

TOP 10 ONLINE TESTING TIPS



It's challenging to boil testing down to ten tips. We've done it, but we've also provided a more comprehensive 14-page Guide to Online Testing that gets into test wave strategy and planning — both of which are critical to success. Checkout these top ten tips, but stick around to download the testing guide as well. It's a great way to get your conversion optimization started on the right path.

Testing to optimize conversion rates is a mixture of art and science. This alchemy can deliver powerful, profitable results or it can languish — stalled in 'implementation'. In order for optimization to yield ROI, it must always be moving forward.

So let's get on with it, time is money...

1. Be Focused

“Convert more visitors into leads.”

Testing for learning is one path while testing for revenue is another. You can learn when testing for revenue, but it can be difficult to maximize revenue when testing for learning. Conversion optimization maximizes revenue. Keep your eye on the ball and remember your mission is to convert more visitors into leads or customers.

2. Be Methodical

“An orderly plan that defines your objectives.”

You need to have it together. With a full understanding of what you're testing and more importantly why you're testing it. There needs to be an orderly plan that defines your objectives, your streams of traffic, your baseline results and the next steps you plan to take based on various outcomes. Put your testing program on the straight and narrow and keep it focused even when the results get crazy (which they likely will).

3. Be Restrained

“Too many alternatives translate into unproductive test periods.”

Restraint is an under appreciated characteristic of online testing. Too many alternatives often translate into extremely long and unproductive test periods. Both A/B split testing and multivariate (MVT) make it easy to get carried away — trying to test too many things at a time. Unless you have traffic sources with a significant number of visitors, plan to try 2-5 alternatives in a test wave.

4. Be Different

“More varied alternatives yield more varied results — faster.”

Alternatives need to be significantly different from one another. The more traffic you have from a given source, the more refinement you can do. But more varied alternatives yield more varied results — faster. And the best way to find big winners is to make big changes. This isn't to say that running a couple of versions of a similar headline will be fruitless. But keep in mind you

could spend that same time and energy trolling for bigger fish.

5. Be Strategic

“Align your testing objectives with your overall strategy.”

This would be the #1 tip except that it sounds too intimidating, however simple. The single greatest influencer on testing success is planning. And planning begins by aligning your testing objectives with your overall marketing and revenue strategy. It sounds obvious, but many a program loses sight of the fact that marketing's job is to increase revenue. Since testing is a function of marketing, its objective must be to maximize revenue from minimized marketing expense.

6. Be Tactical

“Implement your plan within a usable and agile tool.”

All the high-level strategic wisdom won't translate into success unless you're tactically sound as well. Tips 3 & 4 are solid tactics that translate into effective and efficient testing. But there are more. You hear about testing successes in case studies and testimonials. But most tools make it difficult to achieve those results. In order for your testing to be 'case study' successful, you need to methodically plan using sound tactics atop solid strategy. And you must be able to implement your plan within a usable and agile tool.

7. Be Patient

“If you jump the gun on statistical confidence, you're guessing.”

Here's all the math you need to know: If your test has not reached statistical confidence, it doesn't count. Period. Depending on your business and your traffic, you may adopt a confidence level somewhere between 80% and 99%. The higher the percentage, the more solid your results, but the longer waves take to run. If you jump the gun on statistical confidence, you're guessing. If you're gonna guess, why test at all? Throw darts. It's more fun.

8. Be Cyclical

“if you iterate all the time, you never find the big winners.”

There are two reasons for test waves — innovation and iteration. Innovation waves take bigger risks and yield bigger winners and losers (often A/B experience tests). Iteration waves test smaller things and yield smaller wins and losses (often in-page MVT). If you innovate all the time, it's too resource intensive and you never find valuable refinements. And if you iterate all the time, you never find the big winners. The key is to cycle between innovation and iteration — finding the diamonds and polishing them.

9. Be Simultaneous

“Only results from alternatives running at the same time can be compared.”

Only parallel tests can be compared. That means that only results from alternatives running in the same stream of traffic at the same time can be compared. Test waves are often undermined by being compared with other streams of traffic and/or other periods of time. In both cases, environmental factors have significant impact on performance. All alternatives in a wave must draw at random from the same stream of traffic at the same time.

10. Be Continuous

“Continuous optimization will help you keep pace.”

Things are always changing. Upside and downside are always pushing and pulling on your marketing results. Just consider this brief list of factors that alter your marketing environment: competition, economy, weather and seasonality. Online marketing is always in flux. As a result, your testing is never complete. Continuous optimization will help you keep pace with environmental changes and outperform the competition.

You can make these top ten tips become a reality. Thousands of online marketers take control of their performance and lift their conversion rates using these 10 tips. There's no magic, no silver bullet and no black box solution. Testing can be extremely fruitful, high-ROI work that delivers far more revenue using far fewer marketing resources.

To learn more about online testing please

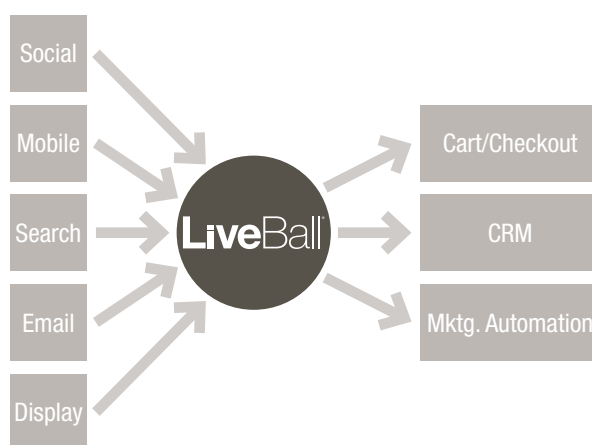
LiveBall optimizes the performance of online campaigns by delivering ideal user experiences. It significantly reduces the resources required to manage long-tail content and optimize conversions.

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- ▶ American Greetings reduced its cost-per-acquisition by 20% in three months.
- ▶ 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 focusing on a user's intent, LiveBall significantly increases user satisfaction. That satisfaction translates into more engagement, more leads and more revenue.



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