increase Engagement Series

DIGITALMARKETER

43 SPLIT TESTS

THAT [ALMOST] ALWAYS

BOOST CONVERSIONS

THIS 3-PART EMAIL SERIES CONSISTENTLY DOUBLES SALES

If you're looking for a simple way to bump your conversions (without having to write new sales copy), then download this copy-and-paste followup series today...
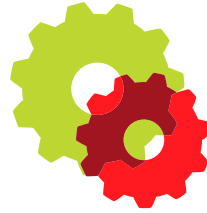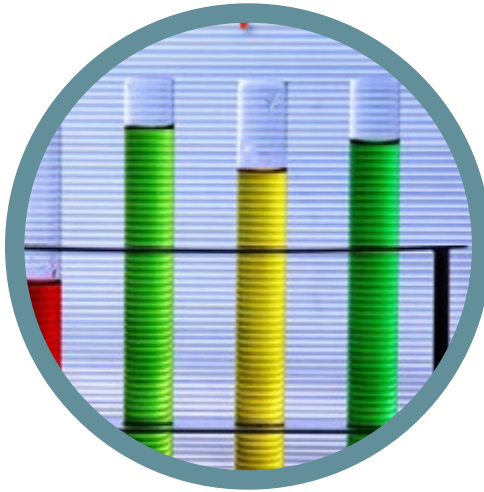
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[Increasing Conversion Rates,](#) and…
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43 SPLIT TESTS THAT (ALMOST) ALWAYS BOOST CONVERSIONS.

At Digital Marketer we've conducted 1000's of split tests.

Today, we'll show you what we've spent a lot of time and money to learn.

These are the background colors, fonts, etc., that have won almost every time in our testing.

Here are 43 marketing elements we've tested time and time again, along with the winning variables for each.

SPLIT TESTS THAT WIN ON A PRINT SALES PAGE.

These are tests we run on traditional print sales pages.

1 FONT SELECTION/SIZE

While the typeface you use on your sales page may seem trivial, we've seen up to a 30% higher conversion rate by simply using a san serif font. For those of you not familiar with typographer terminology, that means a font without those little "feet" at the bottom.

That means OUT with Times New Roman, and IN with Arial. We've found that Arial with a size 12pt font (or larger) gets the best results.

Remember, readability is everything. If a prospect has trouble reading your message, you're screwed.

San serif fonts increase readability (and conversions)

2 **BACKGROUND COLOR**

Here's another variable we get asked about time and time again. For some reason, people are just fascinated with the psychology behind background colors.

We were too, so we tested this variable pretty extensively. Robin's egg blue (Hex={6495ED}) was the clear winner. We actually saw a 31% increase in conversions over dark backgrounds. White and gray backgrounds are also effective.

The theory here is that blue and brown are "trust colors," i.e. colors that trigger feelings of confidence and, in turn, increase conversions. That's why so many news agencies use blue and/or brown on their sets.

Robin's egg blue is the optimal background color

Notice these blue/brown color palettes.

3 AUTOPLAY AUDIO

Sales page audio is another area where we've done a lot of testing. Oddly enough, we've seen anything from a small bump (+2%), to a huge drop off (-40%), as a result of including an autoplay message.

Let's start with what NOT to do. Each time we've used an overhyped sales message—you know, like something you might hear on a late night infomercial—we've seen a huge decline in conversions.

Autoplay audio works best when it features a testimonial from an "average Joe" or "Jane," explaining how your product helped them. Audio can be tricky, so, as always, test the heck out of it.

4 TABLE WIDTH

While it's tempting to revert to the old "bigger is better" theory, our testing shows that 700 pixels is that best size for tables. Make them any wider and your tables lose readability.

In our testing, 700–pixel wide tables improve conversions by 19% over 800-pixel tables.

If your market skews older, you may consider a 600-pixel width. Remember, more left-to-right scanning = harder to read = not good

Split test the table width at 700 pixels wide

5 BIG HEADERS

This one's easy; big headers suck. Even though they may look more polished and professional, our testing has shown that they almost always decrease conversions. They just seem to detract from the headline.

6 **TILED BACKGROUNDS**

Repeating backgrounds are another no-no when it comes to sales pages. These tiled backgrounds seem to consistently hurt response rates. So avoid them like the plague.

We used both a big header AND a repeat background on this hotdog cart sales page and got disappointing results.

Then we switched to a white background with a small header, and we saw an 88% increase in conversions.
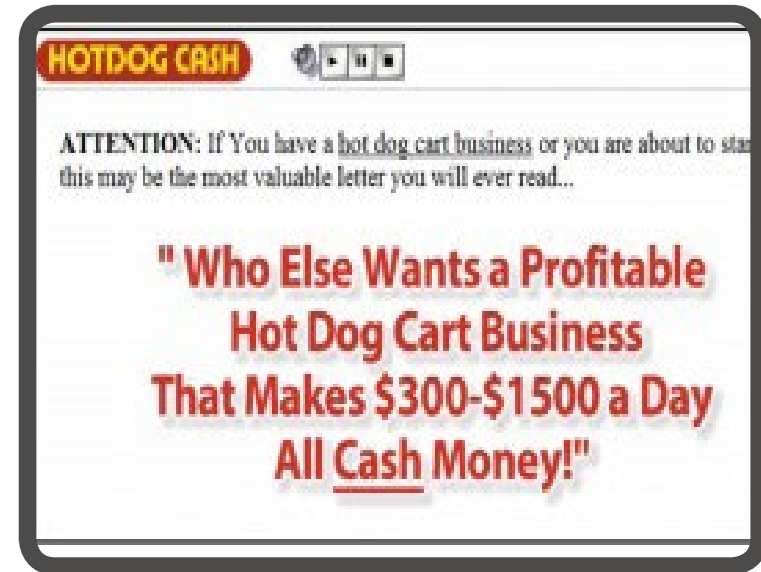
The header and background on the right converted much better.

7 TAHOMA RED 36PT

This font just seems to work great in headlines, partly because its san serif and partly because it scrunches up more than a font like Arial, fitting more words per line. Red 36pt Tahoma outperforms all other fonts, increasing conversions by 17%.
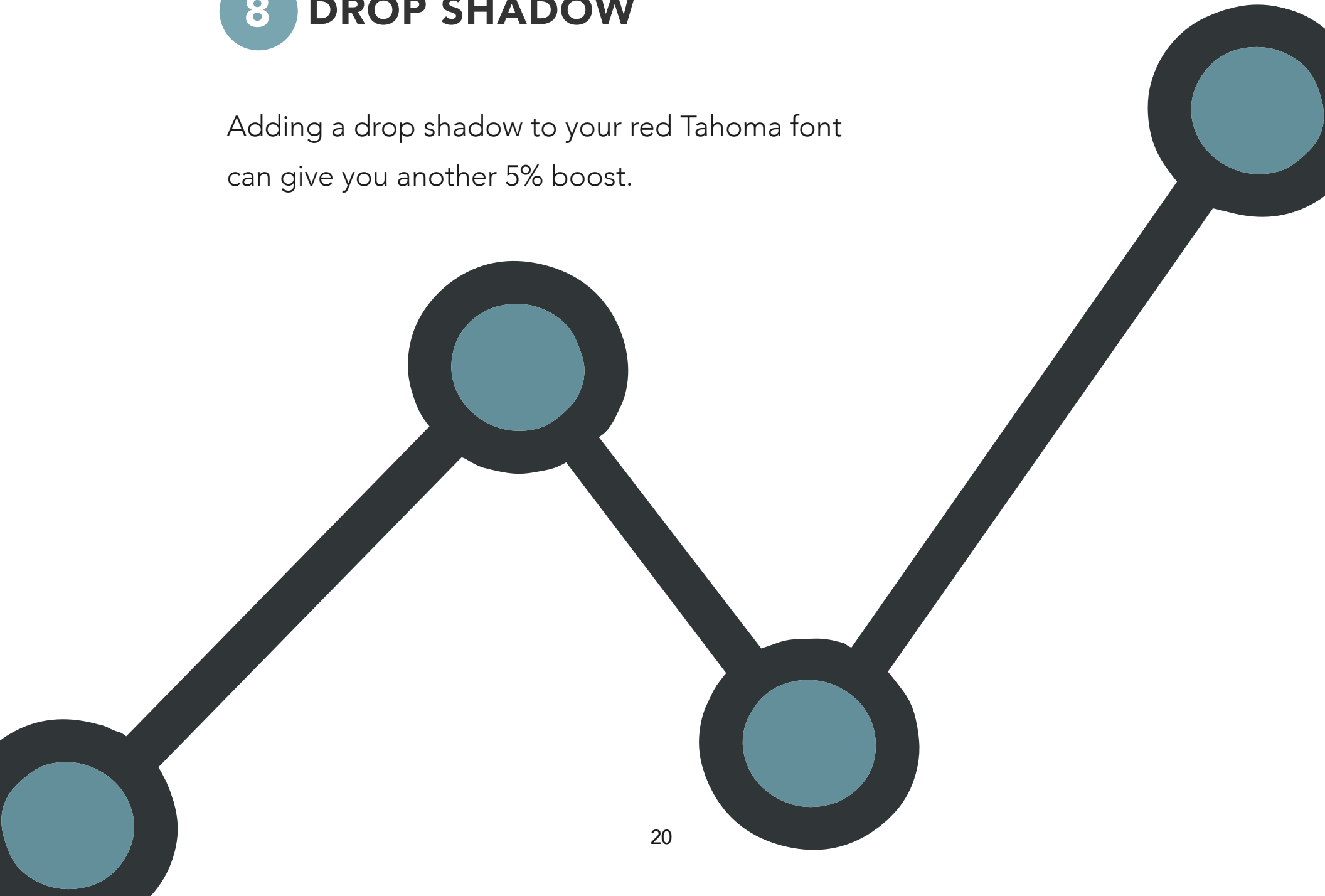
Readability is key.

San serif fonts like Tahoma can give your headline a boost

8 DROP SHADOW

Adding a drop shadow to your red Tahoma font can give you another 5% boost.

9 DROP CAP IN YOUR LEAD

As you know, your lead copy is crucial. It's where a visitor decides whether they're going to continue reading your sales page, or head for the exit.

Using a "drop cap" increases readability and usually gives us a boost.

On the flipside, if your lead paragraph is less than stellar, the drop cap will highlight that fact for readers. So only use a drop cap with copy that's tested well.

Drop caps attract attention, for better or worse

10 SIGNATURE "ABOVE THE FOLD"

Including a signature usually increases conversions, but not by much (+8%). Our advice is to use it only when it makes sense in the context of your offer. If not, a signature just kinda sticks out as weird.

Signatures rarely hurt conversions but they don't always make sense.

(11) PROVEN HEADLINE TEMPLATES

Not everyone can be a headline–writing mastermind, but that's okay.
In fact, creativity can sometimes backfire. These fill–in–the–blank
headlines outperform more "creative" headlines by up to 44%:
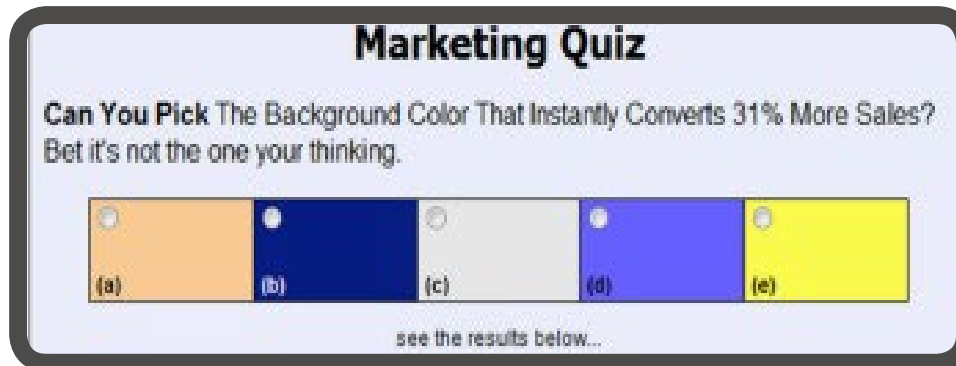
How to _____
Who Else Wants _____?
_____ in 3 Simple Steps! (numbered headlines are great)

Also, a headline with a negative slant can give your conversions a
20% bump. That's because, unfortunately, good news doesn't sell.
Frank Kern calls this the "rubberneck effect."

12 INVOLVEMENT DEVICE

A quiz or poll that's relevant to your sales message can increase engagement on your sales page. When we tested the marketing quiz below, we got a 24% higher conversion rate.

The key is to keep it relevant and include the words "see results below." Then, of course, place the results in a space that encourages visitors to read the rest of your sales copy.

Marketing Quiz

Can You Pick The Background Color That Instantly Converts 31% More Sales? Bet it's not the one your thinking.

(a) (b) (c) (d) (e)

see the results below...

Involvement devices, especially relevant polls and quizzes build engagement.

13 VIRTUAL PRODUCT IMAGES

These can have a HUGE impact (+145%), if done correctly.
Poor product images, however, are worse than none at all. We recommend you hire a professional to do your product images. Poor quality images will make you look bush–league.

Here's an example of a nice, professional product shot.

14 ANIMATED ARROW

According to our testing, a moving or flashing graphic WILL draw attention to your links.

We've seen as much as a 12% bump in conversions using this tactic. Be careful with this one though; you want to make sure that the content or link you're drawing attention to is VERY strong.

If you send a prospect to an order form too soon, they may not be ready to convert and you may lose the sale.

(15) BELCHER BUTTON

Our own marketing genius Perry Belcher gets credit for this one. He was one of the first to test order buttons extensively and now hundreds of sites use his formula.

As you can see in the image, this ugly little button includes 5 major elements: The orange "Add To Cart" button, red dashed border, marked down retail price, a blue underlined link, and clickable major credit card icons.

Believe it or not, the "Belcher Button" can boost conversions by as much as 300%!
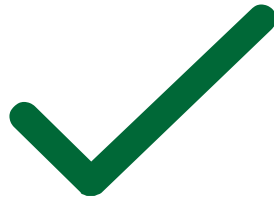
See, you almost clicked Add to Cart. That's how powerful the Belcher Button is.

SPLIT TESTS THAT WIN ON A VIDEO SALES PAGE.

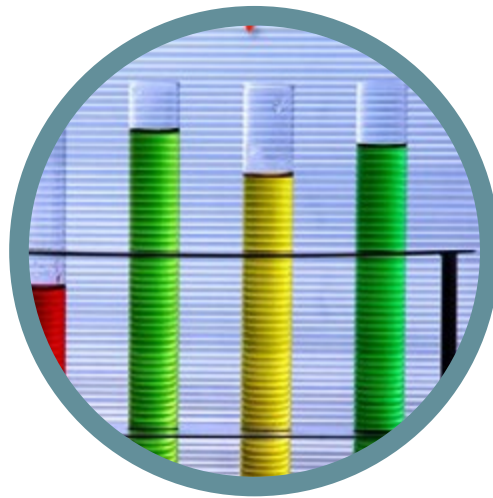As you can imagine, many of the same test results that apply to print sales pages also apply to video sales pages—especially those that deal with background colors, order buttons, etc.

To reduce the overlap, this section will focus on tests that deal with video sales pages specifically. And just so you know, we've transitioned a lot of our long–form sales letters to video sales letters (VSLs)… if that tells you anything about their effectiveness.

16 THE VIDEO SALES LETTER (VSL) BASICS

As you can see in the illustration below, we keep many elements we used on the print sales page: the smaller header, the gripping Tahoma headline, and the Belcher Button.

The major difference is that we've replaced all the body copy with a video, which does all the selling for us.

Here are the three basic components of a good video sales page.

17 **12-24 MINUTE VIDEO LENGTH**

We've tested both short VSLs and super long, 90–minutes videos. But the sweet spot seems to be somewhere between the 12 and 24 minute marks.

Results drop off when your video is too long or too short.

18 REMOVING THE VIDEO CONTROLS

Remove these controls from your VSL's

With sales videos, it's important to control the message. You don't really want your prospect to have the ability to fast forward or skip around.

It may sound strange, but you want your visitors to have virtually NO control. Set your videos to autoplay, and axe the video control bar.
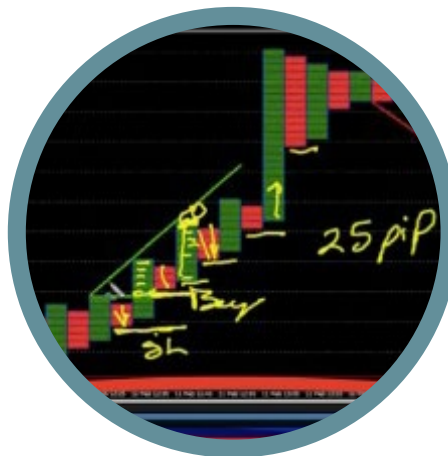
(19) AUTOPLAY BEATS CLICK-TO-PLAY 80%

Much like the video control buttons, a click–to–play video reduces the control you have over your message. More often than not, click-to-play allows the prospect to procrastinate watching the video… and they never actually watch it.

20 UGLY BEATS PRETTY

Strangely, we've found that ugly looking video players with minimal design convert better than more polished examples. Our highest converting videos have no headers, no borders, etc… just a plain white background with text.

There are a few variables to consider however,

- **Price point** – High–ticket items tend to convert better with "pretty" design.

- **Target market** – Ugly often doesn't work well in tech and B2B markets.

- **Traffic Source** – Ugly works better with cold traffic because it's disarming. However, pretty things up for warmer traffic (familiarity breeds contempt).

Beauty (on the right) rarely outperforms the beast (on the left)

21 TEXT VS. NO TEXT

What do you think we found when we tested a short–form video sales page against a long–form version, which included high–converting bullet points, product shots, and a second buy button?

The answer: It depends on the traffic source.

The short–form video sales page (headline and video only) converted better with our cold traffic (i.e. PPC, affiliates, etc.), because it allowed us to control the message. They couldn't really be sure at first that we were even trying to sell something.

The long-form version performed better with customers and active subscribers, because it offered more information and felt less restrictive.

22 BORDERS VS. NO BORDERS

Oddly enough, borderless videos consistently beat videos with a border. At Digital Marketer, our theory is that a borderless video is unusual and it doesn't even look like a video at first. Eventually, this "novelty factor" will probably wear off, but right now it works.

23 MAGIC BUY BUTTONS

When it comes to variables that whisper, rarely do you find one that DOUBLES conversions, but the magic buy button does. When the order button isn't visible when the prospect first arrives, your video sales page looks like regular content… not a sales page.

When your VSL reaches its call to action, shazam! Your buy button magically appears. But prospects have kept an open mind throughout your video.

This buy button was invisible until the exact right moment, then POOF!

SPLIT TESTS THAT WIN ON SQUEEZE PAGES.

24 SQUEEZE PAGE BASICS

Here are a few of the most important factors to check on your squeeze page.

- **Above the fold design** – Keep your opt-in form above the fold, i.e. in the area where visitors can see it WITHOUT having to scroll.

- **Attention-grabbing headline** – Use a proven headline formula to grab attention.

- **Ultra–specific, benefit rich bullet points** – Don't list features; list what those features will do for people.

- **Definite call-to-action** – Say something like "Get free instant access!" right inside your order button.

25 VIDEO FAKEOUT

We've been able to get as much as 48% more opt-ins using this technique. It's easy to execute, just grab a screenshot of your paused video content.

By nature, people like to click on play buttons… you just need to program a javascript warning to say something like "Whoa now! Enter your email address in the box to the right for instant access to watch the video!"

Any entry–level programmer can set this up for you.

The video on this squeeze page isn't really a video, it's an image with a javascript warning.

26 SUBTLE ARROWS INCREASE OPT-INS

Subtle arrows draw the eye toward back to the opt–in form on your page, and they can be surprisingly effective. As you can see in the picture, these are just design elements that resemble arrows, pointing to the email form.

Notice the two, subtle arrows that direct your eye toward the email form?

27 CARTOON CTAS DOUBLE OPT-INS

A cartoon call-to-action is simply a cartoon character that recites all the text on your squeeze page. It combines the novelty factor with the ease of not actually having to read all the sales copy. Plus, you can have the cartoonists model the character after you. We use a site called SitePal.com to create these.

This goateed cartoon character simple reads all of the sales copy aloud

28 REPORTS VS. VIDEOS

This may surprise you, but our split–tests have shown that "special reports" make much more attractive lead magnets than videos.

Simply put, written reports have a higher perceived value. These consistently get us 20% higher opt–in rates than video content, which has become commonplace in the tech, forex, and marketing spaces.

Even better, presenting the exact same content in a hand–drawn format got us a 128% increase in opt–ins over a video lead magnet. Hand drawn illustrations and mind maps are golden right now.

Hand Drawn Reports +128%
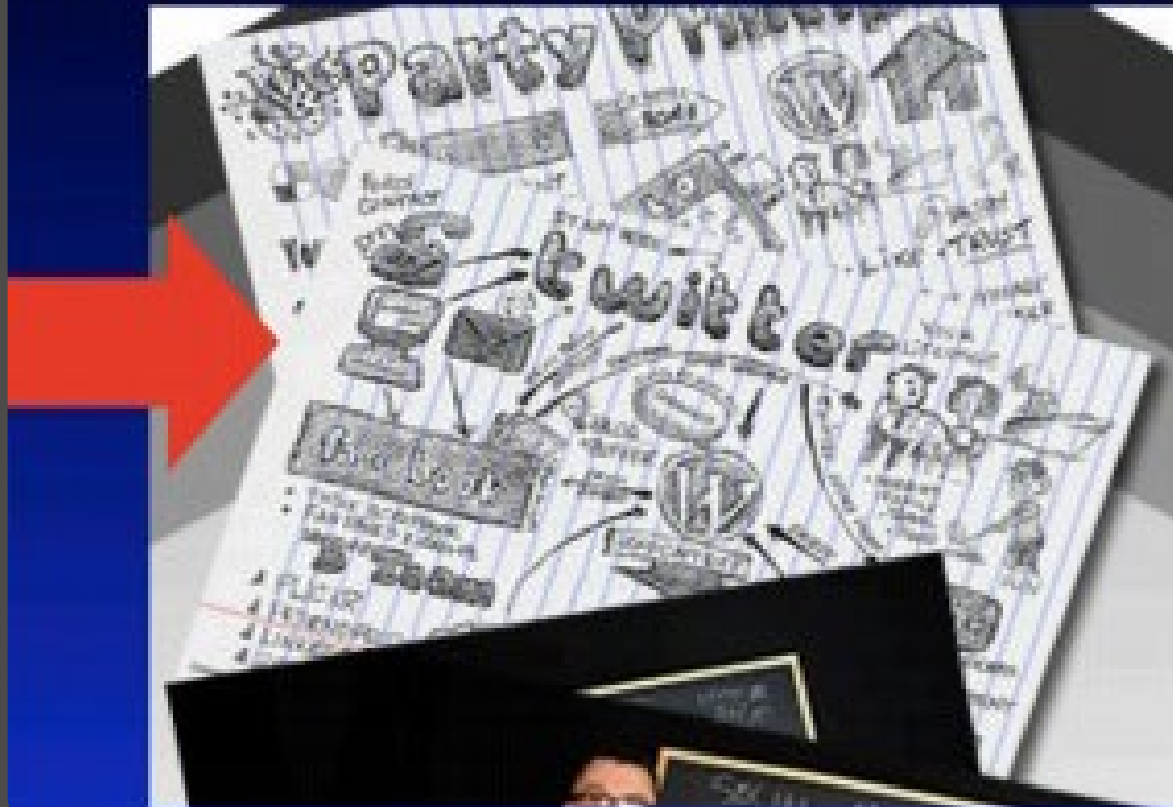
If there's a way to reimagine your content as a hand drawn flow-chart, do it!

29 DITCHING THE "FIRST NAMES" FIELD

Our testing shows that using a prospect's first name no longer increases conversion rates. So there's really no reason to collect first names in an opt-in form. Deleting the "first name" field actually increased opt–ins by 18%.

SPLIT TESTS THAT WIN ON AN ORDER FORM.

Split testing your order form can be very productive. Here are some variables that almost always win.

30 TRUST SEALS

As you can imagine, many prospects are concerned with online security. Satisfaction guarantees and trust seals, even the inexpensive ones, boost conversions by 28%. Consumers just expect to see them on your order page.

Trust seals are an expected part of a secure order form.

31 SUCCESS STORIES

If you can fit a success story into your order form, maybe along the margin, it will boost your conversions by up to 33%. Social proof helps put prospects at ease by validating their decision to buy.

32 PRODUCT IMAGES

This one's simple, including a product image on your order form boosts conversions by 22%. The image reassures customers about whatever product their buying.

Use a professional product image whenever possible. BONUS TIP: See that progress bar at the top? That puts minds at ease and boosts conversions by 15%.

33 SPLIT TESTS THAT WIN IN EMAIL MARKETING

In an email marketing campaign, nothing happens until the message gets opened and your links get clicked. Our split–testing is focused around getting those magical things to happen.

34 PROVEN SUBJECT LINES

The purpose of an email subject line boils down to one thing and one thing ONLY: Getting the message opened.

Use these proven headline strategies to help boost your open rates:

- **Oddly Specific Numbers** - Example, "Why He Paid Google $5,129,346.21"

- **Question Marks** - Example, "Google Made Me Slap Proof?"

- **Percentages (%)** - Example, "99% of People Dieting Need This"

- **Add [Video]** - Example, "Make Your Lead Magnet Sexy [Video]"

- **Include a (free report)** - Example, "Seven Deadly SEO Mistakes (free report)"

- **RE:** – Example, "Re: Watch Me Build Your Membership"

- **Use Personal Pronouns** - Example, "You Need to See This"

In addition, confusing, shocking, or just plain weird subject lines can boost open rates as well. Here are a few examples of random subject lines that, for whatever reason, got great open rates:

- Photos Enclosed Do Not Bend

- Ryan Deiss Retires?

- Forced Continuity Dishonest?

- Why I Love Hotel Bars

- Chuckle–head Does $3.8M First Two Years Online

When all else fails, go negative.

- Things Are Bad… (Maybe)

- Don't take it personally, but…

- I Hate Technology

- One Word… "Crazy"

36 BEST TIMES TO SEND

Email timing does matter. According to our testing, the absolute best time to send is 4:30AM CST, Tuesday–Thursday.

This time works because your email hits inboxes in Asia just before bedtime and inboxes in the western hemisphere just as recipients are waking up.

Contrary to popular belief, weekends are a great time to mail small-ticket offers—but don't waste your time with big, expensive offers.

37 SHORTER EMAILS = HIGHER CTRS

Short and sweet gets high click-through rates. It's that simple.

Even if you put a link at the top of your email, people will often reserve clicking on it until they've skimmed the entire body. So the longer you ramble, the lower the CTRs. Try to limit yourself to 4 or 5 paragraphs.

38 HIGHEST CTR LINK PLACEMENT

When it comes to placing links in your email, we recommend at least 3 links, at the beginning, middle, and end.

39 IMAGES INCREASE CTRS

According to our split-testing, your emails should include an image whenever possible. That said, don't overdo it and don't format the entire email as one big image. BUT a couple of small images won't hurt deliverability.

If there's a video included in your offer, we recommend using a screen shot of that video (play button visible) in your email. That image should be link #2.

Then, underneath that image, include a blue, underlined text link. This has increased our CTRs by 120%.
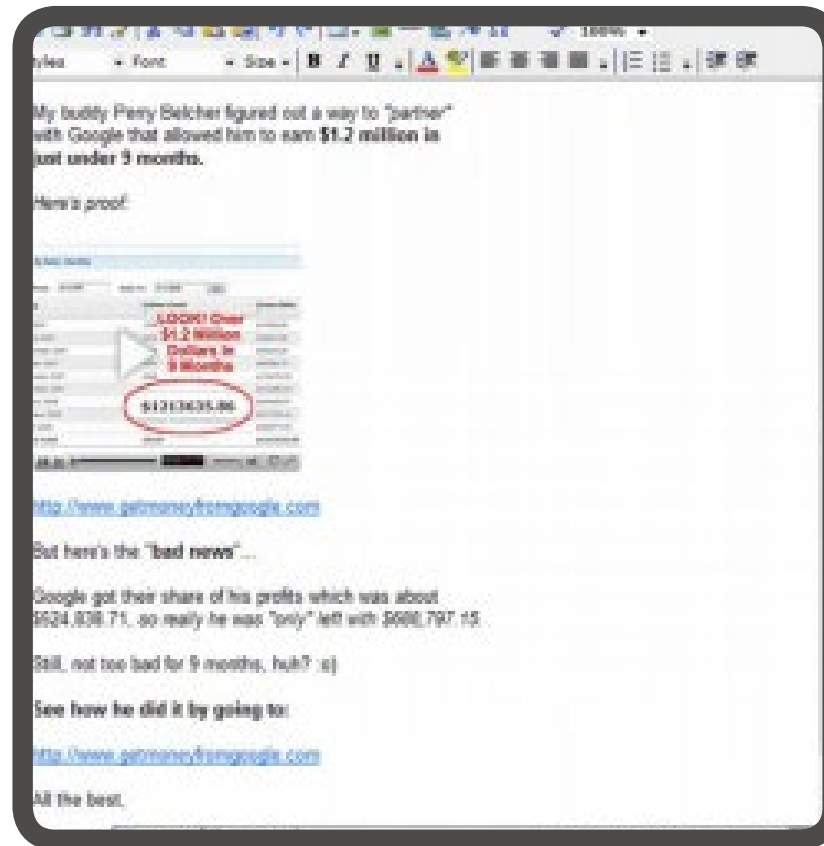
Images linked to video are great for CTRs, but don't forget the underlined link below.

40 PERSONAL SUCCESS COACH

By rewriting your autoresponder campaign as a 6–part, instructional course from a "Personal Success Coach," you can boost reduce return rates by 17%.

41 ADDING VIDEO INSTRUCTIONAL MESSAGES

Instructional messages, teaching customers how to use the product effectively, will reduce returns by about 24%.

42 SPLIT TESTS THAT WIN ON BANNER ADS

Many people in the online marketing world have stopped using banner ads, but we love them.

43 BANNER AD DESIGN BASICS

Here are a few rules of good banner design: Your banner ad should seek to either Blend In (look like regular content) or Stand Out (be super ugly). The more your banner ad looks like a banner ad, the more it will be ignored. We call this "banner blindness."

- Sell the CLICK, not the offer. The purpose of the banner is to get CLICKS. It doesn't need to convince a prospect to do anything else but that. Focus on grabbing curiosity or offering something for free.

- Tell them WHERE to click, with arrows, buttons, or underlined links. We assume that people know your ads are clickable, but that's not necessarily true. Always put a button or link.

- Text still sells. Banner ads that consist of simple text on a plain background convert incredibly well. Images are window dressing.

These banners converted extremely well with minimal images.

This banner blended in so well, the website actually forced us to change it.

43 YOUR TURN

We know you are testing — that's why you read Digital Marketer.

Take 2 minutes and let us know what is working for you in the comments section.

Add the 44th split test that almost always works below.

CONCLUSION.

Conversion testing is the cornerstone of success for any digital marketing effort.

This document represents thousands of hours and millions of dollars spent on conversion rate optimization.

Use the variables that have worked for us as your starting point and conduct your own testing to find the sweet spot for your campaigns.

You'll find that these variables (almost) always win.