Beyond Landing Pages

Turn click throughs into breakthroughs with
50 high-impact best practices

ion

Why landing pages

Search keywords, display ads, social marketing, email marketing, affiliates… **You pay good money for website traffic, but what happens to it after it lands on your pages?** No matter how much money you put into paid channels to increase traffic, what matters most for your online marketing ROI is whether or not that traffic takes action. Conversion-focused web pages are key to helping turn your traffic into leads, customers and sales. In fact, the pages where you send your paid traffic have the ability to make or break your campaign results.

The pages you send your traffic to are called 'landing pages'—the first page a visitor sees after clicking your ads and links. Any page that you direct traffic to is considered a landing page. Regardless of whether it's a paid search ad or an email that prompts someone to click on an offer, the page where that person lands after the click has enormous potential to influence that person into becoming a lead or customer. Landing pages are a visitor's first impression of you and can make the difference between an 'okay' online marketing campaign and a great one.

Making the best landing pages

So, how do you make great landing pages that compel visitors to take action? We're spilling all of our secrets. For more than ten years, we've dedicated ourselves to testing landing page best practices, and we've crammed all of that knowledge into this comprehensive guide. We're going to tell you everything you need to know about what makes the difference between landing pages that fizzle and landing pages that sizzle.

First we'll discuss best practices related to the overall characteristics of your landing page program, then we'll dive into the nitty-gritty pages specifics, and finally we'll cover testing & optimization best practices. By the end of this guide, you'll know everything you need to know about creating effective landing pages.

# 50 landing page best practices and strategies

Start with the right strategic foundation

Effective landing pages start with a solid strategy. We're not talking about the page-level strategy. We're talking big picture strategy driving your landing page program forward. To build anything worthwhile you have to start by laying a strong foundation. These first nine best practices will help you lay the right foundation for your landing page program.

1. Not part of your website

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 & discovery while those that are outside of your website are topic-focused, and designed for conversion. Your website has the responsibility of appealing 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. More or less, your website has to appeal to the 'lowest common denominator' visitor—customers, prospects, investors, media and employees— anyone and everyone who might land there. Think of your site pages as "generalists".

Your potential leads and sales are not the lowest common denominator. They are specifically interested in you, your service or product, and they need specifics. They clicked something specific to arrive at your page, and what specific in return. To get the best ROI possible from any source of paid or campaign traffic, it's important to use a dedicated landing page that is not part of your website. Landing pages designed outside of the structure of your website can be specific to the traffic source a visitor arrives from and that specificity is what results in higher conversions and higher ROI.
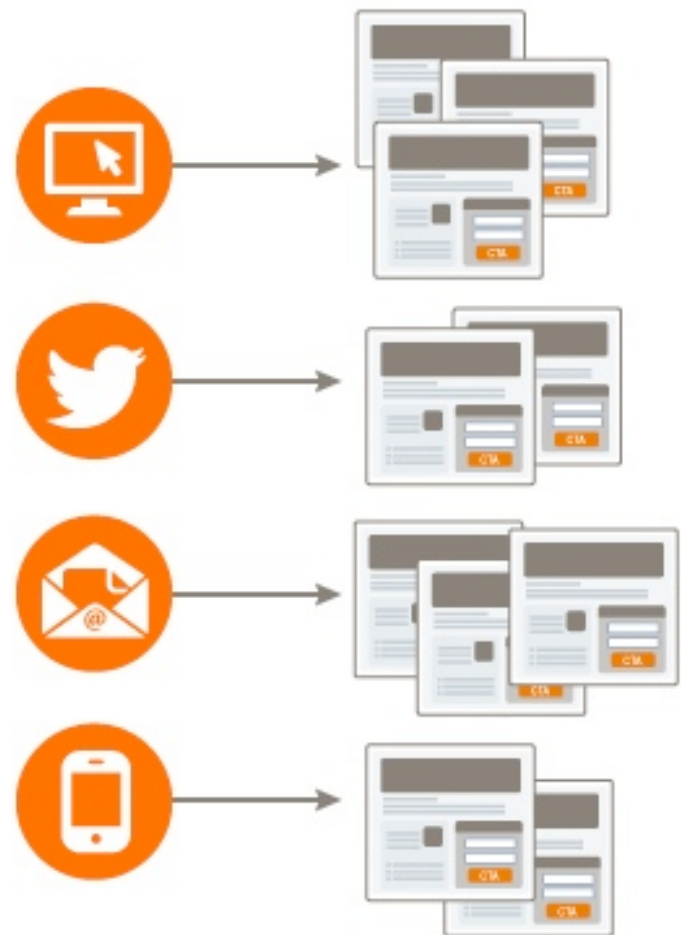
2. Campaign specific

One of the biggest differences between great landing pages and okay pages is specificity. Your offer was intriguing enough to grab someone's attention and earn their click, so why would you send them to a page or website that doesn't continue to talk specifically about that offer? The best landing pages are designed to match the ad and the offer that will drive traffic to it. They are targeted, specific and contextually relevant. These landing pages address any hesitations or concerns that someone might have about that specific offer. Effective landing page programs don't have just a dozen of pages that they use for everything; they literally have hundreds of targeted, granular landing pages.
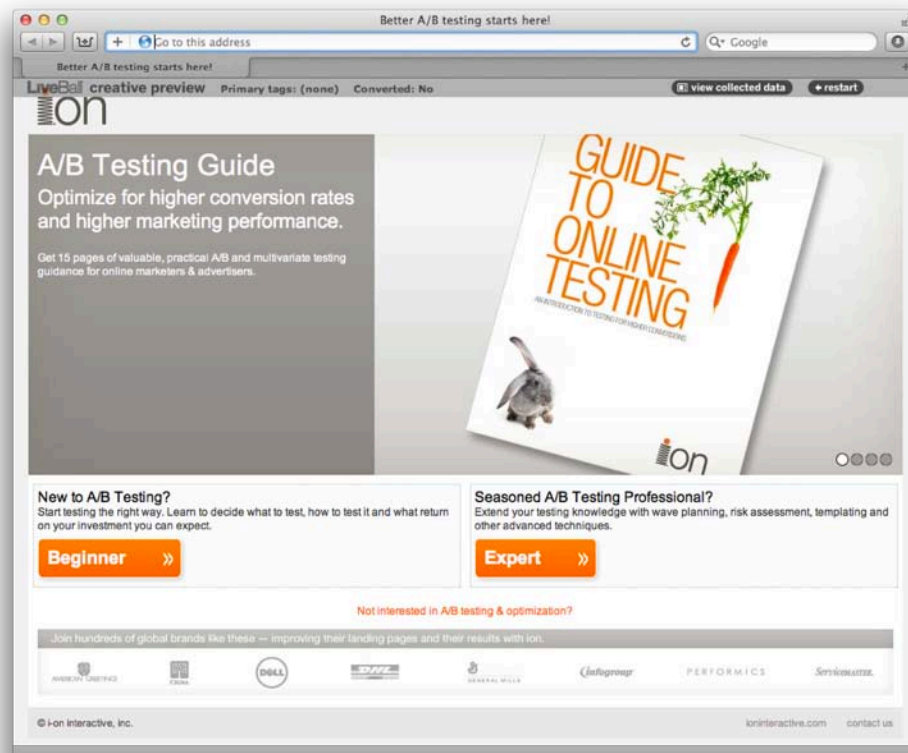
3. Traffic source specific

Not only are the best landing pages campaign specific, but they are also traffic source specific. 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 from the social media link is more likely to be browsing or doing casual research. These two visitors expect and need different things from your landing page and this impacts everything from the content you provide on your page, the amount of content, to the layout of the page itself. By targeting each traffic source separately you'll not only get better conversion rates, but you'll also learn how the performance of different traffic sources compare against each other. Knowing how different traffic sources compare will help you allocate your marketing budget more wisely.

4. Think experience, not pages

When landing pages live outside of your site they become more than just a page, they become an experience. A conversion-focused user experience that compels the visitor to take action. There are three common categories of landing experiences: landing page, conversion paths and microsites. Each type has their own unique advantages and characteristics. Think about which experience helps to best meet the needs of your visitors. For instance, if your visitors are likely facing a big decision then perhaps a microsite is needed in order to offer all of the content they will need. Whereas, if visitors just want to get a whitepaper then they would probably prefer to see a simple, single landing page with a form. Test your assumptions about what type of experience makes the most sense—it's the only way to know what your visitors really want.

5. Have a clear goal and strategy

What is the main purpose of your landing pages? Is it to get more leads or sales? Whatever it is, that goal is what should drive your strategy and landing page design. Clearly defining your goal before you start is critical. Having that goal will help you form a strategy, and it will help you decide what is needed on your pages. If a page element makes it easier for a visitor to take action, then it should be included.

Keep in mind that your strategy is a hypothesis; it's your best guess towards what will make visitors convert. After you launch your pages, you'll find out whether or not it's working. If it isn't, then it's time to dig into your analytics and evaluate where your strategy may have gone wrong, but it will be hard to know where to go next if you never clearly defined your strategy from the start. So know what you want the pages to accomplish before you ever start on them.

6. Grade and score visitors
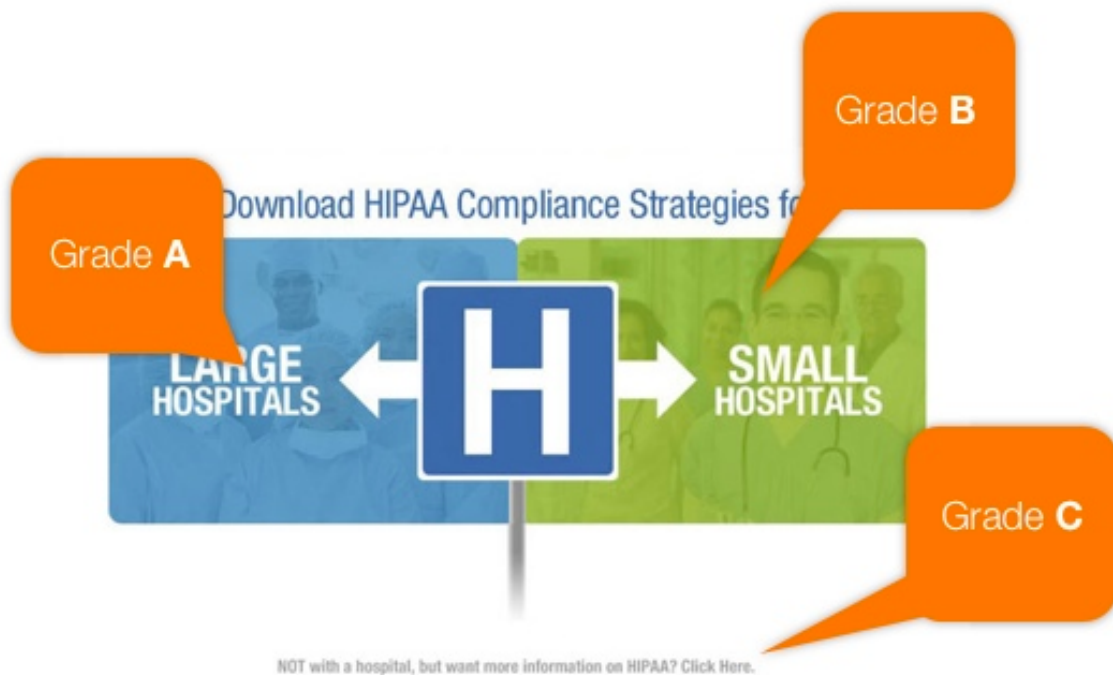
All clicks are not equal. Certain clicks and actions tell us that a visitor is more engaged and more likely to be a higher quality lead or sale. For instance, if someone fills out an inbound form they will probably mean more to you than a visitor who just clicks on a demo video. Setting up a relative grading scale will help you consistently grade and rate the relative quality of visitors across all campaigns and all landing pages. A consistent grading scale will not only help you understand where your best leads are coming from, but your sales team will also know where to focus their attention first.

7. Use real-time analytics

It's vital that the person managing your online marketing strategy has access to real-time analytics. Though we can hypothesize about what will work, the only way to truly know what's effective is by launching pages and reading the analytics. Your analytics are more than just data points and numbers; they represent the reactions of your target audience. A low bounce rate isn't just a good data point, it's a sign your landing page message matches your ad copy and that it is connecting with your visitors. Your visitors' actions (and inaction) hold the clues to what they expect from you and where you can improve. Being able to react in real-time to test analytics can have a direct impact on your ROI.
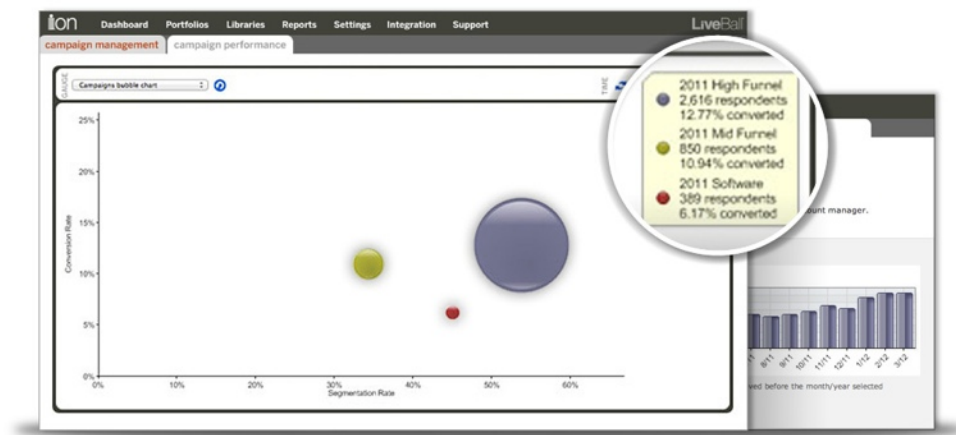
8. Constantly test everything

The best landing pages –the ones that get the best results– got those results through constant testing. We'll dive more into testing best practices later, but a strong commitment to testing needs to be part of your big picture strategy. The best testing isn't ad hoc, nor is it an afterthought. Too often "landing page creation" and "optimization/testing" are thought of and spoken of as two separate steps, but they aren't. Testing needs to be an ongoing part of the process. It's the only way to truly know what works and what doesn't work. To have effective landing pages, you need to be testing.

9. Integrated

Once your landing page has captured a lead or sale, the experience shouldn't just end. Your landing pages should be fully integrated into a larger cohesive post-click program. Whether it's a simple follow up email campaign, a phone call or a larger nurture program, it's important to capitalize on the interest your online visitor expressed by clicking on your ad. Though the landing page experience may have ended, that doesn't mean a visitor's experience with you has ended. If anything, it should just be the start of a larger relationship. Put the information that you've gained through your landing pages to work! Ensure that you have mapped out the entire conversion experience for your visitors from pre-click (what they clicked on), to post-click (the pages they land on) through post-conversion (what happens to them after they convert). Integrated also means ensuring your landing pages are integrated into all of your marketing technology so data is passed seamlessly and relevant systems are talking to each other.
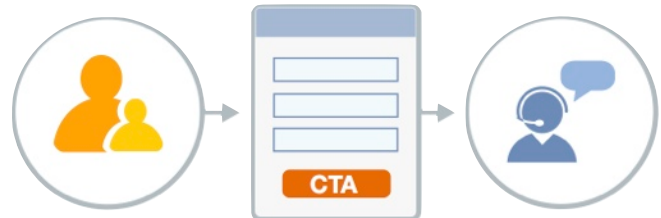
Build your page-level strategy

Now that the right foundation has been laid for your program, we can get into the nitty-gritty details of which best practices help build the most effective landing pages. The best performing landing pages don't share a 'one-size fits all' common

template. However, if you start to compare the page strategies used by the best landing pages, you'll see very specific, strategic trends. These "trends" are universal best practices that will help you get results.

10. Message match
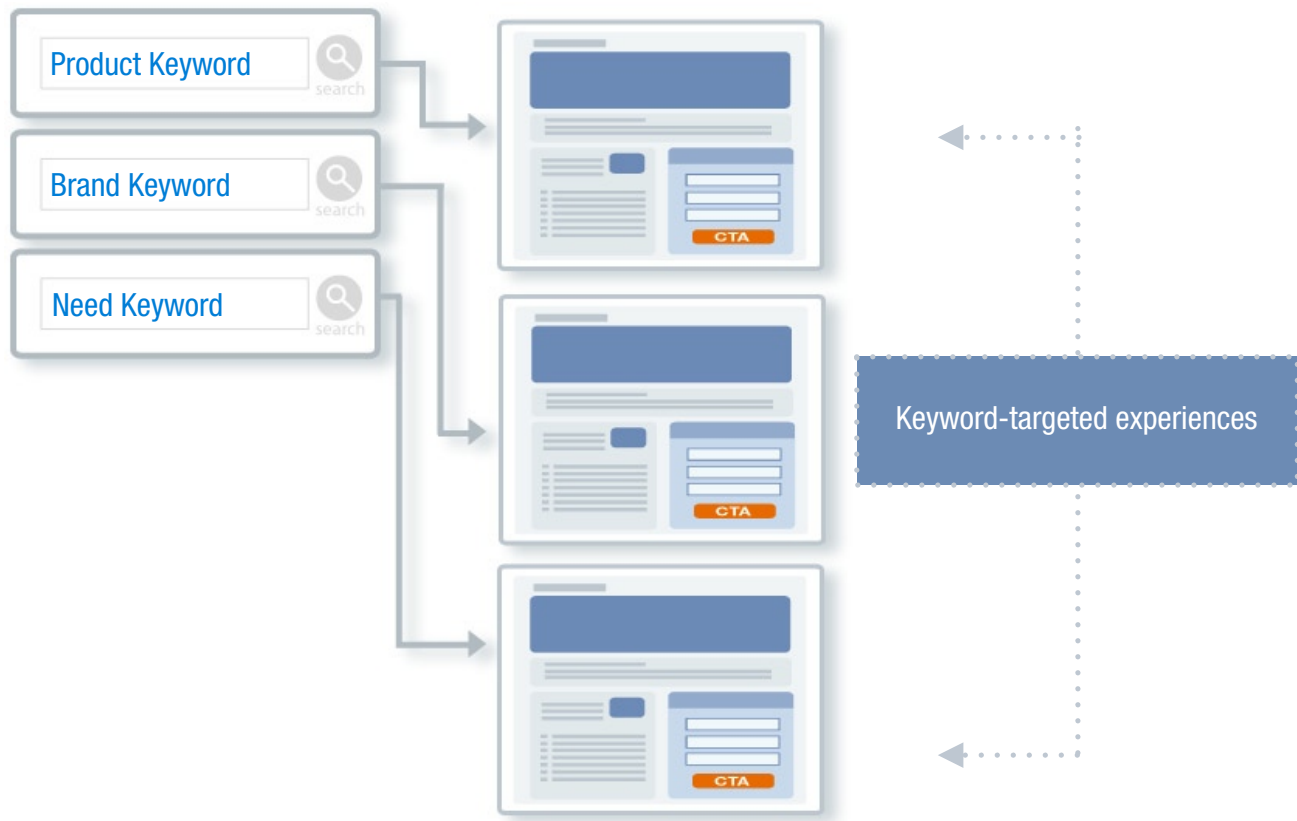
Imagine that you are searching for help on landing page design and came across an ad offering a whitepaper, but when you clicked on an ad you were sent to a page that talked about an agency that designs landing pages with no mention of the whitepaper. It would be annoying, and you'd likely click away pretty quickly. Message mismatch is one of the leading conversion killers. Often message mismatch isn't as pronounced as our example, it can be as simple as stressing one point in your ad and a similar, but different enough one in your landing page headline or even using different wording. Your landing page copy and imagery should mirror the words and phrases you used in your ad. Message match helps establish and build trust between your brand and your web visitors by letting them know that they are in the right place.

11. Conversion-focused

When visitors get to your page, what is the one thing that you really want them to do? It's probably to either purchase an item or to fill out a lead generation form. Whatever it is, the goal of your landing page strategy needs to be getting visitors to take your conversion action. Your page design should guide visitors towards your conversion action. Your conversion rate is the statistic that matters most when its time to gauge your success at the page level.

12. Streamline the experience

Don't make your visitors jump through a lot of hoops, such as clicking through several pages or filling out long forms, to get what they want. Your goal should be to create simple, streamlined experiences that essentially guide your visitors to your conversion action. Eliminate any obstacles that might lead them astray or focus their attention elsewhere. This doesn't mean that you should only use one-page experiences, it just means that you strip away those things that don't help support getting your users to take a specific action, and you don't put any hurdles in front of your visitors.

13. Be user-centered

It's a question we've all asked: "What should go on this landing page?" When it comes to designing pages and deciding which elements should be included, instead of thinking about what you'd like to include, think about what your visitors will want to see. What would make this a good experience for your visitors? Will it be clear to them who you are, what you can offer them, and what action you'd like them to take? The best landing pages are those that are designed to meet the needs and interests of our visitors.

14. A strong, clear call-to-action

If you don't ask for it, you probably won't get it. When your landing page visitors get to your page they want to first know that they are in the right place, and then they want to know what to do next. Use a strong call to action to direct their attention towards your lead generation form, shopping cart button or other conversion action. A good call to action is attention grabbing. It asks a visitor to take one clear action while also reinforcing what your visitor will get out of taking that action.

15. Relevant, streamlined forms

Online marketing is kind of like dating. Your ad was the pick-up line and your landing page is the first date where your landing page visitors start to get to know you better. Of course you want to ask some questions, but it's not the time to barrage your visitors with non-stop questions or even those that might seem a little too personal. Long forms are turn offs. Online visitors are skeptical, even wary, of sharing their information and this is especially true if it seems like a form is asking too much in relation to what they are trying to get. A good rule of thumb is to limit form fields to only those that you really need and save the rest for when you continue to develop your relationship in a subsequent progressive profiling or nurture program. Ask yourself whether that additional form field is worth a lower conversion rate.

That said, there are some cases, such as online insurance quotes, where you do genuinely need to know more than just the basic name and email upfront in order to provide the right information in the next step of your online experience. In these cases try using multi-step forms. They give the illusion of a shorter form and give visitors a quicker sense of progress when they click "next" even if they still have more to fill out. Plus, even if some visitors do drop off in the next step you've at least captured their basic contact information.

16. Clear value proposition

Don't forget your pitch! The page your visitors land on is totally under your control, and it's your chance to create an experience that convinces your visitors that they need your service or product. Make sure that your landing page clearly defines what your business has to offer visitors and then makes them need it now. A clear value proposition helps attract better lead quality because visitors are able to identify whether your product or offer is a good fit for them.

17. Strong headlines matter

Just as quickly as someone clicks to your page, they can click away. Although your ad may have initially captured a visitor's attention, your landing page only has a few seconds to convince visitors that it's worth their time to stay and to read a little more. Let visitors know what you have to offer and pull them in with strong, appealing headlines. Incorporate your offer and value proposition into both your headlines and subheads.

18. Differentiation

Why you? Why your product, your service? The burden of clarifying why you are the better choice falls on you. Wouldn't you rather that they heard your explanation instead of your competitors? Your landing page needs to differentiate you from your competition. Even if you don't have specific direct competitors, you are still competing against the inaction of your visitor. They still have the choice to continue as they have been. Your landing page needs to explain why your product or service is different and how it will make your visitor's life, or their work, better.

19. Above the fold

Don't assume that visitors will scroll down and explore everything that your page has to offer. The most important page elements—the content that you really want your landing pages visitors to see—should be located above the fold. The "fold" of your landing page is the part of your page that visitors need to scroll down to see. You only have a matter of seconds to convince visitors to stay, so you want to make sure
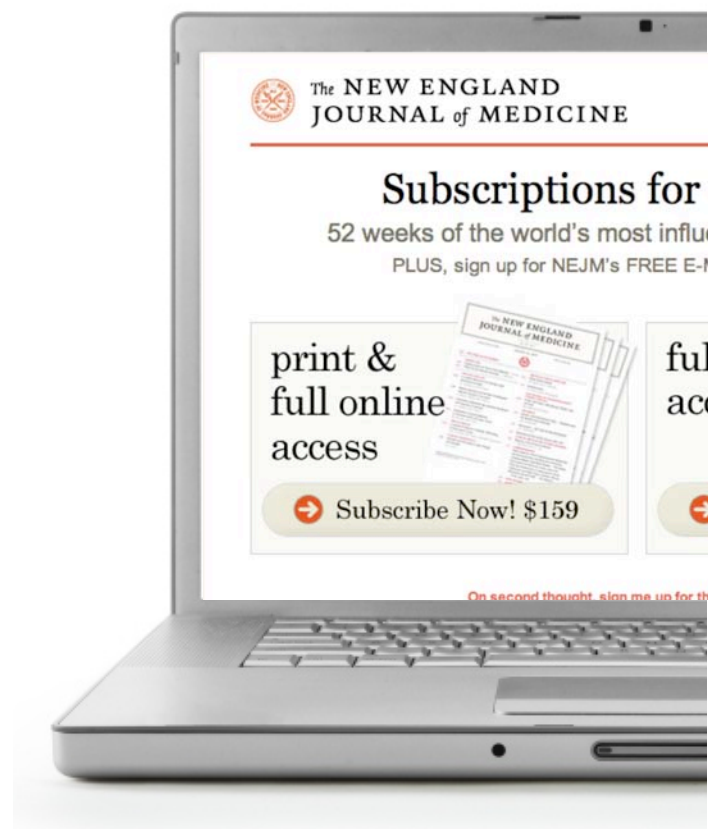
that they see all of the most important items right away. Immediately seeing a strong headline that reassures visitors that they are in the right place, a call to action that directs them what to do next, and clear way that they can get your product or offer makes a big difference. You can still have good stuff below the fold, but the best, most important items should be above the fold.

20. Visual, directional cues

Good design can help lead visitors toward your conversion action. Directional cues are elements on a page that visually guide a visitor's eyes and attention to the conversion point. These can be explicit elements such as an arrow, or a subtle implicit cue, such as color or the direction of a person's gaze in an image. Incorporating both implicit and explicit directional cues is a great way to make sure that you are clearly guiding your visitor's attention to the most important parts of your landing page.
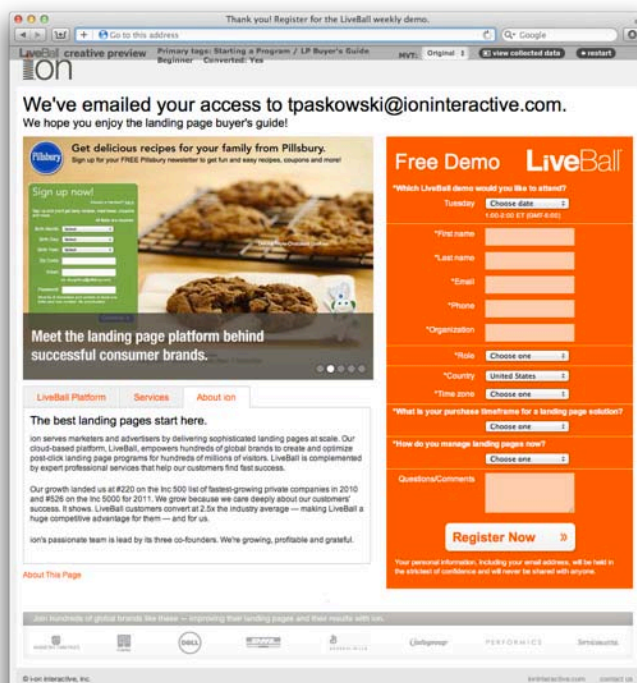
21. Remember to say thank you

First and foremost, thank you pages are a must-do best practice simply because they are polite. They are a way for you to thank visitors for their time and interest and to confirm that they did indeed complete a purchase or that the whitepaper is being sent to their email. However, politeness isn't the only reason why thank you pages are must. They are a great chance to upsell your visitors and to continue their experience with your brand. You have their full attention and you've proven your brand as trustworthy, so capitalize on that and keep going! Try including offers that suggest similar content or ask your visitors to tweet about the interesting guide they just got or to share your offer on Facebook with their friends.

22. Benefit-driven copy

It's true, your product's

features are pretty darn cool; however it's also true that your visitors don't really want to hear about them. It's not that visitors aren't interested, they are actually very interested, but they want to know what's in it for them. The problem with feature-centric copy is that it's still all about you and what you can do. Visitors want to know what you can do for them. They want to know how these awesome features your product offers will benefit them. Benefits make sales, not features.

23. Keep promises

The offer in your ad is a promise that you implicitly promise to keep if visitors would just click to your landing page. Breaking promises isn't the way to start off a good relationship. If you offer something in your ad like a discount or a whitepaper, make sure that its very clear how visitors can get it once they are at your landing pages.

24. Trust is a must

Quite a few of the best practices we've covered in this list such as message match and keeping promises have been all about building trust. The reality of the web today is that many of us are hesitant to give out their information. Trust is the gold of online marketing. It's the currency that helps our landing pages trade for more of our visitors' clicks, time and information. While message match is a more subtle way of building trust, there are more explicit ways that you can position your brand as trustworthy. Keeping your promises is a vital one, and adding a privacy statement alongside any form is another definite must-do. Something as simple as, "We value your privacy and will not share or distribute your personal information with any outside organization" will go a long way. Put yourself in the shoes of your visitors. Click on your ads and ask yourself whether you would give this company your personal information after only a few clicks.

25. Give good brand

Your landing page experience is your chance to introduce your brand to visitors and first impressions matter. What does it mean to give good brand? It's more than just making sure that your logo and colors are prominent. It's also a mixture of good design, relevant and compelling content and a cohesive, error-free experience. This means no bad links, branding inconsistencies, expired information or sluggish response times. Your experience needs to be branded with credibility and authenticity. A brand is many things, but most importantly it's an emotional connection between a user and a product or service.

26. Timely

It's important that both your page and offer is timely and relevant to your visitors. Outdated or expired offers are only going to frustrate your visitors and an outdated look will make visitors question whether your service or product is also outdated. For those companies with a longer sales cycle, timely also means being relevant for where your visitors are in your buying cycle. Your offer and the content on your landing page need to make sense for where your visitors are in the buying cycle.
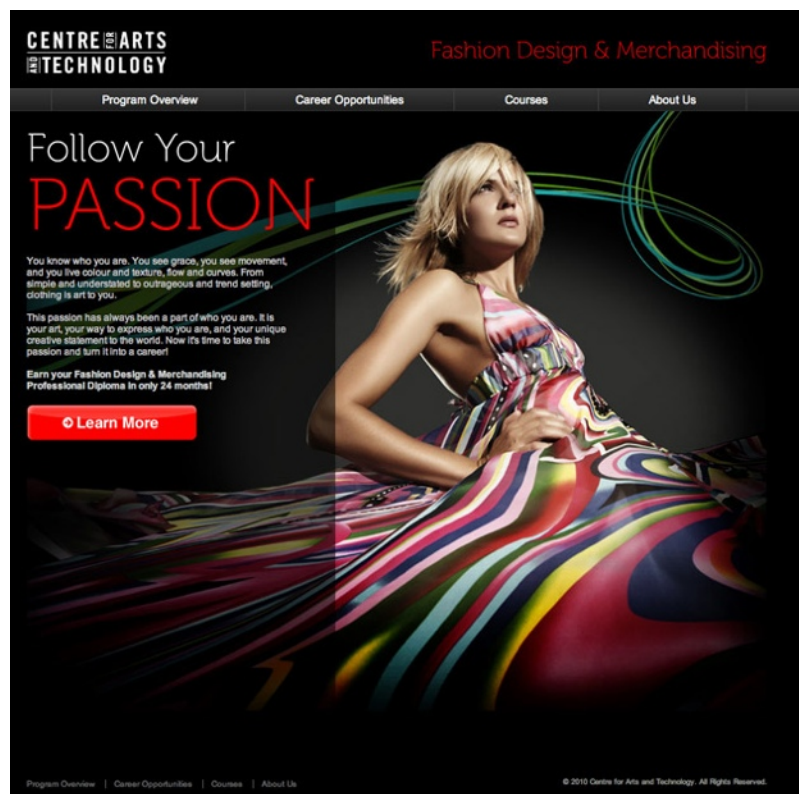
27. Value buttons

Buttons are often overlooked page elements that can have a big impact on your conversion rate when done right. There are two kinds of button labels: those that are value-focused and those that are effort-focused. When buttons say something like "Submit" they are emphasizing the effort that your visitors have to make. Whereas when a button says something like "Get the free whitepaper" they reinforce what your visitor is going to get out of taking an action. Using gain-focused buttons will have a positive impact on your conversion rate.

Gained-Focused or "Value" Button Text	Effort-Focused Button Text
Get View Enjoy Discover See Play	Submit Start Activate Learn Pay Go

28. Meaningful segmentation

Segmentation is a great way to provide your visitors with a more targeted landing page experience while also learning more about them. Your pages can be designed with simple choices for the visitor that help quickly direct them into the right content. Segmentation choices can be designed to be based on industry, role, company size, need, benefit, even place in the buying cycle. In order for segmentation to work it has to 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 more meaningful and valuable. By funneling visitors into these buckets, you can speak more specifically to their interests and increase your chances of conversion.

29. Frictionless choice

Choice paralysis is what happens when our visitors are overwhelmed by all of the options on a landing page and they aren't sure which option to choose. It can devastate your conversion rate. Give your visitors a good set of limited choices that entice them to take the next step and convert. The choices should be relevant to your visitors' needs and match up with the expectations set in your ad. Frictionless choice is especially important for segmentation paths. Make sure that your segmentation seems natural so that the choice for visitors is practically intuitive.

30. Don't link away

If your landing page is designed to move visitors towards a conversion action, why would you want to give them a link that takes them further away from it? Try to limit links, such as navigation bars that can take your visitors to someplace outside of your landing page or conversion path. If you think your visitors will need more information to convert, then test using a microsite that has a strong call to action and conversion option on every page or try using layered, interactive content like accordions. There are creative ways to get more content into your experience in a condensed, digestable format.

31. Mobile optimized

The number of mobile visitors is only going to grow, so make sure that you are serving up good experiences for them too. Just think of how often you check your email on your phone or try to look up something 'on the go'. Mobile visitors are used to app-like experiences and they quickly become frustrated with pages that they need to pinch or squint to read. Creating mobile-optimized versions of your landing pages or using a landing page platform like LiveBall that automatically creates mobile versions of landing pages is essential to convert mobile traffic.
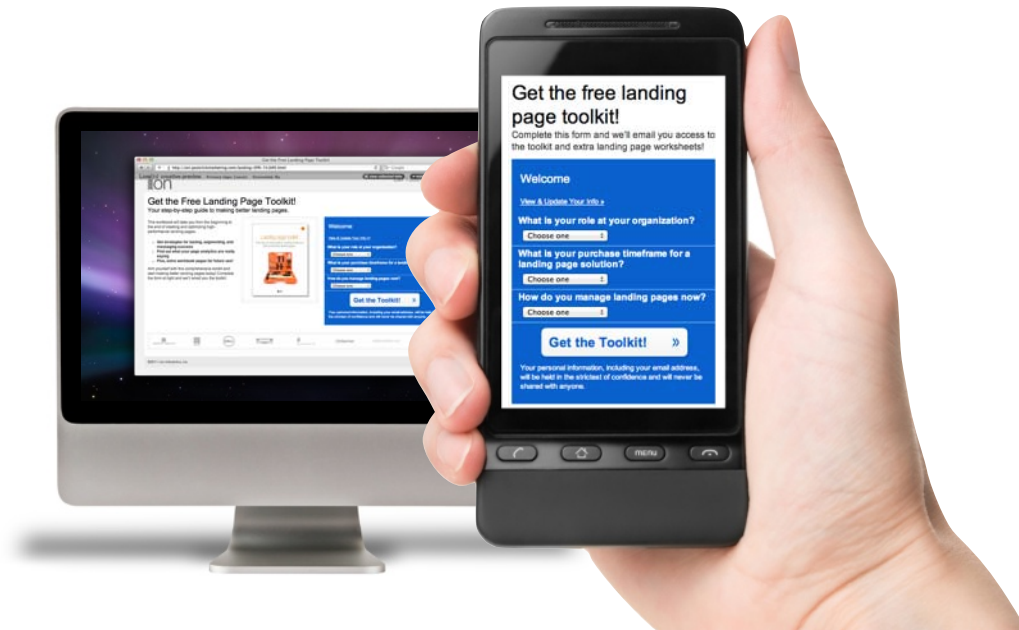
32. Show your product

Visitors want to see and fully understand fully what they are going to get. No matter how awesome your copy is, the old saying that seeing is believing holds true. Seeing the product itself and being able to evaluate it within different views lets the visitor form a stronger emotional connection to the product. They can start to visualize it in their life.

While this might seem like a more obvious tip for ecommerce, it applies to companies selling services too. While it might be harder to show a visual of your end product, you can share example results. Those numbers and real achievements help prove that you have the skills to back up your marketing rhetoric, and they help visitors understand the impact that your services can have for them too. If your landing page isn't selling anything—for example, it offers a whitepaper—a small thumbnail of the white paper itself can help make the offer more tangible and interesting.

33. Context of use

While showing your product or your service results is a good first step, it's also important to show the context of use. For products, a video of your product being used is the best way to do this. A box shot still places a burden on the visitor to research, compare, read review and make their won assumptions. A video that shows that your product is easy and user-friendly will dissolve any doubt that visitors to your landing page may have had. As soon as visitors can picture themselves using your product, they are sold. For services that are more difficult to capture in action with images or services, a great alternative is a case study that shows your typical process and results. This helps visitors understand what their overall experience will be like with your service.

34. Social proof

When a visitor comes to your page they are quickly trying to assess whether they are in the right place. The 'right place' is the landing page where they are getting what they were looking for from a legitimate, credible source. Adding social proof to your landing pages is a great way to help build your credibility and prove that you are real. Social proof works well in building online trust because it shows visitors that others are already using and liking your solution. Reviews, testimonials, case studies, press logos ("as seen on…" or "as featured in…"), twitter feeds or other social widgets, and member/customer statistics or logos are just a few of the many ways that you can show the social credibility of your brand.

35. Avoid information overload

While you definitely want to impress your landing page visitors, you don't want to overwhelm them with too much information. You don't need to discuss every award you've ever won, nor do your landing page visitors need to know every last detail about your business. Your landing page visitors just want to learn more about the offer in the ad that initially caught their attention.

Limit the content on your landing page to only that which will help a visitor decide to take the next step and convert. Being able to edit your landing page down to only the most powerful, convincing elements is one thing that separates the best landing page programs from the rest.

36. Spice it up

Are you using the same basic copy structure, the same predictable layout, and the same images time and time again? Stop boring your visitors! Your landing page should make visitors excited about you and your product. This means trying new ideas like different layouts, incorporating social elements, using interactive content, or incorporating video. Your

landing page experience shouldn't be boring; it should be interesting, intriguing, and memorable. Every time you create a new landing page experience, pretend you're a visitor and ask yourself if it would make you excited about the offer.

37. High image quality

Quality matters. Your ability to create a beautiful, up-to-date landing page says a lot about how 'with it' your brand is. High image quality really affects whether your page looks dated and sloppy or sleek and modern.

Image quality can also affect page load time, and when seconds count in making your first impression, a page that takes just a little too long isn't going to have the best conversion rate.

38. Interactive content

Interactive content like image rotators, content accordions or tabbed content are three of many ways that you can add more content to your landing page without making it look cluttered. Using layered content lets you provide your visitors with more content without asking them to click away from the actual page or risking informational overload. With interactive content you can present modern, sleek and visually stimulating pages that capture your visitor's attention and their conversions.

39. Incorporate keywords on PPC landing pages

Incorporating the same keywords that you are using in your ads into your landing pages is great way of building an even stronger message match between your ad and landing page. The search terms that your visitors are using to find your ad (and ultimately your landing page) are important to them. That phrase guides their search, and incorporating it into your landing page helps let them know that they are in the right place. Creating landing pages for specific ad groups –and even using dynamic content substitution for keywords– will help you realize even higher conversion rates, because these methods
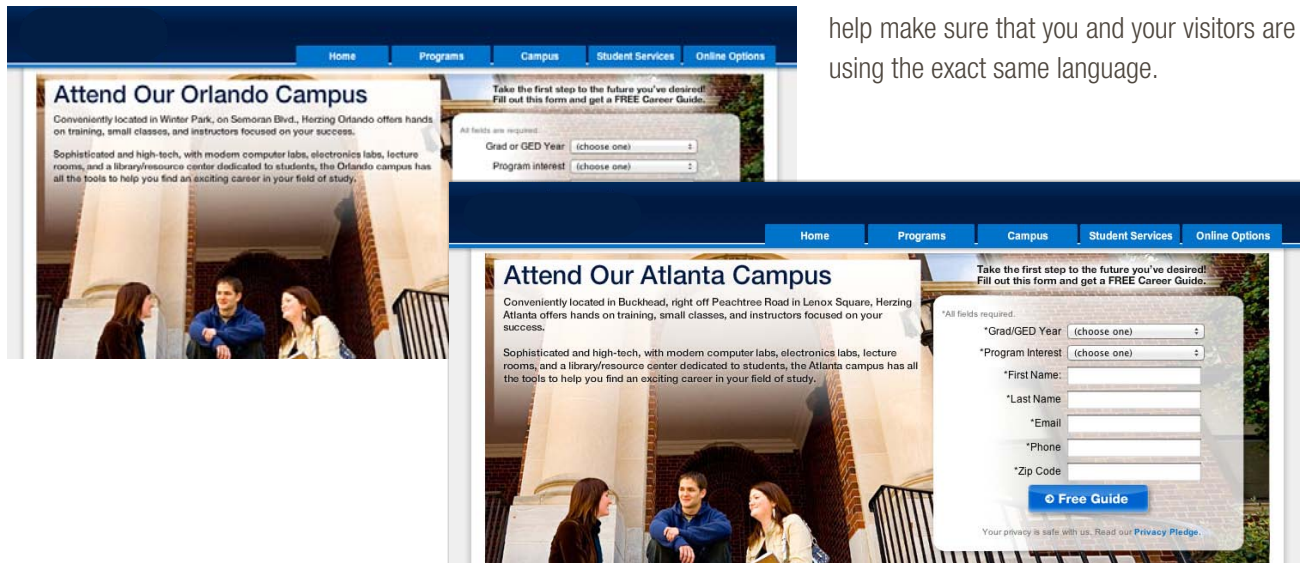
help make sure that you and your visitors are using the exact same language.

40. Design matters

Beautiful, sophisticated design matters and it has a positive impact on your conversion rates. Good design not only supports your message, but it also communicates the value and meaning of your brand and product. Vision is one of our most powerful and emotional senses, and aesthetics are just as important to functionality when it comes to landing page success. Bad design doesn't just leave a bad impression, it makes us doubt the credibility of a page, of a brand, and it even makes us look away. Great marketers don't have to be great designers; they just have to be ready to bring in designers to contribute. Or use pre-designed landing page templates included landing page software live LiveBall.
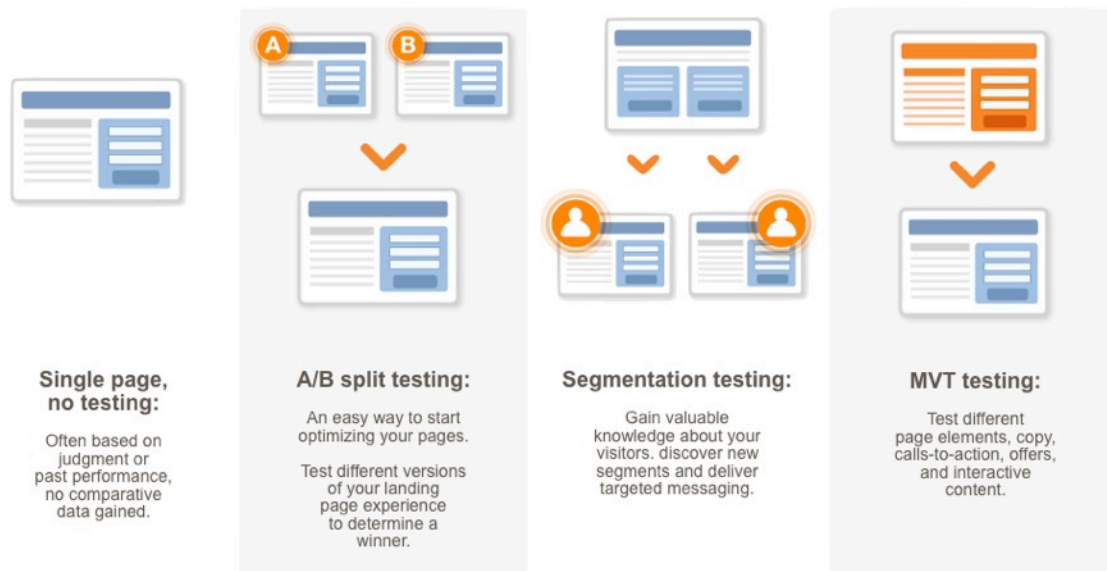
Always be testing

Landing page testing is a best practice that is universal to the leading marketing programs. No matter what your field, industry or focus may be, testing is the only way to get better results and to know for sure what works and what doesn't work for your business. Testing can't be random or ad hoc, it has to be part of a larger, ongoing program that incorporates the following best practices.

41. Be strategic

Planning is the single greatest influencer in testing success. Start your test plans by aligning your landing page testing objectives with your overall marketing and revenue strategy. Before you start to formulate any plans, it's important to decide whether you're trying to learn or increase your conversion rate through your testing. Testing for learning is one path while testing for revenue is another. Since landing page testing is a function of marketing, we believe that its objective must be to maximize revenue from marketing expense. To us, that's true conversion optimization: increased leads & revenue and increased knowledge that matter for your bottom line.

42. Methodically plan

Part of being strategic is having the right plan in place. In order to learn the most from your testing results and be able to formulate smart next steps, you need to first fully understand what you are testing and why you're testing it. This means having an orderly plan that defines your objectives, your traffic sources, your baseline results and next steps based on various possible outcomes. A well-designed testing plan will help keep your testing focused on accomplishing your goals.

Single page, no testing:

Often based on judgment or past performance, no comparative data gained.

A/B split testing:

An easy way to start optimizing your pages.

Test different versions of your landing page experience to determine a winner.

Segmentation testing:

Gain valuable knowledge about your visitors. discover new segments and deliver targeted messaging.

MVT testing:

Test different page elements, copy, calls-to-action, offers, and interactive content.

43. Wait for statistical confidence

Even though you may have what looks like a clear winner right out of the gate, wait until your test reaches statistical confidence before declaring any victors. Landing pages are typically tested to somewhere between 80-99% confidence, depending upon a variety of factors such as traffic levels, the number of variables, and your own risk tolerance. If you stop a test too soon you are basically just guessing on what works best, and if you're just guessing then there's no point in actually testing. A landing page test that has not reach statistical confidence doesn't count.

44. Be cyclical

Landing page testing is most effective when it's done in a wave pattern that alternates between innovation and iteration. Innovation waves test things that are totally different and take big risks that result in bigger winners and losers. Iteration waves test smaller things and yield smaller wins and losses. By using both innovation and iteration, you get the chance to take your big winners and find tweaks that make them even better. We like to think of it as finding diamonds and then polishing them.

45. Use both A/B and MVT

Without a landing page management platform, running multivariate tests can be difficult and typically it's a process that's out of marketing's hands. However there is a tremendous amount of value in running both A/B and multivariate tests (MVT). These two different testing methods are really good at doing finding different types of results. A/B testing is a good method for innovation test cycles where you are testing two or three wildly different landing pages. Multivariate testing is perfect for iteration cycles where you are trying to refine a landing page by testing variations of page elements. Each time you come up with a new testing idea, think about which method makes the most sense for what you are trying to accomplish.

46. Innovate varied alternatives

Your innovation testing cycles should test pages that are very different from one another – significantly different. This isn't to say that testing a couple different versions of a headline isn't worthwhile; it just isn't going to have as big of an impact. For refinement tests, you need a lot of traffic. More varied alternatives will yield more varied results faster. Every time you form a new test idea, take a step back to look at the alternatives and ask yourself whether you are testing something of significance.
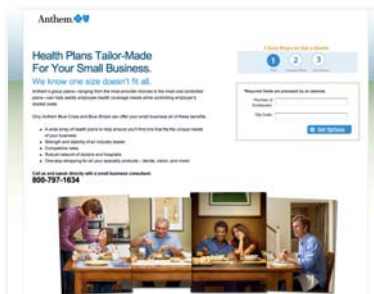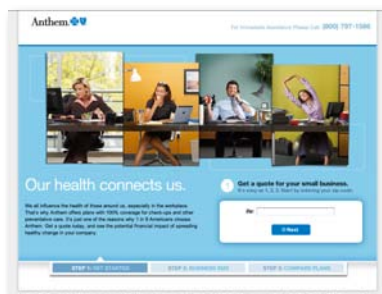
47. Avoid unproductive, unending tests

Beware of the never-ending test! While you should strive to test very different alternatives, testing too many alternatives can result in extremely long and unproductive test periods. Testing is exciting, especially after you find a big winner, and it's tempting to try to test as many different alternatives as possible. Testing too many alternatives however can result in tests that never come close to reaching statistical confidence. Unless you have traffic sources with a significant number of visitors, stick to two to five alternatives in a test wave.

48. Timing matters

When it comes to test results, only parallel tests—those results that came from alternatives running in the same stream of traffic at the same time—can be compared. Running one landing page for a while and then stopping it to run a new alternative doesn't count. Comparing email traffic to pay per click traffic or comparing a campaign from the holidays to one from the summer will lead you astray. Numerous environmental factors (more than we can even try to account for) have a significant impact on performance. Since we can't know every environmental factor impacting our test results, we have no way of removing those variables when comparing tests from different periods or different traffic sources. All alternatives in a test wave must draw at random from the same stream of traffic at the same time.

49. Don't stop

Online marketing is always changing. Whether it's new competition, the economy, weather or seasonality, there is always something new that's impacting our campaigns. It's because of this constant change that landing page testing is never complete. Continuous testing will help you keep pace with environmental changes and outperform the competition. It's important to not let one or two disappointing testing results keep you from continuing. Learn what you can from those tests and move on quickly. While you'll definitely have those individual tests that bring huge results, the best results from testing are actually realized over time.

Turning best practices into action

Ready to put these 49 best practices into action? Here's the cherry on top.

50. Landing pages should be flexible and disposable
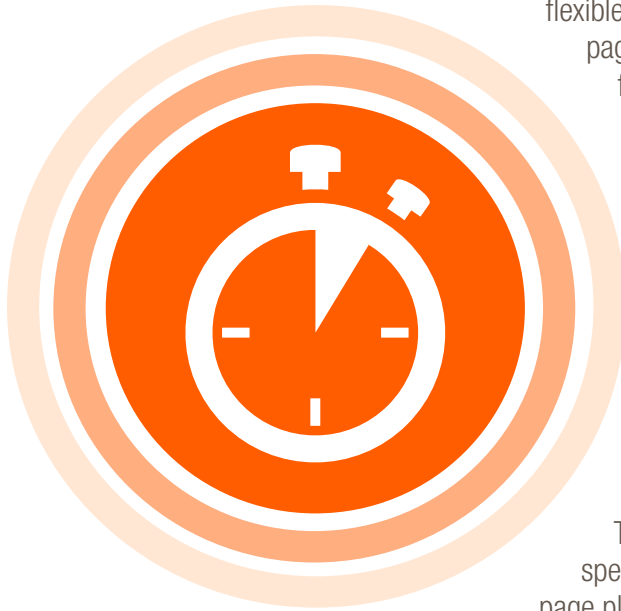
In order to create a landing page program where your team is constantly testing campaign-specific landing pages, your landing pages need to be flexible and disposable. With constant testing, you will find some pages that perform poorly and your team needs to have the flexibility to quickly remove those experiences that aren't working and to create new versions to try. If we are married to our landing experiences because of over-investment of time and money, we'll never be willing to kill the poor performers. By advocating disposable pages, we are not advocating poor quality. Disposable means that they way we create landing pages needs to allows us to react in real time and to create at the scale that is needed to be campaign-specific. The total cost of a landing page needs to remain relatively low while the quality and results remains very high.

The best way to make flexible, disposable, and campaign-specific landing pages is with a marketer managed landing page platform. There are certainly other ways to make landing pages such as hand coding the pages yourself, outsourcing the work to a developer or agency, using a website CMS and even some marketing automation platforms have basic landing page tools. However, handing coding is resource intensive, outsourcing the work takes away your ability to act in real-time, and unless a platform is dedicated to creating landing pages, you won't have the sophistication needed to incorporate all of the best practices discussed here into your program. A dedicated landing page management platform, like LiveBall, will give your marketing team the ability to create high quality landing pages in a matter of hours without development resources. Even more importantly, a landing page management platform will help you expand your scale without extra resources so that the idea of managing and testing hundreds of dedicated campaign-specific landing pages is reasonable, doable and is what helps you get the best ROI.

The Best Landing Pages Start with You. And ion.

ion's web-based platform 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 ion 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 ion's platform to create conversion-focused landing pages.

Ready to go beyond landing pages? Let's talk ion!