Top 10 Lead Generation Tips

Efficient lead generation starts with good user experience. People respond well to things they like. They do what is comfortable and trustworthy. They avoid pain, angst and work. And the more specifically you can speak their language and earn their trust, the more likely they will be to engage and convert.

Higher conversion rates translate directly into less cost for more leads. And best practices lead to best customers. Lead quality is a function of the user's experience. It's all within your control as a marketer. It's not voodoo. It's not a secret sauce. And it's not rocket science.

Here are ten steps you can take to improve your conversion rates and reduce your cost per lead...

1. Be Clear

Waaaaaay up at the tip top of your funnel lies an ad that sets expectations. If those expectations are unclear or misleading, everything else will collapse in an epic failure. You can check for this by looking at your campaign landing page's bounce rate — the percentage of people who land and leave without engaging. If that number is high — say 40% or more — you should take a look at the expectations being set in your ads.

2. Be Specific

This is a bit of an extension of #1 above. Your ad clarity and honesty should be complemented with specific, targeted landing page messaging. The first thing a user sees on the landing page should immediately reinforce why they clicked through. Keep in mind, they didn't ponder your ad and debate its merits before clicking. They just impulsively charged forward, gave you less than two seconds of attention, and judged whether you were worthy or not. Since average conversion rates are under 5%, it's safe to assume that 95% of the time, people don't extend their click into much more. If you're specific with your landing message, you will engage 60-80% of your visitors.

3. Be Precise

Tips 1 & 2 help put your ad and landing message on the same page — no pun intended. But once you've reinforced that they're in the right place, you can now try and get more precise and find out why. Digging for user intent helps you learn a little bit about them so that you can make your message about you more specific to their precise reason for visiting. This is a form of segmentation. You're getting your visitors to put themselves into more specific groups so that your offer is more relevant and appealing to them. When something is more relevant and appealing, it is much more likely to result in conversion. Cha-ching!

4. Be Selfless

It's not about you. It's not about you. It's not about you. The less it's about you and the more it's about them, the more you will engage and convert. Frame everything through those specific lenses you uncovered with segmentation. Stay on message with their need. Don't wander or you'll encourage them to wander — off. And exits are the opposites of conversions.

5. Be Easy

You're looking for a lead, right? That probably means you need a form filled out. The shorter the form, the higher the likelihood that it will be completed. Keep the hoop-jumping to a minimum too. For every question you add, or hoop you hold up, ask

yourself and your organization if you are willing to trade your need for their lead. If the answer is 'yes', then by all means ask the question. If not, be easy and be successful.

6. Be Positive

Many lead-gen offers trade something for the lead — maybe a white paper, a coupon, an offer code, etc. That's the banana. Your visitor is the gorilla. As long as you keep the banana right under the gorilla's nose, he doesn't notice much else. But the second he loses the scent of that banana, he's susceptible to distraction. Staying positive, means keeping the gorilla 100% focused on the banana. Don't let anything come between the two. Even your form button should reference the banana — 'get white paper' will catch a lot more gorillas than 'submit'.

7. Be Equitable

Tip #6 spoke to keeping the offer right under the nose of the visitor. This one's about making sure that what you're offering and what you're asking for are of similar value. People are willing to do more for things they want more. So if you're trading the greatest thing since sliced bread for a lead, you can probably ask for a lot in return. But if your offering is a white paper or coupon, odds are you're going to find a far less receptive audience for your long form or legalese. If your requirements are proportionate to your offer, you will be more successful and generate more leads.

8. Be Focused

Distraction is public enemy number one for lead generation. Your landing page or conversion path should be a laser-focused, message specific oasis — far outside of the rattle & hum of the web, or even your website. Navigation is a distraction. Tangential messages are recipes for disaster. Keeping your user experience narrow, clear and concise will keep them more engaged and make them more likely to convert. Clarity is your friend.

9. Be Brief

Keep it short, keep it simple, keep it sweet. Conversion paths are sets of pages that take the content typically squeezed on one page and divide it up over several pages. Instead of one massive page appealing to all people, conversion paths use segmentation (tip #3) to get people into smaller groups that can then be succinctly messaged to take action. Think in terms of short, punchy, targeted pages of laser-focused content. Each page requires mere seconds of attention that increases user desire and moves them to click again. Before you know it, you'll have boatloads of visitors clicking their way to conversion utopia. Woot!

10. Be Sure

The one and only way to know where you stand with many of the preceding tips is to test alternatives. There are no hard and fast rules to tell you exactly what you need to do for your market and your situation. In fact, even within your own reality, you're likely to see wildly disparate user behaviors that make alternatives more successful in some cases and less successful in others. You need to be engaged in traffic source-specific testing of alternatives. This isn't as hard as it sounds and it's the key to lifting your conversion rate and pummeling your lead cost. You need to try things. And you need to know — with statistical certainty — which things work in which situations.

There you have our top 10 tips for online lead generation. You can make them happen. Thousands of lead-gen 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. But it is extremely fruitful, high-ROI work that delivers far more leads using far fewer resources.

University Triples PPC, Advertising and Email Conversion Rates with LiveBall Microsites

Three-Person, In-House Team Makes it Happen in Just a Few Months

"Before LiveBall we had anecdotal conversion metrics. Now we have 3x improvement, higher quality leads, more tailored campaigns and better forecasting. People believe it's a magic bullet."

Mykola Sarazhynskyy
Marketing Manager, The University of St. Thomas

background

The University of St. Thomas is a private, 124-year-old university based in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis-St. Paul Minnesota. The school uses pay-per-click (PPC), banner advertising and email marketing to generate leads for many of its 200+ non-degree executive education and professionals development programs. A core team of three online marketers: a designer, a content manager and a senior strategist were searching for a platform to empower them to manage and test microsites. They found ion's LiveBall post-click marketing platform near the end of 2008.

the challenge

The University of St. Thomas is proud of their high-quality executive education and professional development programs. The problem was that their frontline web experiences weren't living up to the standards of the programs themselves. The University of St. Thomas had a user experience problem. They knew they needed program-specific tailored microsites to tell each program's story as clearly as possible. They also knew that their cobbled together CRM + Website Optimizer solution was far too cumbersome and inflexible to make it happen. MVT wasn't working. They needed agility and practicality and they needed it fast.

The University of St. Thomas identified three core post-click campaign management needs that needed to be satisfied by web-based technology:

1. The ability to deploy, test and manage a wide array of highly usable program-specific microsites

2. Actionable analytics enabling reliable testing and performance comparison

3. The ability to test forms, collect lead data and seamlessly link that data to their CRM

They chose ion's LiveBall platform in late December 2008.

the solution

The University of St. Thomas' three-person team quickly went to work in early January. They had one version of a microsite launched in short order and over the course of five months have tested 12-15 versions per program. The flexibility and speed afforded by LiveBall's no-code approach to creating and testing enables them to focus on what they're testing instead of how they're testing it. The results speak for themselves:

- 3x conversion rate improvement

- Higher quality leads

- Tailored, long-tail campaigns

- Improved forecasting

- PPC, advertising and email spend moved to most efficient vehicles, messages and keywords

LiveBall has given the The University of St. Thomas team the freedom to try completely new approaches. Recent testing showed that video testimonials more than doubled conversion, extended time spent on pages and extended the number of pages browsed in the microsite. What started as a one-off idea has blossomed into a focused direction and powerful results.

In addition to video testimonials, in just a few months, The University of St. Thomas has tested:

- Long-tail messaging

- Discounting and other narrow incentives

- Second-level segmentation

- Three levels of narrowing by user intent

Mykola says "now the web reflects the quality of our brand and our programs. We never had that before." All in all The University of St. Thomas has deployed and tested more than 15 different experiences across over 20 campaigns. And they're just getting started.

Direct marketer acts and acts quickly to optimize paid search and display campaigns.

Making landing pages as fluid as the SEM that drives traffic to them

"I'm never married to anything. Whatever gets results in testing is all I'm interested in. With LiveBall, I can try everything easily — without IT — I have total control."
Scott Brandt
Vice President of Marketing, SurePayroll

Their slogan is "payroll in 1-2-3" and SurePayroll delivers on that promise as the leading online payroll solution for small businesses. When Scott Brandt brought his direct marketing background from Monster to SurePayroll as the Vice President of Marketing he was already a LiveBall convert. Now his 'test everything' approach has SurePayroll converting 6.7% of pay-per-click search and display ad traffic into leads. He's doing it with 169 landing experiences and 220 sources of traffic. Here's the story Scott told to ion CEO Justin Talerico.

background on SurePayroll

Founded in 2000, SurePayroll is the online alternative to ADP® and Paychex®. The company is dedicated to providing a simple, convenient and accurate online payroll service at a price small businesses can afford. SurePayroll revolutionized payroll by introducing the first completely online payroll and payroll tax-filing solution for businesses within 1-100 employees. Since then, they've quickly grown into the number one online payroll company — recognized by industry experts as the top choice for small businesses.

challenge

As is typical in many technology businesses, the IT team developed and maintains SurePayroll.com. The proprietary system allows for rudimentary A/B testing but when SurePayroll's SEM buys became more and more sophisticated — their website was having a harder and harder time keeping pace. Scott Brandt, VP Marketing says "as a direct marketer, I'm conditioned to act and act quickly. Our IT people are great, but quarterly releases were too few and far between for the speed of our campaigns. I needed my landing pages to be as fluid as my SEM buys."

solution

Scott went on to say "I had used LiveBall previously. I knew what it could do. We started by quickly building templates that enabled us to make fast, easy changes." Scott's testing strategy was to use the first three quarters of 2009 to test and find champions that would be optimized for SurePayroll's critical Q4 period. If all went according to plan, there would be no need for new tests in Q4 — they would simply ride the champions for great results.

Scott says "I'm never married to anything. Whatever gets results in testing is all I'm interested in. With LiveBall, I can try everything easily — without IT — I have total control. LiveBall lets us use automatic optimization to find champions or manually weight alternatives. I like the manual weighting because I like to closely manage the tests. It lets me use my experience combined with the technology to make fast but not rash decisions. I don't like to waste traffic on poor performers, so LiveBall's real-time reporting gauges really help me keep the numbers up while I'm challenging champions. I can just take a small percentage of my traffic and route it to the challenger and keep the overall performance high."

Another important objective of SurePayroll's program is attribution. LiveBall automatically passes collected lead data to Sales-Force in real time. In addition to the data entered into the lead-gen form, LiveBall includes a great deal of system-level data

like traffic source, medium, geographic location, behaviors, referrer, keywords, device and much more. Since all of that can be passed into SalesForce, SurePayroll's follow-up sales calls can be much more personalized and much more specific to the needs of the prospect.

what's next?

SurePayroll is currently letting their proven champion landing experiences generate great results in their busiest quarter. Going forward, they're getting even more specific in their attribution — passing into SalesForce which specific search engine ad creative drove the conversion, and ultimately the sale. Scott says "LiveBall gives us all the data we need to optimize our marketing spend from end to end. There's full transparency and accountability that lets us confidently allocate our budget to the keywords and ads that generate the most impact to our business."

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.

▶ 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.

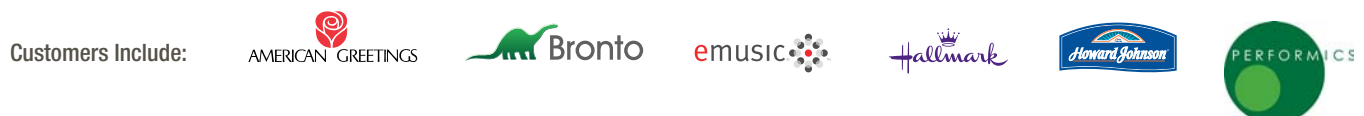▶ Citrix Systems increased its search engine conversion rate from 0.5% to 12% in three weeks.

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 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.

Social
Mobile
Search
Email
Display

LiveBall

Cart/Checkout
CRM
Mktg. Automation
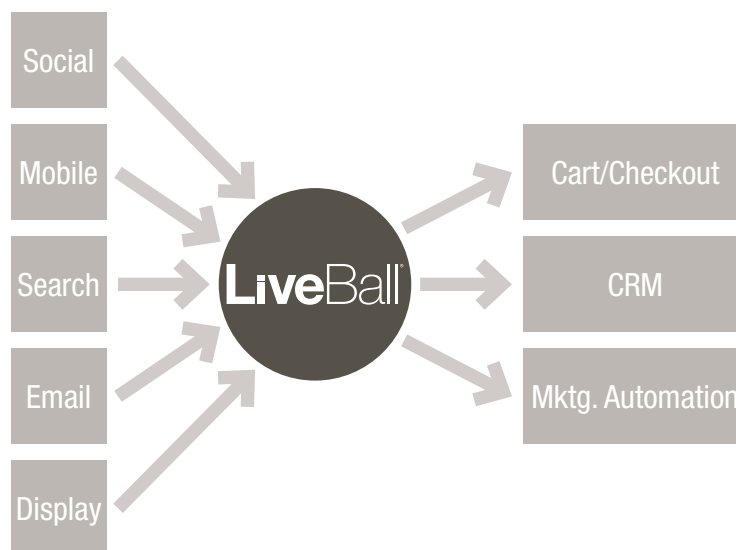
Putting marketing in control

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.

Customers Include: AMERICAN GREETINGS · Bronto · emusic · Hallmark · Howard Johnson · PERFORMICS

ion

LiveBall conversion optimization platform

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.

Testing without code or IT
Test it all. LiveBall brings sophisticated testing into the 'no-code zone'. Launch A/B or MVT in three easy clicks.

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

Unparalleled SEO features
Nine ground-breaking features that make LiveBall the most search-friendly landing page platform.

Clear, actionable reporting
Effortlessly get meaningful, real-time reports as HTML, PDF or Excel XLS and automatically send them to colleagues.

Mobile optimization
Every user deserves an ideal experience. LiveBall keeps that promise by optimizing for the latest mobile devices.

Flexible, branded templates
'Template' is no longer a dirty word — not even in the most creative circles. LiveBall includes a proven set of flexible templates, custom-branded for you.

Flexible conditional logic
Design your own if/then statements for advanced logic — trigger actions from 31 different conditions — code-free.

Asset management
LiveBall centralizes images, Flash, fulfillment, forms, email responders, tags and templates, so it's easy to reuse them.

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

Flexible open integration
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: AMERICAN GREETINGS · Bronto · emusic · Hallmark · Howard Johnson · PERFORMICS

ioninteractive.com : @ioninteractive

888.ion.idea (466.4332) : +01.561.394.9484