Landing Page Toolkit

Your step-by-step guide to making advanced, high-performing landing pages.

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Introduction

Any web page that you purposely send traffic to is a ‘landing page’. Whether it’s a PPC ad, an email, or a QR code that prompts someone to click on an offer, the page where that person lands after they click has enormous potential to influence them. The best landing pages hold a visitor’s attention and guide them towards a next step – and that’s not something that just any web page can do.

The one thing that differentiates great landing pages from the rest is specificity. The best landing pages are targeted, specific and contextually relevant. They are designed to match the ad that will drive traffic to it, and to address any hesitations or concerns that someone might have about your product or service. They make it easier for interested visitors to convert into a lead or sale.

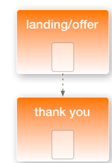
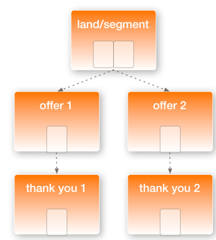
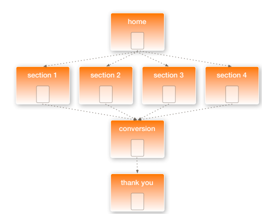
Landing pages come in many shapes and forms. There are two main types of landing pages: those within your website and those outside of your website. Pages that are part of your website are typically meant for browsing while those that are outside of your website are conversion-focused. Your website has to speak to anyone who might be interested in your products or services, and it has to explain who you are to people who might know nothing about you. Your website has to appeal to the ‘lowest common denominator’ – customers, prospects, investors, media and employees. Think of your site pages as “generalists” –they have to appeal to anyone and everyone who may land on them.

In contrast, landing pages designed outside of the structure of your main site are specific to the traffic source a visitor arrives from. Landing pages outside of your main website have the potential for much higher ROI than those within your website, because they can be incredibly targeted and dedicated to driving a visitor directly into your conversion funnel. Since they are free from your site structure, they can be extremely specific and relevant to a particular traffic source. To get the best ROI possible from any source of paid or campaign traffic, it’s important to have a dedicated landing page. This workbook is focused on creating landing pages that live outside of the structure of your main website.

When landing pages live outside of your site they can become more than just a page, they can become *an experience*. Not all landing experiences need to be composed of a single page, nor should they. So even though we may simply say “landing page” throughout this workbook, don’t think that you should limit your landing experience structure to a single page.

There are three common categories of landing experiences with their own unique advantages and characteristics.

Types of landing experiences

Experience	Characteristics	When to use	Flow example
Landing page	A single page with messaging plus an offer. Usually includes form on initial page.	When visitor intent and audience segmentation are pre-determined, basic landing pages can fit the bill. Because they are single pages, reporting is limited to pass/fail. As such, little is learned from those who abandon before converting.	
Conversion path	2-5 segmentation options or choices on the initial page. Users then go to a segment-specific offer page or an additional sub-segmentation page.	Ideally suited to sorting out respondents from vague sources of traffic and rapidly moving them closer to conversion. Enable segment-specific messaging that maximizes conversion potential. Highly valuable in assessing the relative value of sources of traffic because segmentation data is gathered on 40-80% of all respondents (even those who do not convert).	
Microsite	Specific deep dive drilling down into a particular topic. Usually includes microsite-specific navigation. Can have conversion as its goal although it's also well suited for educational purposes.	Topic-specific subject with deep information. Microsites can be more immersive than conversion paths and require more time and thought from their users. If you're certain of intent and segmentation, then microsites are a great way to offer specific content.	

So, how do you create the best landing experiences?

Landing pages are completely under your control. You get to pick where you send traffic and you get to determine what the page should say and how it should look. By creating better landing pages you have the ability to increase your conversion rates and marketing ROI.

This workbook was designed to show you how by taking you step-by-step through the strategic planning process. It will help you set goals, think through customer segments, define your offers and measure results. Whether you're B2B or B2C, this strategy will help you build better landing pages. It's designed to be a workbook, so gather your team, print it out and write all over it!

Getting started

The first thing to do is to asses what you have and what you need – both strategy-wise and people-wise.

1. Gather your team

One of the best ways to avoid a production bottleneck is to clearly define who is going to do what, or if you'll need to outsource part of the process in advance. It's better to realize that you might need to contract with a third-party designer now rather than a couple days before your launch date. We've separated six main responsibilities that go into creating landing pages and provided a general description for each. This doesn't mean that you need six people to make a great landing page by any means– some overlap in responsibilities is expected. While you're going through this list, it's also a good idea to think about your approval process and who will be responsible for providing final approval before any page is taken live.

Example

Role	Skills	In-house / Outsourced	Person / Supplier
Strategic planner	Strategic understanding of online marketing, messaging, branding, segmentation and conversion principles	In-house	Sarah

Your chart

Role	Skills	In-house / Outsourced	Person / Supplier
Strategic planner	Strategic knowledge and appreciation of messaging, branding & segmentation		
Testing designer	Decide test methodology, technology and develop design test plans		
Writer	Teams with designer to create action-oriented, message-matched content		
Designer	Teams with writer to create action-oriented, message-matched content		
Front-end coder	Ability to take content from the designer and writer and turn it into HTML, CSS and Javascript. This can also be completed without code with landing page management software, like LiveBall!		
Programmer	Ability to 'wire up' the pages from the front end coder to database behaviors and results. This is usually not necessary if you are using landing page management software.		
Analyst	Makes practical sense out of the user behavior data and test results applies that back up to the messages and traffic sources		

2. Define your audience

The best landing pages are designed to attract prospects that are similar to your best customers. If you don't already have customer profiles, use this time to find similarities between your best customers. Think about how each of those characteristics relate to your product and service. As your business grows, your customer profile is likely to change so even if you've done this before, it doesn't hurt to go through this exercise again. These characteristics will provide a great basis for messaging and copy guidelines.

	'Good' customer	'Bad' customer
Characteristics		
Need		
Pain		
Role		

3. Measuring quality with grading

All clicks are not equal. Certain clicks and actions tell us that a visitor is more engaged and more likely to be a higher quality lead or sale. For instance, if someone fills out an inbound form they will probably mean more to you than a visitor who just clicks on a demo video. Grading scales typically use an A-F scale, and a visitor's grade moves up or down based on the actions they take on your landing page such as downloads, links or views.

Setting up a relative grading scale will help you consistently grade and rate the relative quality of respondents across all campaigns and all landing pages. Just like back in school, you're looking for the landing pages that deliver the highest respondent GPA. To start a grading program, you first have to define which actions you will have in your landing pages and the relative value of each of those actions across your organization.

If you can, evaluate the assets (videos, Flash presentations, white papers, free trials, coupons, etc.) at your disposal and complete the table. If you're not sure where to start when it comes to grading, think about what actions your best customers (reference the characteristics you defined earlier) would take. Which actions on the page would appeal the most to them based on where your landing page is in the buying cycle?

What are the potential actions a visitor might take on your page? Some examples are: *Download document, watch video, view page, sign up for demo, fill out an inbound form, etc.*

Use this space to brainstorm...

We've provided example actions to help you complete this worksheet:

Grade action (Everyone starts with a ___ grade)	**Action**	**Asset** (Things you have of value to compel the action)
Up a FULL grade	Download document	White paper: How to buy a widget now
Up a HALF grade	Learn more	How this widget can help my business
Down a HALF grade	Watch video	How widgets help our planet
Down a FULL grade	View page	What's a widget?

Use this space to evaluate the actions on your page and their relative value:

Grade action (Everyone starts with a ___ grade)	**Action**	**Asset** (Things you have of value to compel the action)

4. Asses your landing page needs

For each unique marketing **message** that you use, you need a landing page. Messages are more specific than topics or even campaigns. Messages are directly tied to the call-to-actions you use to get people to click on your ads – they are the unique positioning you place on a topic. If you remember the AIDA marketing model of Attention, Interest, Desire, Action — you can think of your message in terms of Attention, Interest & Desire; and your CTA in terms of Action. Below are a couple of examples of the topic-message-CTA hierarchy:

Topic	Message	Call-to-Action (CTA)
Family Get-a-ways	Family fun for everyone. Daily children activities, movies and water sport excursions.	Book now for family fun.
Caribbean Vacation	Experience white sand beaches, gentle breezes and non-stop fun at our all-inclusive resort.	Book now. Lowest rates guaranteed.

Use this space to asses your landing page needs:

Topic	Message	Call-to-Action (CTA)

Use the worksheet below to define your five most common marketing messages. Afterwards, rank your messages by the amount of traffic they receive. For example, in PPC, the ads that get the most clicks would be your highest traffic volume messages. By ranking your messages you can then put the most effort on the landing pages that can do the most good — and that means focusing on the places where you have the most people.

Traffic volume rank Label (1 through 5)	**Topic**	**Message / Call-to-Action (CTA)**

For each unique message defined above, you need a **test** plan. You should always test at least two version of a message. Plan to create two very different landing experiences — **think apple vs. orange** — and then iterate them for each unique message. Don't over-invest your time in crafting the perfect message and page. Landing pages should be disposable so that once you have clear winners from the first round of testing you can retire the losers and create new challengers.

The table below offers two test plan examples:

Control vs. Challenger A

Test phase one Apple vs. Orange	**Winner**	**Test phase two** Iterations
(A) Microsite Lead-Gen Short Form	(A) Microsite Lead-Gen Short Form	(C) Microsite Lead-Gen Short Form + 1 Field
		(D) Microsite Lead-Gen Short Form + 2 Fields
(B) Microsite Lead-Gen Long Form		(E) Microsite Lead-Gen Short Form + 3 Fields

Control vs. Challenger A vs. Challenger B

Test phase one Apple vs. Orange	**Winner**	**Test phase two** Iterations
(A) Landing Page	(A) Landing Page	(D) Landing Page Rev 1
(B) Microsite		
(C) Control (existing website deep link)		(E) Landing Page Rev 2

For each of your messages, think about what you'd like to test and decide which test plan you'd like to use. Complete the worksheet below for each message to organize the first phase of your test plan. We've filled out an example to help you get started.

Messages (defined above)	**Control URL** (existing page)	**Challenger A** (description)	**Challenger B** (optional)
Family Vacation	www.bookingengine.com	Landing Page — one-page warmer + booking engine	Conversion Path — 2-segment warmer: long stay v. short stay + booking engine

Messages (defined above)	**Control URL** (existing page)	**Challenger A** (description)	**Challenger B** (optional)

As you continue through the rest of the workbook, we recommend that you go through the remaining exercise for just one message at a time. As the strategy questions become more involved, it can be easier to focus on creating just one landing experience instead of five.

Setting Objectives

Before we move any further with our landing page, it's important to set reasonable and specific goals.

5. Establishing specific, reasonable goals

Reasonable expectations for landing page testing vary depending on the type conversion. There are three main conversion types:

a. **Transactional conversions** are those where the goal of your landing page is an immediate sale. Since so many things can effect a transactional conversion such as pricing or deals, you should expected smaller changes. A reasonable conversion lift expectation is anywhere from 15 -100%.

b. **Lead generation conversions** can experience larger lifts in conversion rates from testing. This is because marketers have complete control over these landing pages and it's less likely that there will be dependencies or complexities. A reasonable conversion lift expectation is anywhere from 50 -600%.

c. **Social conversions** are much softer than the other two conversion types. The goal of your landing page is to get qualified people to socially engage with your organization. This works best for long sales-cycles, high-ticket, or complex offerings. It's important to track the long-term effectiveness of these conversions for 6-24 months.

The next two worksheets will help you plan for and track your objectives for each message and landing page. Try to estimate your organization's relative value and brand awareness for each message and use that to help predict your performance. For example, in PPC you would expect to perform much better on branded keywords than on vague, categorical ones. The higher your organization's perceived value, the better you can expect to perform.

Complete the table below to set objectives by message. Remember, a message is a unique spin on a topic. It's what you said to create **interest**. And your CTA (call to action) is the specific statement you are using to compel **action**. You need to consider both as a unit when evaluating your expected performance.

For example, if you have a resort that's branded as a couple's destination, but does allow children, you'd expect to perform better on a romance message and worse on a family vacation message.

Message / CTA	Expected performance	Target engagement %	Type of conversion	Target conversion %
Romance / Four nights for the price of three	Strongest	80%	Transactional	4.5%
Family / Kids stay free	Weak	50%	Transactional	1.5%

Message / CTA	Expected performance (Choose One: Strongest / Strong / Neutral / Weak / Weakest)	Target engagement % (Choose One: 40% / 50% / 60% / 70% / 80%)	Type of conversion (Transactional / Lead Gen / Social)	Target conversion %

Identifying traffic sources

The way that people find you will influence what they expect to see on your landing page. It's important to identify which traffic sources help you generate the best new customers and which traffic sources would work best with your messages.

6. Getting prospects to your page

How did your best customers find you? Earlier, we went through the characteristics of your best customers, but it's also important to know how they found you. Right now, you probably receive traffic to your website and landing pages from several different sources. Use the worksheet below to list all of the traffic sources you are currently using and then rank them in terms of lead or sale quality and quantity.

Traffic source	What works	Quality	Quantity
Email marketing (in-house list)	White papers	best inbound source	1/3

Traffic source	What works	Quality	Quantity

Creative requirements vary widely by source media and context

Visitors from different traffic sources have different needs and focus levels. With your site, you have to expect to receive traffic from all sorts of different sources. With a landing page, you can direct specific traffic, and tailor your page to the needs of visitors from a particular traffic source. For instance, someone who clicks on a PPC ad is more likely to be on a mission to find an answer, than someone who ends up at your page from a social media link. The visitor form the social media link is more likely to be browsing or doing casual research.

The table below summarizes types of traffic and types of landing experiences that most closely match the needs of that traffic.

	Unbranded SEM/PPC[1]	Display 3rd party[2]	Branded SEM/PPC[3]	Email 3rd party[4]	Display intrasite[4]
Visitor Intent	Wandering	Impulse	Determined	Considered	Interested
Prospect Temp	Coolest	Cooler	Cool	Warm	Warmer
Landing Page Length	Shortest	Shorter	Short	Short	Longer
Landing Page Mission	Quickly make it clear they belong	Quickly make it clear they belong	Form a Connection	Extend the Story	Extend the Ad
Tolerance	None	Little	Some	Little	More
Place in Funnel	Rim	Rim	Top 1/3	Top 1/3	Top 2/3

1. *Unbranded SEM/PPC: Search Engine Marketing/Pay-Per-Click keywords not specific to your organization*
2. *Display 3rd Party: Advertising running on third-party websites (not your own website).*
3. *Branded SEM/PPC: Search Engine Marketing/Pay-Per-Click keywords specific to your organization. Your brand name(s).*
4. *Email 3rd Party: Links, sponsorships or ads running in third-party emails or your own email to a purchased/ non-house list.*
5. *Display Intrasite: Advertising or cross-promotion running on your own website.*
6. *Email House: Links, sponsorships or ads running in your own email to your home-grown list.*

7. Traffic source matching

Thinking back to the messages you defined earlier, it's time to match each message with the traffic source that seems the most likely to respond and identify to each message. Use the table below to plan where you'd like to run your message and how that traffic source selection might affect the landing page experience. If you're not sure what type of landing experience to use, review the three general types of landing page experiences discussed in the first section of this workbook. You also may want to consider testing a message with different traffic sources.

We've provided a couple of example rows to get you started.

Message / CTA	Source of traffic	Type of landing	Landing experience
Romantic Vacation / Free Water Sports	Unbranded SEM/PPC	Conversion Path	2-Segments — by length of stay
Family Vacation / Kids eat Free	Email House List	Landing Page	Land & jump — book now

Message / CTA	Source of traffic	Type of landing	Landing experience

Segmenting customers

Segmentation is a way for you to provide your visitors with a more targeted landing page experience while also learning more about them. You want to connect your greatest strengths to the needs of your best prospects. As you go through the first exercise in this section, try not to think about the mechanics until you've defined what you can do to encourage your best prospects to step out from the crowd.

8. Defining relevant segmentation

In order for segmentation to work, it has to first be beneficial to the visitor. Your visitor has to get the sense that by selecting one of your segmentation choices they are going to get something more specific to them and therefore valuable.

The next two exercises will help you flesh out two- and three-choice landing pages. Segmentation requires a multi-page experience and is most often associated with conversion paths. This is still a good exercise to complete for each message even if you were planning on using a simple one-page landing experience. It's impossible to predict whether a simple landing page (no choices), a two-choice segmentation page or a three-choice segmentation page will work best for conversions. You will likely see significant variance in results between sources of traffic and messages, so be sure to test segmentation everywhere.

You'll notice in the first chart that there is grading section for each segment. As we mentioned earlier, good segmentation design gets people into qualitative groups that are strategically better or worse for your organization. Grading is just a quantification of that relative quality. Like the grading scale you mapped out earlier, make sure that your grading is consistent if you use the same segmentation options on other pages. Grading starts with the simple question: which segment is more valuable to your organization?

Not everyone will identify with your segmentation categories, and that's okay. Whenever you use segmentation, you can also provide 'bail out' link that gives those who don't belong to one of your carefully designed segments a place to click. Once you have segmentation data under your belt you'll be able to move your spend towards the vehicles that give you the highest score and away from the vehicles that deliver the highest percentage of bailouts.

We've provided a couple of example segmentation rows to help you complete this worksheet. You'll also notice that there is a space for your message-matched, segment-specific asset. Segmentation doesn't work if you can't provide a targeted, specific experience and asset based on the segmentation question. Don't get disappointed if you don't have the right asset for a segmentation you'd like to use, this is one of the best ways to come up with new content ideas!

Message / CTA	Grade action	Segments	Message-matched, segment-specific asset
Romantic Vacation / Free Water Sports	Grade UP	Longer Stay	Offer: 5th Night Free
	Grade DOWN	Shorter Stay	Offer: $100 Air Credit
Family Vacation / Kids Eat Free	Grade UP	Multiple Rooms — Older Kid(s)	Offer: Kids stay 1/2 Price
	Grade DOWN	Single Room — Younger Kid(s)	Offer: 5th Night Free

Message / CTA	Grade action	Segments	Message-matched, segment-specific asset

9. Externalizing your segmentation

Now that you defined your segments and the assets that best appeal to those segments, it's time to sort out how to present them to your respondents. It's important to word your copy in a way that will resonate with your visitors. So if *you* say "enterprise" but *they* tend to just say "large", let their lingo guide your copy. Your mission here is to minimize friction or questions about where they fit and encourage honest, intuitive behaviors. Most people behave honestly when it's in their best interest to do so.

For example, if your call-to-action is a 'free white paper' and your segments are large hospitals and small hospitals, your segmentation positioning might be 'white paper for smaller hospitals' versus 'white paper for larger hospitals'. This will make your respondents want your offering even more because it's specific to them. While your users get a more specific piece, you get the information you need about the visitor.

The worksheet below starts with your calls to action and moves to segmentation positioning. Work your way through it and you'll have a great road map for your creative team.

Message / CTA	Segment externalization
Free White Paper	White Paper for Smaller Hospitals
	White Paper for Larger Hospitals
FREE Trial Software	Free Trial for Accounting Firms
	Free Trial for Tax Professionals
	Free Trial for Corporate Finance

ion

Message / CTA	Segment externalization

Defining offers

The next step is to develop a specific and immediate promise that will motivate visitors to take the next step.

10. Making segment-specific offers

For an offer to work it needs to have two things: value to you and value to the respondent. Clicks tell you a lot about your visitors, so your offer should be designed to tell you something of value about those people who click on it. For instance, you could offer a white paper that only someone who is very low in your lead funnel would be interested in. Likewise, value to the visitor must be clear and proportional to the effort required to fulfill the offer. Your offer has to desired. The more specific an offer becomes, the higher its value to the respondent – and this means higher conversion rates.

Use the worksheet below to brainstorm potential offers matched to your previously defined segments and assets. Fulfillment assets can be things like coupons, discount codes, white papers, webinars, gift with purchase, etc.

Call-to-Action copy	Your segment	Offer copy	Fulfillment
Free HIPAA Compliance White Paper	Small Hospitals	Get White Paper for Smaller Hospitals	HIPAA Compliance for Small to Mid-Size Hospitals
	Large Hospitals	Get White Paper for Larger Hospitals	HIPAA Compliance for Large Hospitals
	Not a Hospital	Learn More about HIPAA Compliance	None (link to HIPAA www)

Call-to-Action copy	Your segment	Offer copy	Fulfillment

11. Equalizing the level of visitor effort

You should now you have your highest-value stuff matched to your most valuable prospects. Conversion is all about earning your prospect's trust so that they believe the reward is worth the risk and effort necessary to get it. Successful landing experiences create the perception of fair exchange — that what you're asking for is fair given what you're offering.

Use the following worksheet to evaluate the value propositions of your potential offers. Your gain needs to be equal to or greater than your pain for each fulfillment.

Offer	Value (higher score = more value)				Effort (higher score = more work)				Ratio
	Exclusivity How special is it? [1-5]	Immediacy How soon do I get it? [1-5]	Usability How easy is it for me to use it? [1-5]	Total Gain	Intrusion How much private data is required? [1-5]	Time How long does it take? [1-5]	Delivery How much work is it to get it? [1-5]	Total Pain	Gain/ Pain

The is a way to visualize reducing friction. The offers with the highest value:effort ratios are the ones that have the best chance of generating the best results. If a value:effort ratio is less than one, you should think about how you can lower either the pain, the time or delivery for your visitor. Low friction landing experiences segment, qualify and convert far more respondents than high-friction ones. When the perceived value of your offer exceeds your friction, everyone wins.

Developing copy

So now you know the type of landing experience you want to create for your messages, the assets you'll offer, the traffic sources you'll use and whether or not you're going to use segmentation, it's time to start writing copy! Let your offer and everything that you've outlined about your ideal customers guide your messaging and tone.

The best landing page copy not only hones your brand message and the reasons why a visitor should take action, but it also has these five characteristics:

a. **Message match**

The landing page headline and imagery should tie into the call-to-action that earned the click. Your landing page should match the ad that sends it traffic. Phrases, headlines, and images used in the ad should also be used in the landing page. Message match helps reassure visitors that they are in the right place and builds their trust.

b. **Well positioned segmentation**

Segmentation choices should be in the best interest of the prospect. Is your prospect getting a more specific experience by choosing a segment or is the segmentation really only helping you collect data?

c. **Emotionally persuasive**

The copy should appeal emotionally enough to captivate and engage respondents. Does your copy propel someone to want to take action, now?

d. **Effort**

The effort required of the respondent should be proportional to the nature of the offer. Don't make a prospect click through a conversion path for a mediocre, unspecific white paper. Similarly, don't present a 10 field form for a short top ten tips list.

e. **Specific**

Your copy should speak in specifics: give numbers, examples, exact and precise promises that are related things you said in your ad and in your segmentation. Is the content as specific as it can be to the target and segment?

12. Evaluate your creative

Use the table below to evaluate the initial creative portion of your landing experiences. Your goal is to get high scores. This grading is subjective, but try to evaluate your page from the vantage point of your best prospects.

LP	Message match [1-5]	Segmentation positioning [1-5]	Emotionally persuasive [1-5]	Effort required [1-5]	Content specificity [1-5]	Total score

If your totally sore is over 22 points, then you're in great shape! If you fall in the 20-21 range, good effort! However if you find yourself in the 17-19 range you may want to brainstorm about how you can improve the areas where you scored lowest. If you find yourself scoring under 16, it's definitely time to really focus on changing your copy and maybe even your offers.

Converting visitors

As soon as someone comes to your landing page, your experience should move their interest into a meaningful (and measurable) action step or conversion.

13. Warming to conversion

Regardless of which type of conversion you're looking for, you need to warm respondents prior to asking for anything. Think of a landing page as a first date; you need to become comfortable with someone before leaning in for a kiss. Making promises and keeping them click-over-click builds trust. Repeating the trust cycle before you ask for conversion greatly increases your chances of success.

Think through the different clicks someone makes through your landing experience starting with your initial ad. Each click is prompted by a promise, but was it kept? The chart below shows examples to help you complete your own.

Trust cycles (clicks)	Promise made	Promise kept
1	'Download FREE HIPAA Compliance White Paper' in the ad	Get Your FREE White Paper
2	Which FREE white paper would you like?	HIPAA Compliance for Smaller Hospitals HIPAA Compliance for Larger Hospitals
3	HIPAA Compliance for Smaller Hospitals -or- HIPAA Compliance for Large Hospitals	White paper offer page with promotional copy about the white paper and the value it has through the lens of the chosen segment.
4	Fill out the form to get the white paper via email	White paper delivered via email upon form submission
5	Learn more about ACME Software & HIPAA (extension of white paper delivery email)	Link to solution page connecting the ACME Software offering to HIPAA compliance

Plan the promises you can make and keep using the worksheet below.

Trust cycles (clicks)	Promise made	Promise kept

Testing will help you determine how many trust cycles you can complete to optimize your conversion rate. Test with one cycle, then add another, and another. When adding a trust cycle lowers your conversion rate, you've found your limit. Once you know the optimal number, you can work to optimize your individual promises and raise your conversion more.

14. Capturing information with forms

For lead-generation, there are probably only three fields you absolutely have to have: first name, last name and email address. Once you have that information, it's enough to follow up with either through a nurture program or other outreach initiatives to then collect more information along the way over subsequent interactions. Always ask yourself: if your conversion decreases with each additional field, do you really want to make that trade? You landing page isn't an interview for marriage; you're just getting to know each other. Being greedy for information can very easily end up reducing your conversion rate.

Use the worksheet below to plan your form testing. Begin by launching a simple three-field form. Then, add a field and launch again — note the difference in conversion rate. Keep adding fields and re-testing. You decide where the balance is between data collected and conversions lost.

Field	Data name	Conversion
1	First name, Last name, Email address	Baseline conversion = _____%
2	+ Address	Conversion rate = _____%
3	+ Time Frame	Conversion rate = _____%
4	+ New field =	Conversion rate = _____%
5		Conversion rate = _____%
6		Conversion rate = _____%
7		Conversion rate = _____%
8		Conversion rate = _____%
9		Conversion rate = _____%
10		Conversion rate = _____%

15. Value buttons

The form button is overlooked way too often and it can make a huge difference in your conversion rate. There are two kinds of button labels: value-focused and effort-focused. Most buttons are effort-focused and have a negative effect on conversion — the act of clicking on that button. Use the chart below to help guide the gain-focused labels on your form buttons.

Compare these gain and pain buttons to get a better understanding of what to use and what to avoid:

Value buttons	Effort buttons
Get White Paper	Submit
Download Now	Continue
Watch Video	Next
Start Free Trial	Payment

List the button call to actions you use and if any of them sound painful, create a new ‘value’ version.

Your buttons	Value version

Measuring results

Now that you’ve completed all of the worksheets, it’s time for whoever was designated as the front-coder and programmer in the roles chart to make your page a reality. As soon as your page is live, you’ll start collect invaluable data about your page’s performance. We’ll walk you through the most important metrics for figuring out what’s working and what isn’t so you can understand who is converting, who isn’t, and why.

Consider these points when evaluating your conversion rate:

- There are no hard and fast ranges that apply to conversion norms, but the global average is between 3-4%. You should always compare and interpret your conversion rates against a control (whatever you were doing before you created your new landing pages). Your perspective on conversion success will be relative to that control.
- Be careful to consider environmental factors when comparing periods. It’s best to live in the here and now — always comparing to a live, parallel control. Comparing period over period can be misleading, because there are many other variables impacting your landing pages. This is especially important if your service or product is in high demand during seasonal times.
- If you’re seeing a low conversion rate following a high segmentation rate, you attracted the right people and earned their interest, but the segmentation is the issue.   Take a look at the transition from your segmentation page to your offer page.
- Your offer presentation might also be the reason for a low conversion rate—especially your form and form button. Ensure that the effort you’re asking for is proportional to your offer. Check on the tips in the next section about interpreting your offer’s effectiveness.

Interpreting your offer's effectiveness

Your offer is what drives a prospect to act on your page. You'll know very quickly whether or not it's working, but there are certain metrics that will help you understand why it is or isn't working. We've listed red flag metrics related to your offer and notes on how to start troubleshooting in the chart below.

Metric	Reasons	Notes
Low Click-Through Rate	Poorly targeted media buy	Not offer related
	Weak offer	A strong call-to-action can compensate for a weak offer
	Weak call-to-action	A weak call-to-action can undermine a strong offer
High Landing-Page Abandonment (bounce rate)	Call-to-action mismatch	The landing page message must strongly connect to the ad's call-to-action
	Weak offer	Sometimes when there's a strong CTA masking a weak offer — the bluff gets called on the landing page
	Too much too soon	When the landing page tries to do too much there's a perception of disproportional effort required to move on — too much to read, too many choices, etc.
High Offer-Page Abandonment	Gain/Pain imbalance	If there is too much perceived pain for the perceived gain, you'll get a lot of people to your form page, but far too many will abandon — this can also result from a lack of trust and/or credibility
High Mid-Form Abandonment	Bad question(s)	When you get too personal or ask a question that requires a difficult or too-thoughtful answer, you'll see mid-form abandonment — this is another case of gain/pain imbalance

What's next?

Using these metrics you should be able to pinpoint where to focus your efforts and next testing ideas. The best landing pages are never finished, they are always in flux. Constantly testing everything is the best way to ensure that your landing page is the best it can be so whether it's trying new offer versions, tweaking layouts, or trying new traffic sources, never stop trying new ideas!

Whenever you have a new challenger in mind, use the 15 steps from this toolkit. They will help you create landing pages that are strategically sound, and ready to take your conversion rates to a whole new level.

Annex

Landing page worksheets

Save these blank worksheets and make copies to use whenever you need a new landing page. Once you've completed these steps, you're ready to take your page live. Refer back to the Measuring Results section in the Landing Page Toolkit to understand where you should focus your next testing efforts!

Define your target audience

	‘Good’ customer	‘Bad’ customer
Characteristics		
Need		
Pain		
Role		

Define your landing page message

Topic	Message	Call-to-Action (CTA)

Establish your goals

Message / CTA	**Expected performance** (Choose One: Strongest / Strong / Neutral / Weak / Weakest)	**Target engagement %** (Choose One: 40% / 50% / 60% / 70% / 80%)	**Type of conversion** (Transactional / Lead Gen / Social)	Target conversion %

Match a traffic source

Message / CTA	Source of traffic	Type of landing	Landing experience

Define relevant segmentation

Message / CTA	Grade action	Segments	Message-,matched, segment-specific asset

Externalize your segmentation

Message / CTA	Segment externalization

Make segment-specific offers

Call-to-Action copy	Your segment	Offer copy	Fulfillment

Evaluate how your page equalizes value & effort

	Value (higher score = more value)				Effort (higher score = more work)				Ratio
Offer	Exclusivity How special is it? [1-5]	Immediacy How soon do I get it? [1-5]	Usability How easy is it for me to use it? [1-5]	Total value	Intrusion How much private data is required? [1-5]	Time How long does it take? [1-5]	Delivery How much work is it to get it? [1-5]	Total Effort	Value / Effort

Evaluate your creative

LP	Message match [1-5]	Segmentation positioning [1-5]	Emotionally persuasive [1-5]	Effort required [1-5]	Content specificity [1-5]	Total score

Map your trust cycles

Trust cycles (clicks)	Promise made	Promise kept

Capture information with forms

Field	Data name	Conversion
1	First name, Last name, Email address	Baseline conversion = _____%
2		Conversion rate = _____%
3		Conversion rate = _____%
4		Conversion rate = _____%
5		Conversion rate = _____%
6		Conversion rate = _____%
7		Conversion rate = _____%
8		Conversion rate = _____%
9		Conversion rate = _____%
10		Conversion rate = _____%

Create value-focused buttons

Your buttons	Value version

Notes

The Best Landing Pages Start with You. And LiveBall.

LiveBall is ion's web-based platform that empowers marketers to launch and test advanced landing pages without code or IT. If you're looking to grow your landing page program, check out these resources and find out how LiveBall can help.

Next steps for your landing pages:

If you want to stay up to-date on the latest online marketing trends and best practices, subscribe to the **ion landing page blog**.

Learn more about how you can improve your online marketing ROI by checking the free **webinars**, **white papers** and **presentations** in our library.

Join us for a **Live Demo** and see just how easy it is to use LiveBall to create conversion-focused landing pages.

Ready for more effective landing pages? **Let's talk LiveBall!**

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Guide

Building an enterprise-level landing page program.

Your guide to why size is an advantage.

ion

To thrive and succeed, an enterprise post-click marketing program for landing pages must be well-defined, systematized, and integrated with the overall marketing engine.

How are landing pages for large organizations different than landing pages for anyone else?

The objective is the same, to provide a better landing page experience for respondents after they click through from online advertising or email marketing, and to thereby increase your conversion rate and ROI. Regardless of your company's size, perfecting the post-click experience – the landing page, microsite or whatever comes after someone clicks on your ad – is the most direct way to improve your marketing results.

The tactics and creative options for the design and content of the pages — the best practices that are usually written about the subject — are largely the same for both small and large organizations:

- Maintain continuity from click to conversion.
- Constantly test with innovation and iteration.
- Segment respondents with conversion paths where applicable.
- Speed and agility are critical.
- Embrace the diversity of The Long Tail.
- Optimize for ROI, but don't optimize away your brand.

The big difference is behind the scenes. Enterprise landing pages have:

- More **people** involved in the lifecycle.
- More **complexity** in the process.
- More **scale** in the overall marketing portfolio.
- More **risk**, both real and perceived.
- More **upside** potential.

Although these aspects may seem tangential to most landing page best practices, these factors have an enormous impact on the implementation of such best practices in large organizations.

In an enterprise-scale environment, an under-the-radar, ad hoc approach to landing pages is almost guaranteed to underperform, because the absence of structured processes for post-click marketing robs them of attention, budget, and priority. To thrive and succeed, an enterprise post-click marketing program must be well-defined, systematized, and integrated with the overall marketing engine.

The goal is to turn your size to your advantage.

Here are specific ways to make that happen, to help define your ideal team and supporting infrastructure, and to address the challenges of enterprise post-click marketing on each of these 5 dimensions.

More people

Call it the axiom of the org chart: the larger the company, the more people involved in an activity. Online marketing, however, is a particularly chaotic intersection of marketing managers, website managers, search specialists, product managers, business intelligence analysts, IT administrators, legal, and at least one floating contractor. Then you go up: your boss, your boss's boss, your dotted line boss, and probably a committee.

And that's just inside the organization. There are potentially a plethora of out-sourced vendors and agencies in the loop as well: a search agency, an ad agency, a brand agency, a web development firm, an email marketing company, a PR firm, a social marketing consultancy, etc. And across all of these constituencies, personnel are constantly in flux.

This large cast of players isn't a bad thing, per se. Online marketing is multidisciplinary, and as the centerpiece for almost every company's interface to the market these days, it's well deserving of the attention and input from these disparate groups.

To survive this juggling gauntlet of many hands, though, post-click marketing initiatives need to meet the requirements of each group — and leverage their talents and contributions — in an efficient and orderly fashion.

Here are 9 steps for incorporating landing pages in online marketing with a large cast of players:

1. **Start by building recognition that landing pages are an important piece of your online marketing ecosystem**: bring all the stakeholders and participants together to discuss the objectives, address their needs, and brainstorm ways to optimize the process. Competitive benchmarking can be a strong motivator to kick-start this. References such as the search marketing maturity model can help illustrate the interdependencies between the different participants in the online marketing ecosystem.

2. **Officially assign responsibility for post-click marketing**, either with the people running the pre-click campaigns (advertising, paid search, email) or with a dedicated post-click marketing manager. It needs to be a primary part of someone's job description, not something that gets tacked on to an already overloaded schedule (and thereby drops off the end). This role will need to have a budget and either leverage other participants and/or have its own dedicated headcount — i.e., post-click responsibility and the authority to execute it properly must go hand-in-hand.

Call it the axiom of the org chart: the larger the company, the more people involved in an activity.

3. **Agree upon a way to measure the performance of landing pages and connect it into the overall online marketing ROI funnel**. In the New Marketing landscape, nothing is defensible unless it can be measured — the mantra of performance marketing. This doesn't have to be airtight, as there are diminishing returns to being too pedantic — the stage may be digital, but the actors are all human and full of infinite possibilities — but it does need to credibly connect the dots in a way that the other people in the ecosystem can appreciate.

4. **A pilot program is a splendid way to introduce post-click concepts and processes into an organization**, both to demonstrate the value and to discover the interconnections and latent serendipity of the various participants in the online marketing ecosystem. For this to be successful, however, it's vital that initial progress has been made on the previous three steps for cooperation, responsibility, and performance measurement — an orphaned post-click pilot rarely ends like Oliver Twist.

5. **Determine an overarching post-click marketing strategy that people can navigate by, even as tactics change fluidly on the battlefield**. This must be aligned with the metrics in #3, or people get yanked between what is right for the strategy and right for their performance review — nip that conundrum in the bud whenever you can. Great strategies are often simple in concept: clearly identify the competitive advantages and unique selling propositions of the company across its markets, segmented as finely as possible, and creatively represent those advantages to their respective audiences in a consistent and cost-effective manner. If you get stuck, fall back on the core questions: Who are our best customers? Why do they buy from us? How can we attract more of them? Post-click marketing strategy is all about meeting — or exceeding — the expectations of those best customers as they enter your online marketing funnel.

6. **Establish a documented way to coordinate continuity between pre-click ads and post-click landing page experiences — even if they're controlled by the same people — such as a lightweight message map spreadsheet**. This is essential for continuity and message match, the backbone of post-click marketing. It's also important when you're running tests with different ads and different landing pages to be consciously aware of any interaction effects. A centralized reference like this makes it possible to scale the number of participants in the marketing mission while maintaining synchronization. (It also helps as personnel changes require new participants to quickly come up to speed.) If you don't already have a way to easily share file updates and discussions around them online, across both internal and external participants, you might consider Basecamp.

7. **Harness the very best creative talent you can — post-click is a creative channel**. Tactical superiority can be achieved by crafting landing experiences that look, read, engage, and flow better than the competition. Take advantage of the broader array of human resources within your ecosystem to tap the best designers, graphic artists, copywriters, Flash programmers, and widget makers. These don't have to be full-time positions for post-click — in fact, you can handily outsource this on a project basis, if that's easier — but wielding these creative professionals in your landing experience production improves engagement, branding, and visual resonance in ways that lesser competitors can't readily match.

8. **Communicate regular updates and feedback with the whole online marketing team**. Not a cacophony of boilerplate multi-page reports, but concise highlights of the most interesting results once or twice a month. Because landing page experiences sit in the upper middle of the funnel — often the murkiest stage in customer acquisition — they can reveal substantial insight about your market. Behavioral post-click segmentation is golden here. Sharing this information helps your peers — advertising, site optimization, lead nurturing, etc. — gain new perspectives on their slice of the funnel, encouraging reciprocity and cross-border innovation. Everyone needs early funnel empirical data at some point in a marketing initiative — let them know that post-click is available to help collect it. Post-click isn't a silo, it's an interconnected fabric. Embrace this role of "funnel facilitator" and legitimately build political capital for the post-click marketing function.

9. **Invest in education and plug into the global online marketing community**. Events such as Search Engine Strategies (SES) and Search Marketing Expo (SMX) let you step outside your daily routine, take a fresh look at what you're doing, benchmark it against a wider range of contemporaries, cross-pollinate ideas from other industries, and network with potential new collaborators. This community interaction — learning best practices from the successes and mistakes of others — can be a catalyzing inspiration and helps inoculate you from "not invented here" (NIH) myopia. Regular blog reading, such as Search

Engine Land and MediaPost's OnlineMediaDaily, is a must. In such a rapidly evolving field, you've got to consistently work to put the "knowledge" in "knowledge worker".

Of course, more people are inexorably tied to more complexity and more scale — so many of the suggestions in the next two sections will also help maximize the productivity of this larger cast.

Just remember: more people should be an advantage, and the foundation of successful enterprise post-click marketing is to make that statement true.

More complexity

To paraphrase Arthur C. Clarke: any sufficiently complex system is indistinguishable from chaos. And let's face it, enterprise online marketing is a pretty darn complex system. To properly incorporate post-click marketing into a large organization, the goal is actually to simplify processes as much as possible.

Landing page production in large organizations must deal with:

- More extensive **brand standards**.
- More rigid protocols for **IT involvement**.
- More requirements for **legal approval**, even in the tiniest campaign.
- More stringent **rules for data collection**.
- More demands for **interoperability with existing systems**.

Overall, more coordination is required with more things in the organization as a whole — more channels, bigger channels, more independently moving pieces in The Great Marketing Machine.

The impact of this complexity is an inflation of the “soft costs” — overhead and time — for producing and managing landing pages and post-click marketing. Every touchpoint adds delays and indirect costs, diminishing your agility and ROI. It’s not unusual to hear tales of big companies taking weeks to launch a new landing page.

Some people might object that formalizing post-click marketing will only make things more complex. But post-click marketing happens whether you consciously manage it or not — people click on your ads, land somewhere in your web universe, and experience an impression of your company. Letting this happen on an ad hoc basis ironically creates more complexity because it causes a drag on the performance of the entire marketing funnel — like trying to bicycle uphill with your brakes on — and generates interrupt-driven exception management every time someone tries to fix the post-click experience for a one-off campaign.

The antidote to that inefficiency is partly organizational structure, partly business process management, and partly software automation. Ultimately, all these ideas share the same underlying strategy: reduce the number of manual touch points when launching and managing landing experiences. The goal is to asymptotically approach frictionless post-click marketing.

Here are 10 suggestions for taming post-click complexity:

1. **Establish a central repository for all landing pages and their components**. At the very least, this should be a source-controlled directory structure in your web site environment. However, it’s much better if this is implemented as a database-driven application — essentially a content management system (CMS) for landing experiences — which can be searched, analyzed, and automated. This can be a partition of your existing CMS platform, or a separate software package, possibly even a software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution. The benefits of this approach include a foundation for software-mediated workflow, de-duplication of content, better security through centralized access control, and a master archive that can serve as a reference point for all previous and current post-click initiatives. No more having to track down who was running what landing page where with email, voicemail, or stalking them at the coffee machine.

2. **Provide a standardized mechanism to “preview” and “proof” landing experiences**. Preview should give you the ability to walk through a landing experience — be it a single landing page, a multi-step conversion path, or a microsite — exactly as it will appear to real respondents. You need to be able to do this before it goes “live” in production, while it’s live — but without contaminating the statistics of real users — and after it’s been disabled and archived. Unauthorized parties should not be able to view these pages when they’re not live. A “proof” feature is similar, but instead of walking through the experience as a simulated respondent, a proof provides a condensed map of the complete landing experience, with all the content, behavioral rules, and tracking scripts listed in an organized fashion. With a proof, someone can

quickly review a landing experience in a comprehensive and consistent manner, knowing exactly how the experience will behave in all cases.

3. **Minimize IT dependency for daily landing page production and management**. The IT processes surrounding changes to a company's website are usually pretty involved — after all, the global website must serve all constituencies and can impact everyone. Landing pages, however, are more of a pure marketing initiative — more a part of the advertising for specific campaigns — that typically target small subsets of your overall audience. Agile experimentation is what's needed. To facilitate that, you should consider setting up a lightweight environment specific for landing pages — a landing.yourcompany.com subdomain — that marketing can use as a sandbox, without interfering with (or bearing the burden of) the primary website management overhead. This both reduces the number of participants in front-line landing page production and eliminates delays at the marketing/IT divide.

4. **Create a set of design templates for landing pages that adhere to your brand standards**. These master page layouts strategically separate design and content. Talented designers can produce these layouts and visual themes once — test them on all browsers and receive sign-off from branding — and then they can be reused for dozens or hundreds of landing experiences by front-line marketers. Ideally, your landing page management system (or plain CMS) should tightly control which parts of pages can be dynamically edited by front-line marketers — the content for specific campaigns — while assuring that the design cohesion and brand standards of the templates are unbreakable. This approach saves time for designers, who have their work leveraged repeatedly without their ongoing involvement; it saves time for the marketers authoring new pages, as they aren't entangled in design issues; and it saves time in deployment, as the guaranteed consistency of these pre-approved templates reduces the number of back-and-forth cycles for reviewing new landing pages and fixing minor interface issues. You end up with landing pages that always look good for your brand.

5. **Maintain pre-approved content elements that can be reused across multiple landing pages**. Such a digital asset management system can include a collection of categorized images and Flash animations that have been blessed as "allowable art", email messages and fulfillment files that have been proofed and signed off on by legal, and links to your privacy policy and copyright notice built directly into the templates. Reusability helps cost justify better creative investment, as the payback is spread across multiple deployments. Sharing elements from a common source means that alterations — even thing as simple as fixing typos — can be automatically inherited by all landing pages referencing them. Overall, this approach speeds things up by reducing the production time and cutting down approval processes when deploying new pages synthesized from these existing elements.

6. **Standardize data collection and form handling**.
One of the biggest time sinks in ad hoc landing page production is constructing and debugging forms and data collection processes — often a source of painful iterations between marketing and IT. Again, the solution is to separate these requirements into centralized and reusable components. We recommend 4 conceptual pieces: **(a)** definition of data fields and their permissible values, i.e., the fundamental data structure; **(b)** the assembly of forms that collect user responses and map them to the defined data fields — so marketers can change the way the question is asked without tampering with the underlying data fields; **(c)** placement of the forms on particular pages, including the freedom to collect some data "passed in" from the query string or from several forms spread across multiple pages that progressively build a respondent's profile; and **(d)** the formatting and exporting of all collected data to back-end systems — your CRM, your lead nurturing platform, Salesforce.com, etc. — using procedures that take advantage of the standardized data fields, regardless of marketing-level content on the pages from which it was collected. With this approach, the IT elements are configured once and then repeatedly leveraged across a plethora of campaigns — and updates at any level can be seamlessly inherited — without triggering a costly end-to-end fire drill.

7. **Don't fragment your respondent data by turning your landing page environment into a data silo**. While it is highly advantageous for marketing to have its own sandbox to create, deploy, and optimize landing experiences — and to use those landing experiences to collect valuable respondent data — you want to make sure that your collected data is quickly and properly transferred to a common CRM or lead nurturing system, inheriting all the security and backed-up redundancy built into that infrastructure. You don't want the data to grow stale or end up causing integration problems down the road. By using standardized data formats and exchanges — as described in #6 above — you can pass data in real-time (or daily batches at the latest), nicely scrubbed, into existing IT systems designed to maintain a holistic view of prospects and customers. Post-click marketing is a contributor to that data warehouse, not a rogue competitor to it.

8. **Interface consistently with enterprise-wide web analytics**.
Although there is immense value in analyzing respondent data and behavior in the focused context of your landing pages — and their interplay with different traffic sources — it's important that this activity also be transparently shared with whatever web analytics and/or business intelligence platform(s) you have standardized on for your primary/other web properties. Again, your post-click marketing environment should be a contributor, not a competitor, to any such global infrastructure. Luckily, this is usually very easy to accomplish, by including standardized bits of Javascript tracking code on your landing pages. Ideally, you want to configure these scripts in one place for an entire campaign, and then have them automatically inherited by all pages within. Like many of the strategies above — setup once, leverage multiple times — this makes it simpler to deploy new pages as well as update and maintain existing ones.

Landing pages exisit whether you consciously manage them or not — people click on your ads, land somewhere in your web universe, and experience an impression of your company.

9. **Favor A/B testing over multivariate testing (MVT) for landing pages**.
   MVT is a more mathematically complex methodology — testing many simultaneous variations of elements on the same page — that typically requires more configuration to set up and more traffic to reach statistical significance. This complexity can make life difficult for a marketer to design tests with a clear hypothesis and can run into trouble with bizarre interaction effects among the different elements. In contrast, A/B tests are easy to visualize, straightforward to implement, quick to achieve statistical significance, and logical to draw conclusions and learning from. They also support apples-to-oranges testing of different kinds of experiences, encouraging bolder experimentation — a strategic luxury of independent landing pages that is rarely feasible in your primary web site. A/B testing promotes simplicity, speed, and flexibility in post-click marketing optimization. Keep it simple!

10. **Handle special-case rules in a standardized manners**.
    At first this might sound like a contradiction in terms, but this is a vital concept for keeping complexity under control. There will always be exceptions and custom behaviors requested for the content and flow of particular pages: substitute a different headline if the respondent is a repeat visitor, send an email alert to a specific mailbox when a user submits a particular answer on a form, deliver a different version of a download if the person is connecting from outside the country, etc. What you don't want is for each special case to be hacked together in its own way — some Javascript here, some server-side code there, some jury-rigged contraption somewhere else — as it's near impossible to maintain or reuse. Instead, you want a systemized approach that can provide customized experiences using standardized methods, such as something similar to how rules for handling messages are configured in most email programs. When you need more features, extend the shared set of rule options.

By structuring your post-click marketing so that responsibilities are cleanly separated into Lego-like blocks of functionality — that can be quickly and safely assembled into new landing experiences by front-line marketing staff — you can keep the complexity under control while increasing the overall sophistication of your post-click capabilities. Expertise is leveraged where it delivers the most value — in a business process architecture that emphasizes reusability — and is not unnecessarily ensnared in day-to-day production or management.

This distributed approach can dramatically reduce your soft costs, making individual landing experiences much more cost effective. This, in turn, sets the stage for scaling up.

More scale

Marketing in a large organization is all about “more”. Not just more personnel and more processes connecting them — which we covered in the previous two sections — but more prospects and customers, and more vehicles to reach them in more markets.

- As input into post-click marketing, this means:
- More search marketing across more keywords.
- More banner advertisements across more networks.
- More email marketing initiatives across more lists.
- More respondent traffic from each of these sources.
- More audience segments/niches within this traffic.

All of this translates into **the need for more distinct landing pages**, scalable on demand, with targeted landing experiences designed to match the expectations of each of these streams of respondents.

This, however, is a key advantage for larger players. Your scale can enable broader coverage of The Long Tail, investing in more niche exploration, increasing the likelihood of discovering new segments with outsized returns. (This is also one of the secrets for dealing with more risk/reward, as we’ll examine next.)

Another benefit of scale is the ability to cost justify investments in talent and infrastructure. All of the people and processes discussed in the previous two sections are sources of competitive advantage. They’re also mostly fixed costs. With larger scale, you can leverage those fixed costs across a greater number of landing pages with a greater number of respondents, for more efficient utilization and faster payback. The same effort is required to create a landing experience that serves 1,000 people as one that serves 100,000 — but the latter delivers orders of magnitude ROI.

All of this translates into the need for more distinct landing pages, scalable on demand, with targeted landing experiences designed to match the expectations of each of these streams of respondents.

But to make scale work for you — and not against you — you need to structure your post-click marketing so that increases in the number of advertisements, the number of landing pages, the number of respondents, and the number of tracked audience segments in those respondents do not require a linear increase in your fixed or variable costs.

In other words, averaged out, you want more for less. Here are 10 ways to achieve such scale advantage:

1. **Organize your landing page initiatives into campaigns and portfolios of campaigns**. As the number of landing pages under your direction grows, it's helpful to divide them into logical groups. A campaign is a collection of landing experiences and the traffic sources that drive respondents to them, all bound by a common purpose or characteristic. For instance, for paid search, a post-click campaign would naturally correspond to a campaign in Google AdWords — with different landing pages and traffic sources for each ad group within that AdWords campaign. Portfolios are then related sets of campaigns, perhaps clustered by product, audience, or geography. In such a tree-like arrangement, you can deal orderly with thousands of post-click initiatives. You can distribute responsibility and delegate authority for different portfolios and campaigns. Ideally, you want to review performance and analysis not only on individual landing pages, but also in aggregate across a campaign or an entire portfolio.

2. **Recycle and test good ideas from one landing page in other contexts**. To maximize the ROI from work already done — including those soft costs such as content approval cycles — test your ideas across multiple venues. In the context of a specific campaign, it should be as straightforward as including the same landing experience in the A/B testing rotations for multiple traffic sources. For example, for a search keyword group, you might test the same path across Google, Yahoo!, and Microsoft Live traffic sources — while still tracking their performance independently. You then might try them with related banner ads or email marketing messages, perhaps copying a landing experience and making only minor tweaks for vehicle-specific continuity. If performance for the same concept varies across traffic sources, this helps reveal the characteristics of those different audiences.

3. **Consider software-as-a-service (SaaS) for your landing page environment to grow smoothly**. Because post-click marketing is more of a marketing function than an IT one, you can take advantage of SaaS products for marketers — such as LiveBall — to move your landing page management into the cloud. In-house IT infrastructure investments tend to require upfront capital expenditures, with their own byzantine approval processes, as well as ongoing

maintenance. SaaS offerings, in contrast, can be subscribed to on an as-needed basis, where you're always prioritized as a customer. And since SaaS vendors are specialists, you inherit their economies of scale. By virtualizing this capability, you further eliminate IT dependencies, increasing your agility to scale campaigns on demand — when you hit a winner, you can quickly exploit it and reallocate when opportunities shift. You're probably already using SaaS elsewhere, such as Google AdWords, Salesforce.com, Google Analytics, etc.

4. **Rig your landing pages to automatically expire when their content is outdated**. As you increase the number of landing pages you have on active duty, you want to minimize the conscious effort required to manage them. For time-limited offers, promotions for particular events, or content that is regularly changed, it's best to give associated landing pages an expiration date that will automatically take them out of rotation when their time is passed. This prevents outdated pages from slipping through the cracks, floating around indefinitely, and causing bad impressions or expectation mismatches for respondents. Expired landing pages should still, however, be archived for reference purposes in your landing page management environment.

5. **Have A/B tests automatically remove underperforming alternatives once statistical significance has been reached**. Keep in mind, A/B tests may actually be A/B/C/D/etc. tests with many variations being evaluated simultaneously. As soon as it can be determined that one or more of those alternatives under-performs the other(s) — using statistical significance of at least 80% for "lead generation" campaigns, or up to 95% or 99% for high-traffic or e-commerce campaigns with a transactional conversion — you want them immediately removed from rotation. You don't want to waste a single click once your trials have born fruit, but you don't want to manually babysit them all either. Auto-optimization — letting your landing page software do this work for you — is the answer.

6. **Take notes on your experiments, briefly documenting hypotheses and conclusions**. Annotating your landing pages and post-click campaigns with your ideas, questions, and analysis of results makes it easier to scale the number of initiatives that you can juggle effectively. These notes don't need to be long or extravagant — think Twitter, not Pulitzer — but simply quick comments on the thinking behind different tests and campaign organization. You can then pick up a thread weeks or months later, without straining your memory, and jump right back in the flow. This also facilitates hand-offs among team members, who can more readily pinch hit when a colleague is on vacation or called off to another project. Writing down your thoughts can also provide clarity, help you discern insightful patterns across your different efforts, and make status updates and management reviews a breeze to pull together.

7. **Promote the development of reusable/parameterized widgets and Flash objects**. Interactivity, video, animation, and other engagement devices have been shown to significantly improve conversion rates and respondents'

impressions of a brand. But building one-off applications in Flash or Javascript is expensive and becomes hard to maintain with scale. A better approach is to create widgets and/or Flash objects that accept configurable parameters — and therefore can be reused across multiple landing pages. For example, a reusable Flash object might have a "carousel" mechanism for rotating between several images and links, but the specific images and links shown are dynamically passed in as parameters. Expert designers and programmers can create these dynamic objects once, and then front-line marketers can plug in the parameters for their specific campaigns. The more reuse these objects get, the higher their ROI, and the more engagement features are distributed across your post-click marketing.

8. **Install marketing dashboards to continually "scan the horizon".** The more landing pages campaigns you have running simultaneously, the more important it is to configure performance gauges that will quickly alert you to any unusual activity — either good or bad. The objective is to facilitate continual partial attention across a broad range of initiatives, while focusing on a small subset. Good visualizations can be very helpful in this process. For instance, a bubble chart that shows three dimensions: conversion rate along the x-axis, engagement score up the y-axis, and the size of the bubble representing the quantity of respondent traffic. Small bubbles in the upper-right corner reveal excellent opportunities; large bubbles in the lower-left corner uncover high-traffic under-performers. Ideally, your dashboard should let you drill down in real-time to examine the causes.

9. **Grow the different stages of your online marketing funnel in proportion to each other.** As the truism goes, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Although post-click marketing usually starts off as one of the least developed capabilities in an organization, your adoption of the concepts described in this article will change that. At some point, however, to grow further, the next weakest link in the online marketing chain will need to be addressed. Maturity models, such as the search marketing maturity model, can be used to manage balanced development of the funnel as a whole. Since post-click marketing sits in the middle of the funnel, it can help illuminate a broader funnel perspective and assist with improvements upstream and downstream — incoming traffic and outgoing conversions. Keep an active dialogue with your counterparts up and down the funnel for cross-stage insights, multi-stage opportunities, and a collaborative culture of continuous improvement.

10. **Support international landing pages properly in your environment.** Sooner or later, as you scale your post-click marketing, you're going to need to publish pages in other languages. The world may be flat, but it's not homogenous. People have an affinity for their native tongue, and post-click marketing needs to build rapport every way it can. You don't want to be holding back for technical reasons on global growth opportunities, so make sure that your landing page production system fully supports internationalization —

Unicode is usually best — and that your pages can be served in any major language.

Remember, however, that the secret of scale is turning a tiny prize garden into a thriving farm — without sacrificing organic, homegrown goodness. You want to leverage economies of scale and optimized production processes, without forgetting that at the end of the day, the tastiest tomatoes win.

All the capabilities for scaling post-click marketing still rely on taking strategic and creative chances to deliver extraordinary landing experiences to your audience. So let's talk about taking chances the smart way.

More risk

The difference between small business landing pages and enterprise post-click marketing is analogous to the difference between piloting a two-seater prop plane versus captaining a Boeing 747 jumbo passenger jet. Sure, it's all flying — altitude, airspeed, compass — but the stakes are higher. Aerobatic stunts that would be fun for a single aviator would be reckless insanity for an airline pilot.

In the context of enterprise online marketing, more risk is perceived because, simply due to scale, a small mistake can quickly become a high profile failure, both inside and outside the organization. And to a real degree, there is — hopefully! — substantial brand equity and goodwill out there that you don't want to tarnish.

However, the risk of inaction is arguably far more dangerous. The online marketing agility of smaller competitors can pose a serious threat to larger firms that get mired in either their own overweight processes — which many of the suggestions in the previous sections are designed to fix — or their own overly cautious worldview and a reluctance to conduct bold experiments. The market does not stand still.

The objective is to have the best of both worlds: safe and sensible agility.

Luckily, many of the capabilities that should be put in place for efficient scaling also serve as safety mechanisms:

- Standardized brand templates reduce the risk of layout mistakes or browser incompatibilities.
- Auto-optimization features make certain that underperforming alternatives are swiftly taken offline.
- Automatically enforced expiration dates guarantee that outdated content is never left in rotation.
- Standardized data collection process make sure the right information is collected the right way.
- Favoring A/B testing over MVT avoids inadvertently bad combinations (the Russian roulette caveat) and minimizes the chance of misconfigured tests.
- Good dashboards quickly alert you to any unusual patterns that need your attention.

Well-managed, the ability to take smart, calculated risks is a powerful cultural advantage.

But there are further ways to assuage risk in post-click marketing, where you can use your size to your advantage. Here are 4 recommendations for managing risk:

1. **Leverage a portfolio strategy: more experiments = more opportunities to find gold**. Take a cue from early-stage venture capitalists, who make relatively small investments in 10 companies, knowing that it only takes one winner to make up for all the others going bust. As a large organization, you should have the ability to experiment with a tremendous number of post-click marketing ideas — far more than smaller competitors could afford — as long as you keep the costs of individual experiments low. This is the art of mining The Long Tail. You want to minimize the loss on the ones that don't work, by testing on a small scale and promptly jettisoning any that don't bear fruit — don't build a castle on swampy ground. Meanwhile, when a specific idea hits a home run, be ready to leverage it for all it's worth, expanding its reach and iterating further refinements.

2. **Learn from your shared, centralized campaign history.** Two things that hurt a lot of organizations in their post-click marketing: **(1)** blindly following tactical advice that worked for other companies but isn't right for their own market — creative ideas are rarely reducible to universal best practices (e.g., "have navigation", "don't have navigation"); and **(2)** a failure to recognize what does — or doesn't — really work for their specific market

because they don’t share the information across all of their post-click initiatives. As they say, those who don’t learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Make full use of your centralized systems, dashboards, and note taking to exploit hard-won knowledge into your own best practices. But be enlightened from history, not chained to it. Don’t be afraid to revisit old ideas with new perspectives — just do so with an informed background. When in doubt, run a small test and document the results.

3. **Use disproportionate traffic allocation for champion/challenger tests**.
   Once you have a winning landing page in a high-volume campaign, you’ll obviously want to reap the benefits of that champion. However, major breakthroughs can usually be enhanced by further refinements, so you want to continue to run subsequent “challenger” landing pages. To balance both those objectives, keep the majority of traffic directed to your champion, and only siphon a sliver for your new challengers — just enough to obtain statistical significance in a reasonable period of time. For high-volume campaigns, that’s probably less than 10%. If the challenger doesn’t work as well, it’s impact on your overall performance metrics will be negligible; if it does work, it can be quickly elevated as your new champion.

4. **Mitigate unsuccessful tactical ideas by always representing the brand well**.
   Part of the deal with a portfolio strategy is understanding that many experiments — maybe even most experiments — will not pan out. The upside is that this is how you learn and discover what works spectacularly. Even though you keep those tests small, you still want to respect the value of every respondent. To do that, always make sure that your landing pages are quality work that represent your brand well. Landing page experiments should be quick and cheap, but they shouldn’t look quick and cheap. And they should always live up to the expectations set before the click. Even if someone doesn’t convert on an experimental idea, you want to make a good impression that positively contributes to brand awareness and favorability — the world keeps spinning, and those prospects may very well come back to you on a separate campaign.

Well-managed, the ability to take smart, calculated risks is a powerful cultural advantage. In an online marketing arena where you’re either the quick or the dead, being aggressively innovative — but never reckless — is key to staying ahead of the curve, ahead of your competition.

With intelligent risk can come great reward.

More reward

For all the challenges of a landing page program at the enterprise level, the rewards of success make it all worthwhile. Conversion rate improvements as a percentage translate into much bigger absolute wins — a 100% increase in conversion rate is awesome in any context, but when it's a doubling of millions of dollars in sales, that's objectively even more impressive. After all, the bigger you are, the harder it is to move the needle.

Once you achieve this success, the tough part is over — congratulations on all your hard work — at least for that campaign cycle. However, there are 3 closing pieces of advice to keep in mind for making the most of your accomplishments:

1. **Celebrate and share the credit — remember, post-click marketing doesn't exist in a vacuum**. Recognize the contributions upstream and downstream in the funnel, and use these successes as a catalyst to further closer collaboration. For major improvements, a party is most definitely in order. Tequila shots are optional.

2. **Review your ROI, even beyond the scope of your official landing page performance metrics**. Particularly in lead generation, which is early in the sales cycle, but also with transactional respondents that can have repeat business, it's often helpful to look beyond the immediate metrics of post-click marketing (e.g., engagement, conversion rate, quality score, initial transaction amount) and explore the patterns of long-term, deep-funnel value. The same applies to evaluating the indirect and soft costs. Understanding these factors can inspire new strategic post-click ideas and improve your business case, justifying further NPV and IRR investments in your post-click marketing capabilities.

3. **Finally, don't rest on your laurels — online marketing is a highly dynamic environment**. Things change quickly: user expectations, competitor responses, the culture and issues of your different Long Tail marketing niches. Left un-attended, the arc of every successful campaign eventually wanes. To keep your edge, you must be proactive. Take full advantage of all the infrastructure you've put in place for testing, low-cost updates, dashboard alerts, and regular brainstorming from an extended team of experts up and down the funnel.
   Above all, keep your post-click marketing authentic, genuine, and fresh.

Ultimately, all of the recommendations in this report — 36 in total — come down to one fundamental concept: agility. Speed and efficiency in post-click marketing translates directly into speed and efficiency in bringing new customers — the right customers — through your funnel. It's not easy, but if you invest in the right structure, you can obtain a magnificent competitive advantage.

As Lou Gerstner, the famed turnaround chief of IBM in the 1990's stated: who says elephants can't dance? ■

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