



CONVERSION CONTENT MARKETING



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Content marketing influences prospective customers with authority, liking and reciprocity.

Content marketing, in the words of Chris Brogan, can really “shake the tree.”

Thriving at the intersection of SEO and social media, content marketing has become central to digital marketing strategy. Its objective is simple: create genuinely useful or entertaining content for many specific niches of your target audience—not to overtly promote your business, but to build rapport and brand equity—and give it away for free.

Content marketing influences prospective customers with authority, liking and reciprocity (in the terms of Robert Cialdini). It educates them about new ideas and opportunities that will nudge them toward your funnel. But generally, it doesn't attempt to convert people immediately, instead sowing seeds to be harvested later.

In contrast, landing page optimization has traditionally focused on a much shorter time horizon, aiming to convert people right away on their visit to a particular page. Typically, a visitor must convert to receive the value promised by the landing page, such as a white paper or webinar. Different variations of the page are tried using A/B and multivariate testing to see which induces the highest conversion rate.

If content marketing is about romancing prospects, old-school landing page optimization is more like honing pick-up lines.

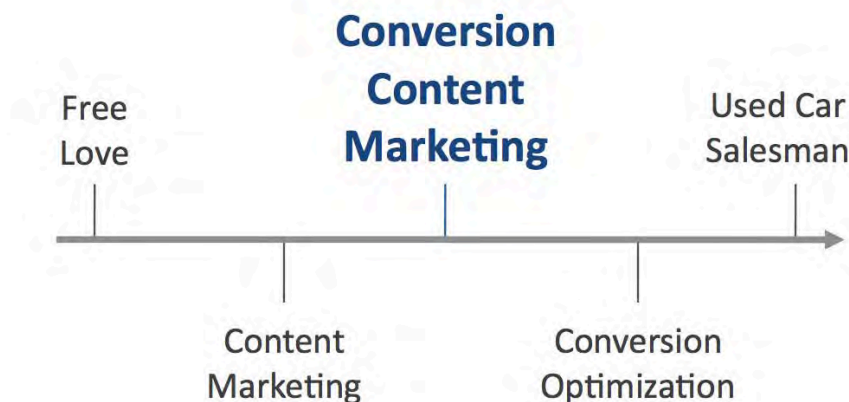
The new school: conversion content marketing

The problem with “pick-up line” landing pages is that when they're used indiscriminately, they're annoying. In most circumstances, prospects don't want to be picked up. They want to have a little conversation first, learn something about you, warm up to your charms.

On the other hand, a lot of content marketing—especially the ubiquitous blog post—is like the shy admirer who never musters the courage to ask for a date. The prospect might be interested in a closer connection, but when that seducible moment passes, their attention flits elsewhere and may never return.

In terms of the [READY Framework for Conversion Optimization](#), content marketing is often Relevant, Engaging and Authoritative, but has no Directional or Yield-optimal momentum. This is because it usually excels at the first three, yet fails to capitalize on the strength of the last two.

The happy medium is a hybrid: *conversion content marketing*.



Conversion content marketing extends a content strategy with savvy but appropriate conversion optimization tactics and techniques. The combination of these two world views lead to the following six principles.

Principle #1: Conversion is optional

Content marketing works best when visitors get value without having to give anything in return—other than their time and attention. That time and attention is what you want, because it's a great starting point for a relationship with your brand. So the first principle of conversion content marketing is that conversion is optional.

Optional conversion means that if your content is a white paper, visitors can download it without filling out a form. If it's a recorded webinar, they can watch it without registering. If it's a collection of best practices, a cool infographic, a slide presentation, etc., it's simply right there for them to consume. It's not dangled like a carrot, but shared like a free sample at the cookie stand.

The conversion is offered as a natural extension of the content. If a visitor likes your content, they have a logical next step to take. For instance, you might offer:

- An option to sign up for bonus/premium/extended content
- An option to subscribe to a relevant newsletter or alert service
- An option to have someone contact them on that specific topic
- An option to make a pertinent purchase ("don't shill, help fulfill")

The call-to-action is more subtle than in traditional landing page optimization. It's presented, genuinely, as a way to help the visitor move forward—but only if they want. You might ask for the conversion, but you don't demand it. If your conversion rate is 15%, you still want the other 85% to leave better off with [a terrific brand impression](#).

...as a rule of thumb, 60% of your effort should be creating new content and 40% should be testing and refining it.



Principle #2: Testing is mandatory

In content marketing, once something is published, it's usually etched in stone (or at least wet concrete). Rather than continue to tweak that piece, the marketer moves on to the next idea. This produces a continuous stream of new content, which is great, but little iterative improvement on any one piece of content. Blogs epitomize this firehose approach.

In contrast, the mantra of conversion optimization is test, test, test. Testing boosts your performance, and more broadly, boosts your learning about what works and why. But optimization marketers sometimes take this to an extreme, getting stuck on optimizing a single page ad infinitum.

Conversion content marketing is a 60/40 blend of the two. Testing is mandatory—if you're not testing, you're squandering your traffic. But as a rule of thumb, 60% of your effort should be creating new content and 40% should be testing and refining it.

Of course, testing requires measurement to define improvement. Conversion rate is still a key metric, even if the conversion is optional. It indicates how good an experience visitors had with your content and the appeal of your discretionary call-to-action. But conversion rate shouldn't be the sole metric, as you want to protect the brand value of your free content. You should also weigh visitors, SEO rank, social media sharing and "microconversions" such as number of pages viewed, downloads, video views, etc.

Good testing aims to boost conversion rates without negatively affecting content metrics.

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Principle #3: Format is flexible

Landing page optimization produces, well, landing pages. Content marketing, on the other hand, takes form in a variety of shapes and sizes (although blog posts are probably the most popular). Conversion content marketing embraces the idea that format is flexible and pushes it to the next level.

Conversion content should be published in the form that maximizes the value—and the holistic experience—delivered to visitors. Don't be constrained to boring, cookie-cutter landing page or blog templates. Great content experiences can take many different shapes:

- A stand-alone page that presents the content creatively
- A microsite with several interconnected pages
- A wizard that guides visitors through a series of steps
- A web application that has a custom flow of interaction

Multi-page experiences enable innovative content presentations and can make large content more consumable. They're a modern reincarnation of the microsite—not a fluffy, Flash showpiece from the past, but an SEO-primed cluster of focused, engaging HTM content.

Design and layout of individual pages complements the content, but also balances the secondary mission of incorporating conversion points in an elegant way. Calls-to-action should be attractive, but not distracting. You want to make it easy for people to take a relevant next step, but you don't want visitors to feel pushed. Perfecting this synergy is the sweet spot for testing.



...the more specific and targeted you are to a particular audience, the better you will perform.

Principle #4: Scale is vertical

Both content marketing and landing page optimization have converged on the same insight: the more specific and targeted you are to a particular audience, the better you will perform. It's not about creating "one page to rule them all." Instead, you achieve your best results by producing many different experiences, each crafted for a distinct idea and audience segment.

This is why conversion content marketing should follow the 60/40 rule described earlier and put the majority of its effort on producing new material. The only difference between this and general content marketing is that you want to design the optional conversions to match.

Scale is vertical means that you grow content conversion marketing by constantly addressing new niches, new issues, new applications, new verticals, etc., where your expertise can deliver value—and gently connect the dots to your products and services. (I actually believe a focus on ever more diversified audience segments, across multiple touchpoints and stages of the marketing funnel, is a strategy for scaling the new marketing organization as a whole.)

Agile marketing practices can really help your conversion content marketing scale efficiently.



Principle #5: Content is king

The essence of conversion content marketing is that content is king. The call-to-action, which is often glorified in conversion circles is certainly important. But frankly, it's not as important as the content for which that call-to-action is associated.

So what does a great, content-driven experience built for conversion need to include?

- Depth
- Quality
- Humanization
- Specificity
- Differentiation

The experience should provide enough depth that the user is compelled to take the next step. This means providing visuals of how your product or service works, including pricing information if appropriate, and detailing out any fine print.

Your content-driven experience must also demonstrate the quality of your offering. To this end, you should include elements of social proof like customer testimonials, press clippings, and the logos of widely recognizable customers.

In order to create an emotional connection between the user and your content, you should humanize it. You can do this by providing the bios and headshots of your

team or including video of your best customers talking about or demonstrating use of your offerings..

And remember, content is only king if it resonates with your audience. Conversion content marketers must take care to personalize copy and offers to different customer segments based on their wants or needs.

Finally, content becomes a beloved king if it's differentiated from all the other content out there. Don't be afraid to test big, bold ideas when it comes to form, function or layout to see what resonates best with users.



Principle #6: Produce Copiously

Your conversion content marketing efforts need a portfolio strategy. Each portfolio should contain specific messaging and offers for the various audience segments that you're targeting in a particular campaign. This means you need to create multiple versions of each piece of content with specific headlines, subheads, pictures, offers and so on. The core message will remain the same, but personalization is often the key to high-ROI results in conversion content marketing campaigns.

Content marketers and conversion optimization professionals: you have a glorious collaboration ahead.



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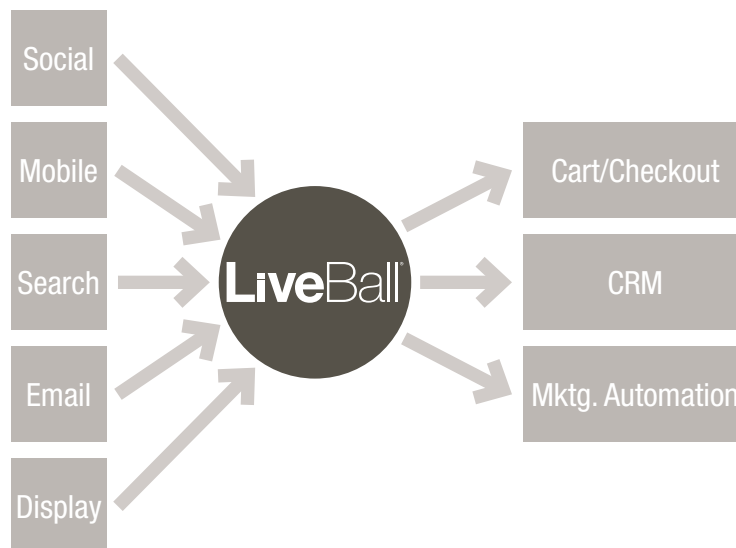
LiveBall optimizes the performance of online campaigns by delivering ideal user experiences. It significantly reduces the resources required to manage long-tail content and optimize conversions.

As a direct result of using LiveBall, customers see significant increases in revenue and profit.

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- ▶ Bronto Software increased its lead-gen conversion rate from 2% to 18% in five months.
- ▶ Citrix Systems increased its search engine conversion rate from 0.5% to 12% in three weeks.

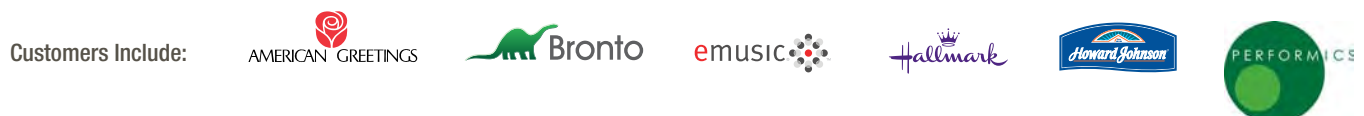
Optimizing the gap between ads and results

LiveBall optimizes the gap between online ads — search, email, mobile, social, display — and results. It creates the first impressions a brand makes on users. By determining a user's intent and then focusing on it, LiveBall significantly increases user satisfaction. That satisfaction translates into more engagement, more leads and more revenue.



Putting marketing in control

LiveBall is technology for marketers. It's a whole new class of easy-to-use software that saves resources, increases agility and improves results. It's IT independent — putting marketing in control of campaigns from beginning to end. LiveBall is cloud based — making it quick to launch and maintenance free. To use it, marketers log-in with a web browser. And for all the enterprise features of the platform, training takes less than two hours. It's low overhead and high impact.





LiveBall[™] The most complete conversion optimization platform.

LiveBall gives marketers the power & freedom to execute.

For marketers. By marketers.

Just point, click and change it. Change what? Everything — forms, text, images, Flash, links, brands, page layouts, SEO controls — you name it. All IT free.

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Test it all. LiveBall brings sophisticated testing into the 'no-code zone'. Launch A/B or MVT in three easy clicks.

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LiveBall includes an agile, flexible, sophisticated no-code forms engine. Make pain-free, world-class forms all by yourself.

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Export to Salesforce.com, post to a form, send email, a delimited or vCard file — LiveBall gets your data where you need it.

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LiveBall customers mix and match components in their own loosely coupled architecture to attain best-of-breed status in each key sales & marketing area.

LiveBall usability

LiveBall gets out of your way — saving you time & resources at every step. Even the training is short and simple.

LiveBall is cloud-based and IT free.

Cloud-based software is reliable, easy to buy and easy to live with. With LiveBall, you simply order your solution, we provision it and get you started, you just log in and use it. You pay based only on the number of unique visitors you send to the platform.

Content management — make all the pages you want

Testing — three clicks for powerful A/B testing

Reporting — real-time analytics at your fingertips

Hosting — go live in minutes

Support — high-touch service from nice people

Users — everyone in your company can use it

Quick start — everything you need to get started fast

Unlimited seats — everyone can use LiveBall

Unlimited pages — create and launch all the pages you want

Unlimited visits — multiple visits from a unique count as one

Unlimited testing — run all of the code-free tests you want

Unlimited support — via phone & email — for one user

Customers Include:





LANDING PAGES FOR AGENCIES

A landing page program should be rooted in sound strategy in order to be highly effective.

Any agency can take advantage of the unique properties of landing pages to help their clients improve online marketing results.

Landing pages are the pages that visitors arrive on after responding to, or clicking on, an ad. Landing pages can help lift the conversion rate for marketing campaigns that are driving online traffic, such as PPC, email, display, direct mail and broadcast.

A well-managed landing page program is often the key to better online marketing performance and can easily be elevated to a strategic level inside of your clients' organizations. This can lift your agency into a more strategic position and strengthen your role.

Any agency can take advantage of the unique properties of landing pages to help their clients improve online marketing results.

Landing pages concept to completion

On the surface, landing pages can appear to be the simplest of online marketing tactics. Make a page, launch it, plug in some analytics and you're done. Not so fast. If you've worked on landing page initiatives, you know that it's never as easy as it seems (unless—shameless plug—you are using a landing page management platform like LiveBall). There are many moving parts for landing page development. Even the term 'landing page' is deceptively simple. A 'landing page' is actually a series of pages that form a microsite or conversion path. All of these 'landing experiences' are opportunities to make great first impressions with potential customers.



To get going, start with the building blocks of good strategy. Your client is driving traffic from PPC, email, display, direct or broadcast. They want to convert that traffic into business. Define what the conversion opportunities are in advance and agree on them with your client. It's important to know how your client will measure the success of the campaign so you can focus your efforts on achieving those specific results. It is about engagement, lead-gen, conversion rate, sales?

Based on outlining the goals and objectives of the campaign, you spring into action to concept & produce strategic landing experiences.



In today's online marketing landscape you have a variety of choices for landing page management tools. To get the job done right you'll need access to content management, real-time testing, analytics and hosting:

- Creation—Your agency needs a way to produce high-quality landing pages rapidly, without bogging down IT or web development resources.
- Testing—Without testing you are leaving conversions on the table. In today's world, testing is imperative and it's the fastest path to lifting conversion rates.
- Analysis—Clients want transparent, easy-to-understand results at the snap of the finger. You need the capability to deliver on-demand analysis and reports.

You can cobble together a landing page solution for your agency by using separate tools—one for publishing, a separate environment for hosting, standalone code for testing and an analytics platform. But specialized solutions, like LiveBall, are available to combine these functions into a highly scalable, agile engine for landing page creation, testing and analysis in a single environment.

As an agency, you know best how your clients buy from you, so make your landing pages easy to buy.



The pitch

The question agencies ask us most frequently is 'how do we sell landing pages to our clients?'. The best answer is to sell landing pages in whatever manner you sell your other services. There is no single right way to develop a landing page service offering. As the agency, you know best how your clients buy from you, so make your landing pages easy to buy. Design your landing page services to align with the other services your agency provides. Here are some options to consider:

- Project based
- Retainer based
- Percent of media
- Performance based

If you create landing pages on a project basis, your proposal will need to be based on time estimations—from concept through launch, as well as the direct costs of any tools you may need to use to create, host, test & analyze the landing pages. If you are using online tools to help in the delivery of the landing pages, you may want to structure it so that you can spread the cost of those tools across multiple clients and take advantage of the resulting economy of scale. One thing to consider for project-based landing page engagements is hosting costs. Take into account the expected time period for hosting and include any associated fees in your price estimate.

Retainer-based engagements can be beneficial for both your agency and the client. In this type of arrangement clients will typically pay a fixed fee over a fixed period of time, in exchange for a pre-defined set of services and deliverables. Retainers may include a number of landing experiences per month, project management, testing, hosting and analysis. Retainers work well for clients who are used to full-service agency relationships, are driving significant traffic or have frequent stand-alone campaigns and need ongoing services. A retainer-based relationship gives a landing page program time to mature and often these are the engagements that drive the best results for clients.

In performance-based relationships your client may pay you for each conversion your landing pages deliver, a percent of revenue derived from your landing pages, or a fee for a pre-determined conversion rate improvement.

And finally, some client relationships may even warrant a creative approach to packaging the landing page services, such as an engagement that is based on a percent of media spend.

If you have clients asking you for landing pages, or conversion optimization, focus your efforts on preparing a great proposal that addresses their needs and encompasses all the facets of landing page strategy and execution. If your clients are not yet asking for landing pages, but it is something you want to pitch as a service to them (and a new revenue stream for you), you will need to build a strong case for the effectiveness of strategic landing pages. The case for landing pages is usually based on the potential conversion improvement that comes as a result of landing page testing.

LiveBall can help

The best landing pages start with ion interactive's LiveBall. LiveBall is the leading enterprise landing page management platform. The cloud-based software enables the rapid, flexible creation & testing of landing experiences. And there's nothing to install, nothing to maintain—it's software as a service for hassle-free landing pages.

ion interactive has numerous agency partners—large and small—who use the LiveBall to manage their clients' landing pages and boost their client conversion rates. Contact us to see if LiveBall is right for your agency, we look forward to hearing from you!



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LiveBall for agencies

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LiveBall is software for a whole new breed of agency.
From a whole new kind of marketing technology company.

Agencies powered by LiveBall share a passion for results. And have the technology to make those results a reality.

LiveBall optimizes the performance of online campaigns by delivering ideal user experiences.

With LiveBall, agencies make & optimize conversion-focused, user experiences — without code or developers. There's nothing to install, nothing to maintain, nothing to worry about. Just great pages and easy testing.

LiveBall turns campaign friction into freedom by delivering enterprise-scale agility. Subscribe to LiveBall, setup client portfolios and start optimizing pages fast.

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Service	LiveBall Support	Smart Launch	Post-Click Coaching	Custom Engagements
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Your Need	Using LiveBall	Expert help launching LiveBall	Expert guidance	Let's talk
Timeline	Lifetime of your subscription	2-6 weeks	2+ months	Based on needs
Price	Free!	\$5,900	From \$2,500 / month	Based on scope



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