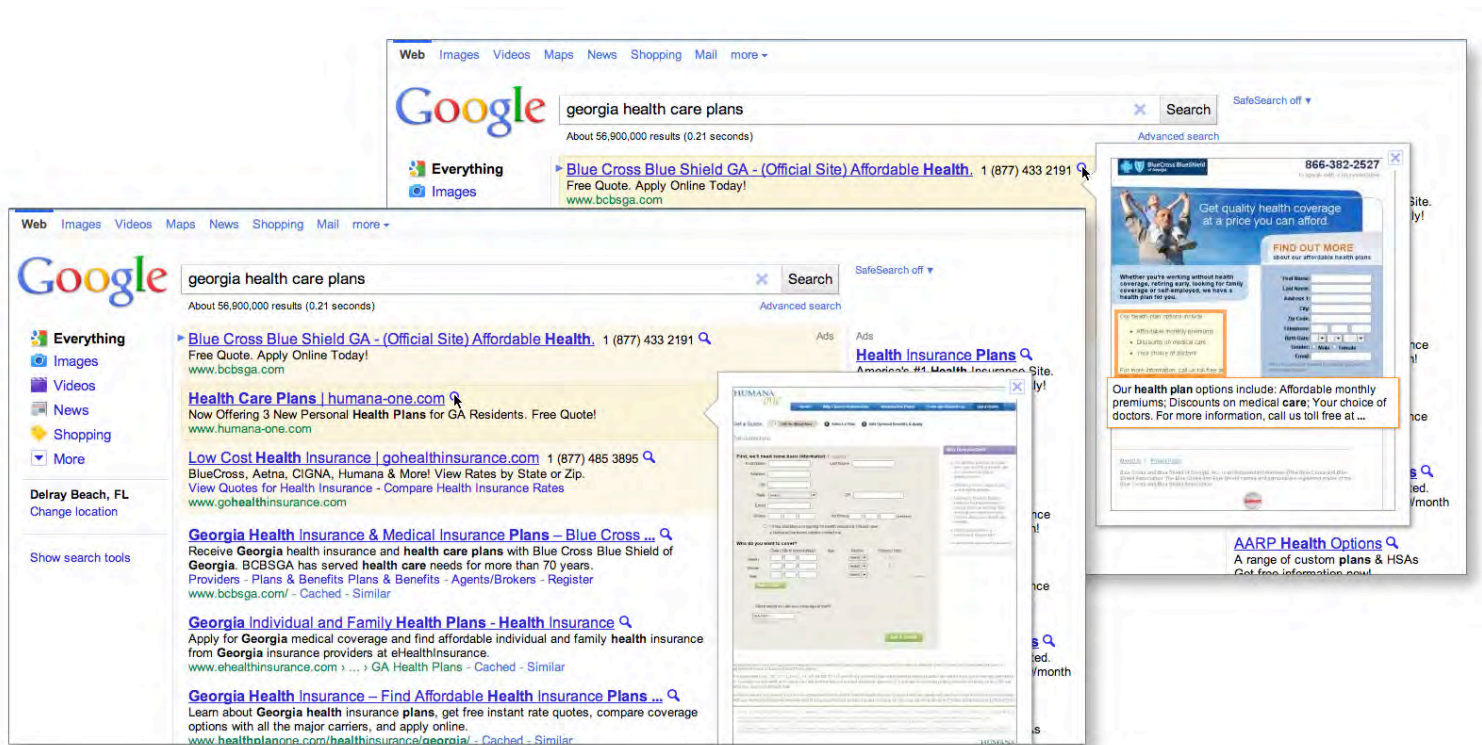


GUIDE TO GOOGLE INSTANT PREVIEW

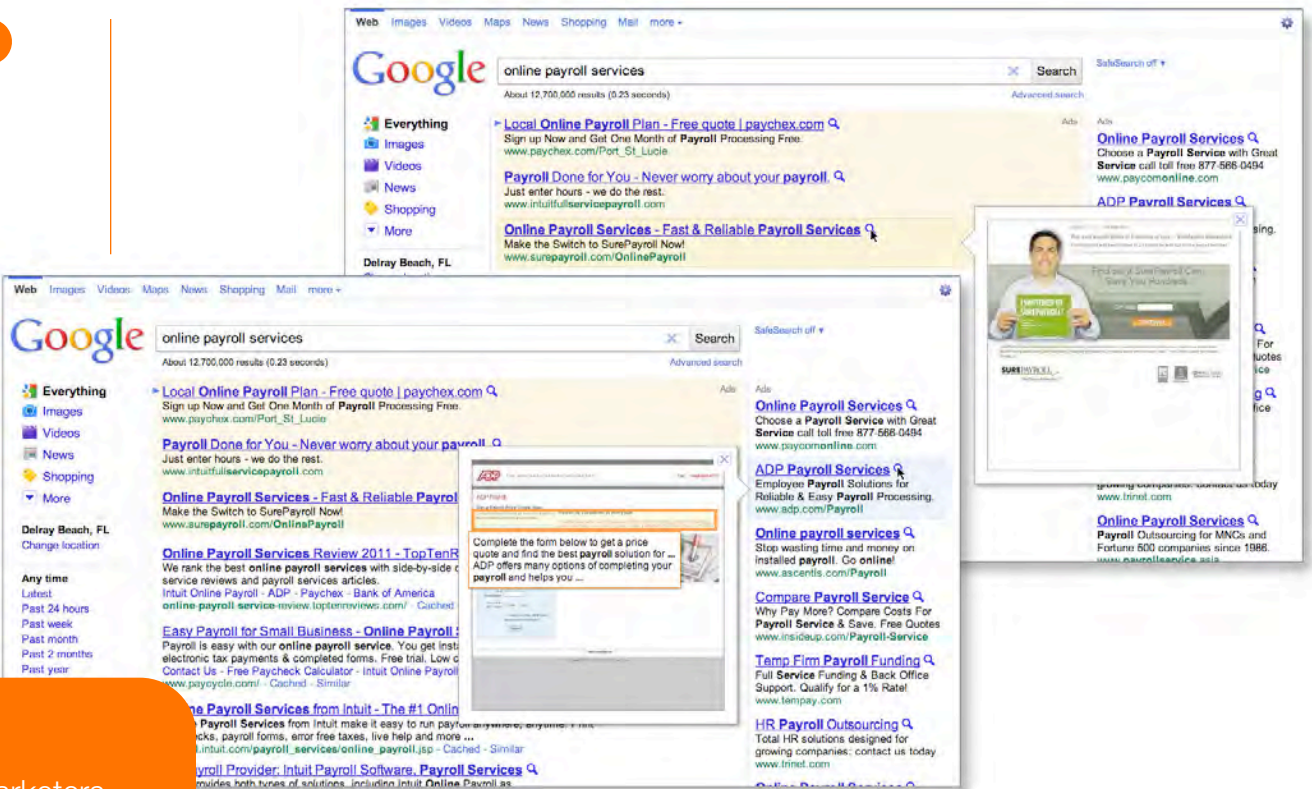
THE NEW IMPORTANCE OF LANDING PAGES

AND THEIR IMPACT ON CLICK-THROUGH RATE (CTR), COST-PER-CLICK (CPC) & POSITION



The collage illustrates the Google Instant Preview feature across three different search results. Each preview shows a thumbnail image, a title, and a brief description of the landing page content.

- Top Preview:** Search for "georgia health care plans". The preview shows a landing page for "Blue Cross Blue Shield GA - (Official Site) Affordable Health". The thumbnail features a blue background with white text and a small image of a person. The title is "Blue Cross Blue Shield GA - (Official Site) Affordable Health". The description mentions "Free Quote. Apply Online Today!" and provides a phone number: "1 (877) 433 2191".
- Middle Preview:** Search for "georgia health care plans". The preview shows a landing page for "Health Insurance Plans". The thumbnail features a blue background with white text and a small image of a person. The title is "Health Insurance Plans". The description mentions "America's #1 Health Insurance Site".
- Bottom Preview:** Search for "georgia health care plans". The preview shows a landing page for "AARP Health Options". The thumbnail features a blue background with white text and a small image of a person. The title is "AARP Health Options". The description mentions "A range of custom plans & HSAs" and "Get free information now!".



For marketers, this is the most significant change to come to paid search in nearly a decade.

Which ad would you click on?

As you read this sentence, someone is using the preview of your landing page to help them decide to click on your ad. How do your landing pages stack up? And how will your paid-search ROI be affected?

Until recently, users searched using Google and decided which listings to click on based upon short text blocks. They had very little information to go on when making that choice. Consequently, they were often disappointed with their subsequent experience, leading to a lot of 'back' button action, low conversion rates, a lot of wasted time and frustration. And a lot of wasted marketing spend as users abandoned after the cost of the click was incurred.

Frustration and waste are not good words on which to base a business — not even a business as entrenched as Google search. Google instant preview improves search by showing users what comes next — before they click — helping them make better choices and waste less time.

With Google instant preview, the search giant has evolved its offering and begun to address the gap between generic search and more specific, targeted alternatives like paid social.

For marketers, this is the most significant change to come to paid search in nearly a decade.

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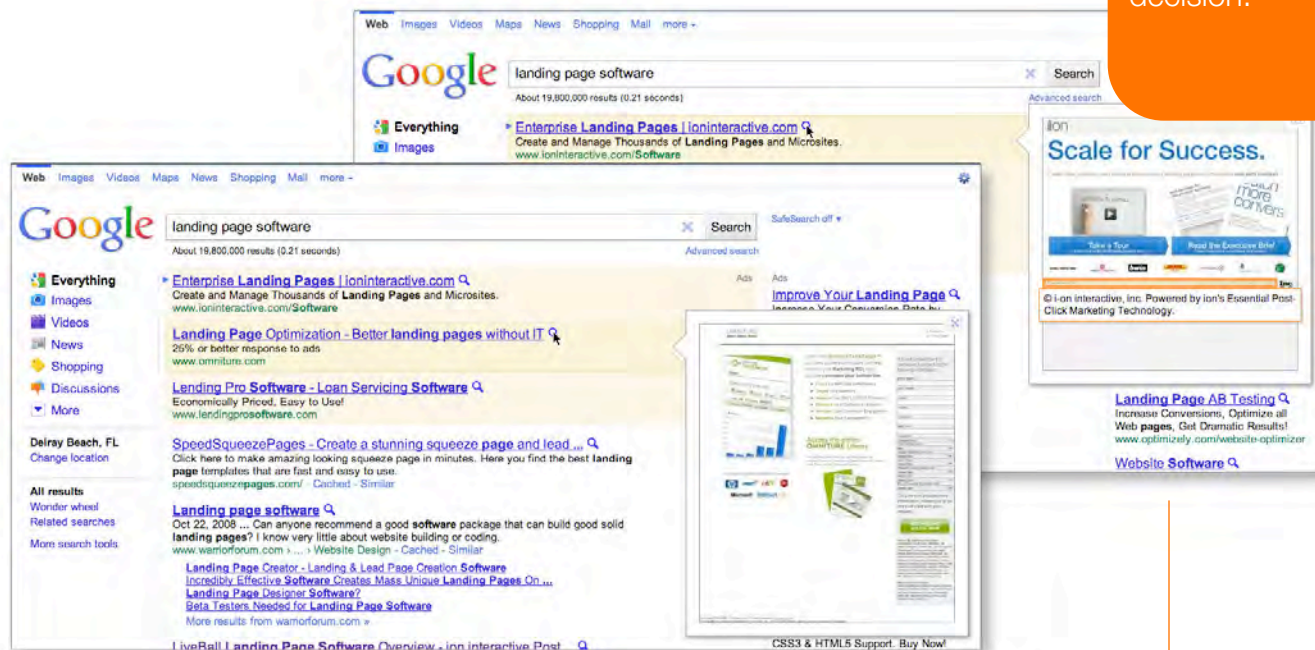
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Landing Pages have Become a Pre-Click Force

Prior to Google instant preview, the value of landing pages was almost entirely on the post-click side of the fence. While there's tremendous value and ROI to be derived post-click, surfacing landing pages before the click changes their role entirely. It makes them part of the pre-click decision.

Surfacing landing pages before the click changes their role entirely. It makes them part of the pre-click decision.



Now Users Have More Information & More Control

Quality score has traditionally been Google's way of evaluating the suitability of landing pages in relation to paid search ads. Users never had a say, until after they clicked. And a high quality score didn't translate into a good user experience. So while quality score may have been better than nothing, it's wasn't a good predictor of user satisfaction. Quality score was an abstract notion — not surfaced to users and not fully understood by advertisers — but rather used by Google in algorithms to help prioritize and maintain some semblance of quality control. In short, Google decided for users, and they were often wrong.

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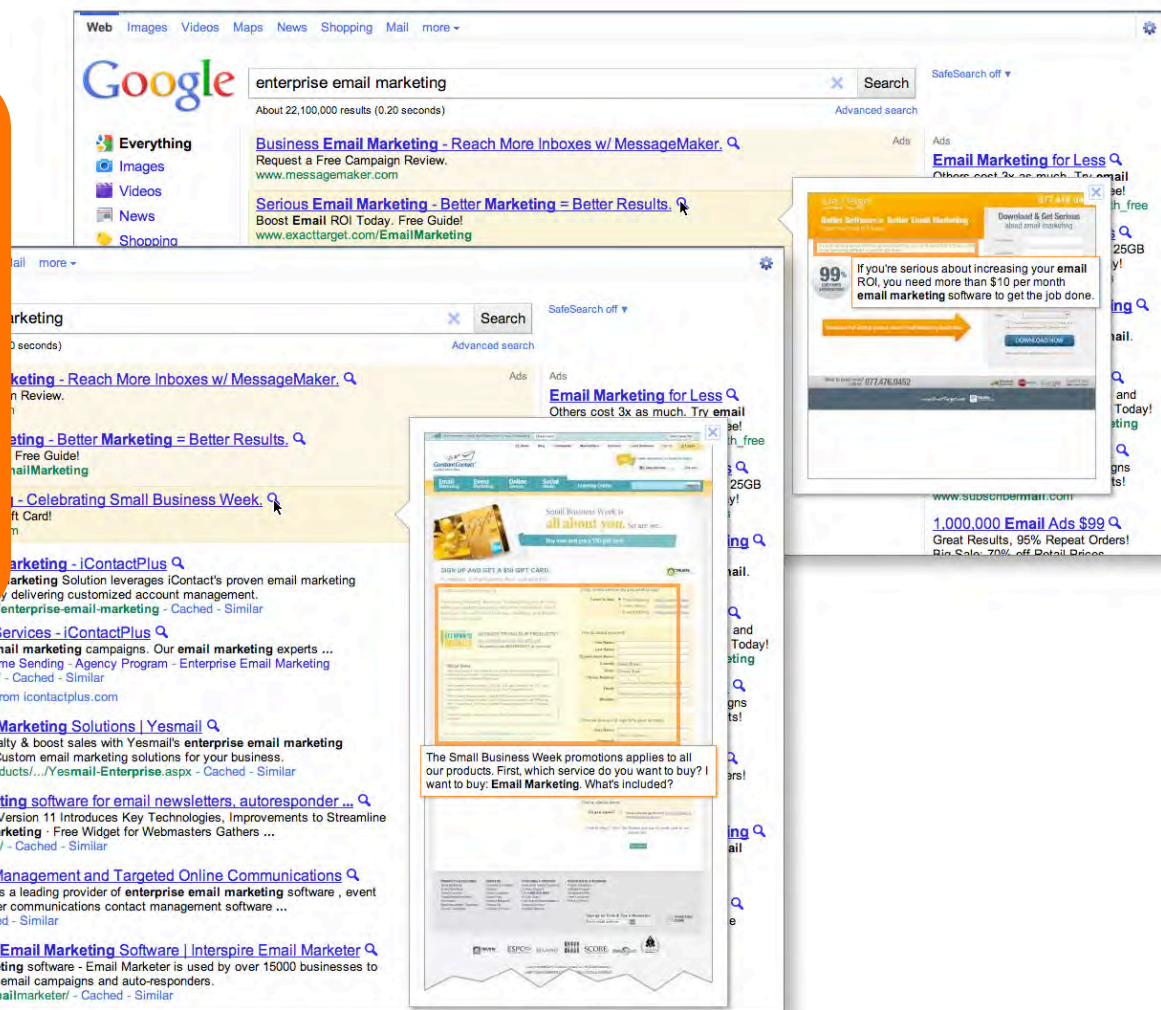


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(Users) vote for their favorite ads and previews by clicking. And marketers can earn that vote by providing the best, most specific and persuasive landing pages.



Preview is revolutionary more than evolutionary.

It may be tempting to relegate the importance of instant preview as iterative rather than innovative. So what if you can now see a thumbnail of a page? Before giving it the 'so-what' brush off, consider how instant preview affects search dynamics:

1. Instant preview is **visceral** — it's surfaced to users front and center, before they make a choice
2. Instant preview is a **picture** — rumored in history to be worth at least 1,000 words — far more than your text ad
3. Pictures are **emotional** — people connect more deeply to emotional appeals than intellectual ones
4. Instant preview is new and **dynamic** — once conditioned, users should give it more and more credence over time
5. Instant preview is a **brand opportunity** — even without paying for the click people will see your preview

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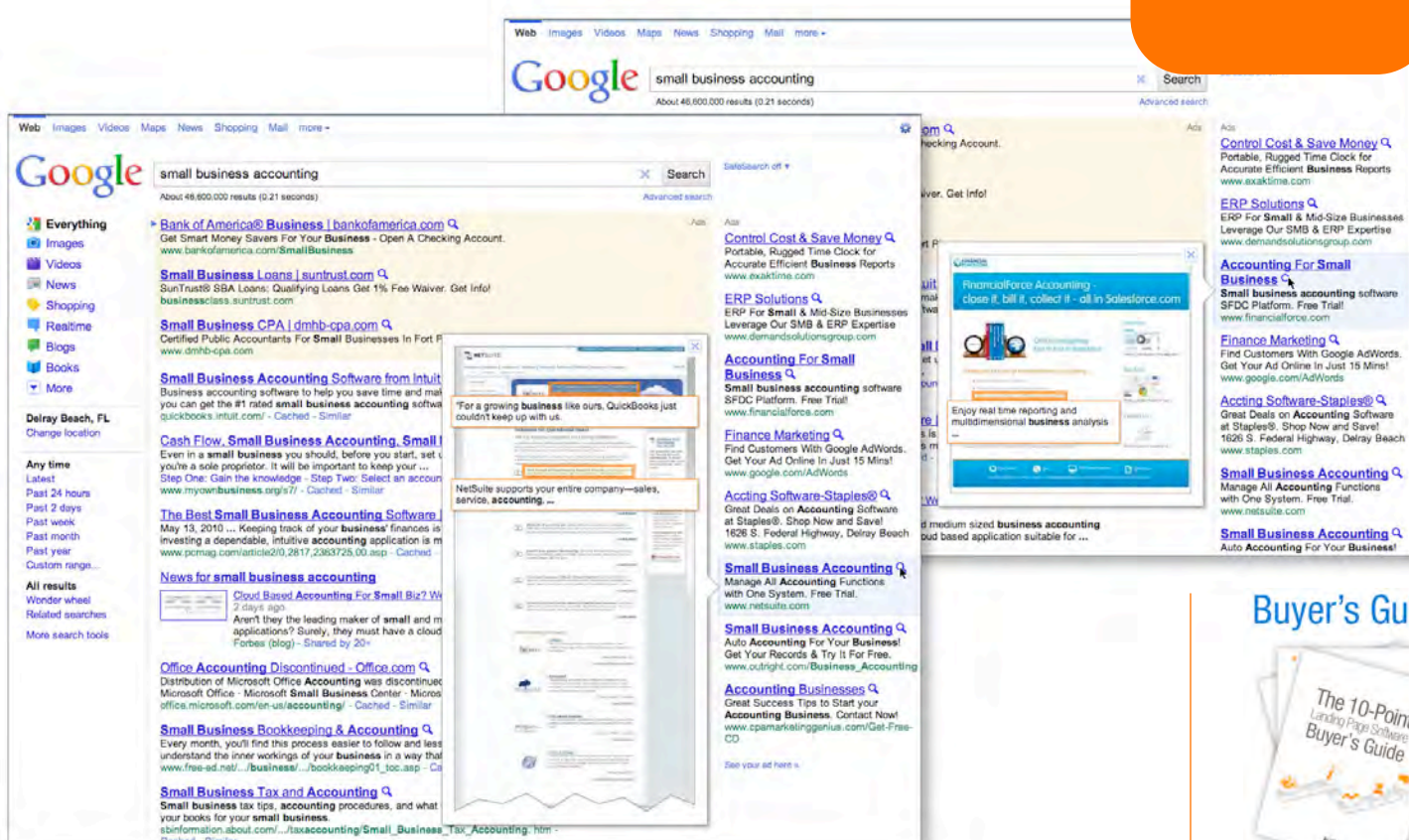


Instant preview provides a lot more for users to go on. They are in control of assessing what's good, bad or indifferent. They vote for their favorite ads and previews by clicking. And marketers can earn that vote by providing the best, most specific and persuasive landing pages. This is all in stark contrast to quality score.

Instant preview affects the decision to click.

The statement that 'instant preview affects the decision to click' represents a fantastic new opportunity for search marketers. It's as if the limitations that have governed persuasion on SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages) have been completely lifted. If you have great landing pages mated to your ads, they just became more valuable. If you don't, you've just been presented with an incredible green-field opportunity to take a competitive advantage.

It's as if the limitations that have governed persuasion on SERPs have been completely lifted.



Differentiation now has a canvas in Google SERPs.

Now, not only can good landing pages compel a click over poor landing pages, but alternative formats of user experiences can be surfaced to visitors in direct competition with others. Now users can make the choice of which looks better to them — a form, a microsite with navigation, a conversion path presenting a simple choice, or even an organic page? Visual competition for the all-important first

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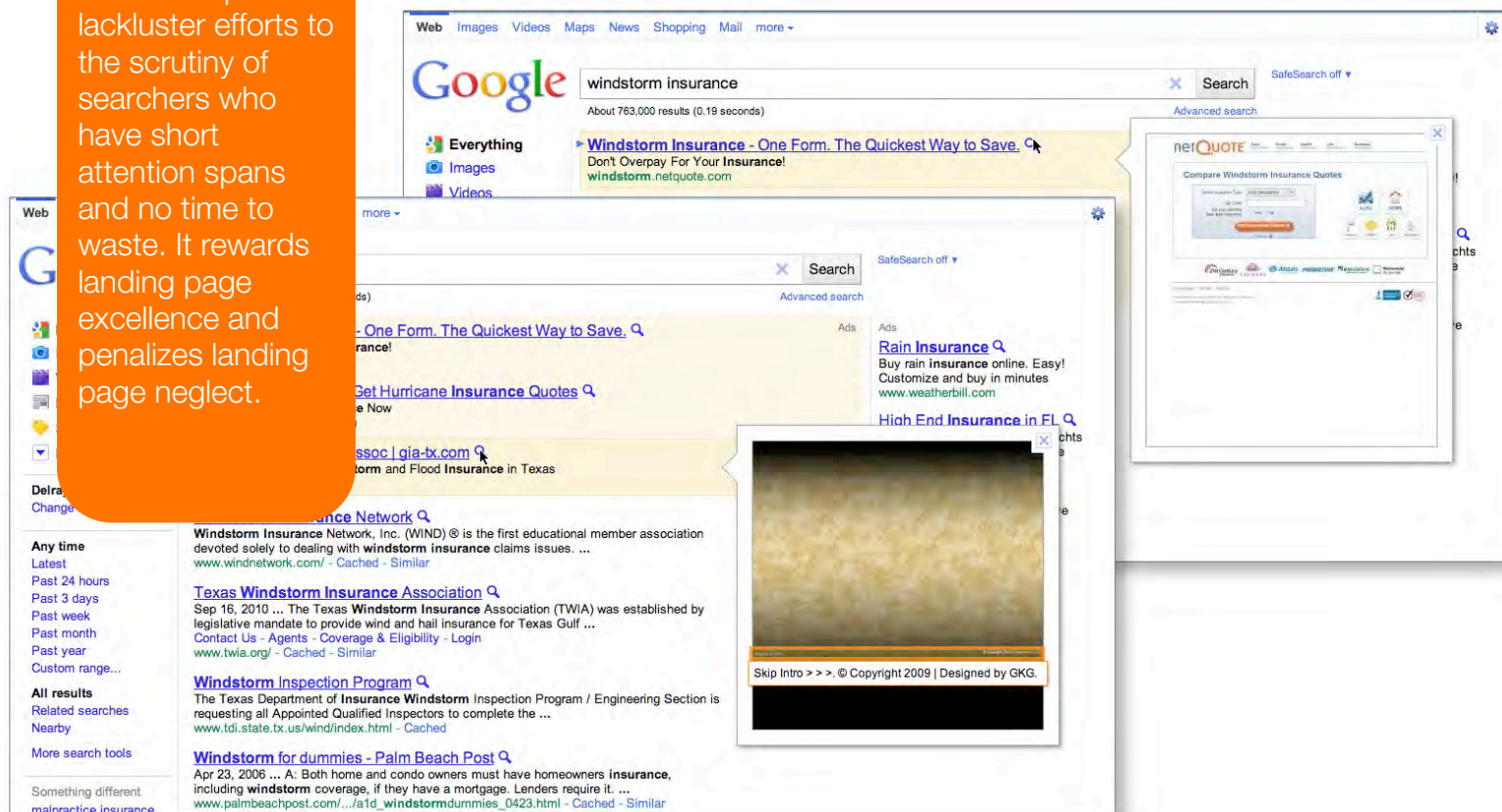
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Preview exposes lackluster efforts to the scrutiny of searchers who have short attention spans and no time to waste. It rewards landing page excellence and penalizes landing page neglect.

impression will dictate whether you even earn a click. The 'landing page' can no longer hide beneath the veil of an equalizing text ad. Differentiation has been given a canvas.



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With users in control and a visual canvas at their disposal, marketers have new incentives to make their landing pages great. Now that their pages are competitive weapons that directly impact their click-through-rates (CTR), those pages also begin to affect cost-per-click and ranking.

If your organization gets by with home-page or deep links into your website, think about how those pages look in preview. If you rely on the tried-and-true long-form landing pages to present one-size-fits-all content, have a look at those long, complex previews and ask yourself if they look inviting. Google instant preview is no equalizer. It elevates concise, simple, targeted pages to a whole new level of prominence. And it exposes lackluster efforts to the scrutiny of searchers who have short attention spans and no time to waste. It rewards landing page excellence and penalizes landing page neglect.

Messaging continuity, concise headlines and engaging visuals are all characteristics of highly successful landing pages. Google instant preview pushes these characteristics right into the searcher's browser and shows them a picture of your effort. If your page matches user expectation, you'll have a good shot at earning their click. If not, they'll move on to the next ad.

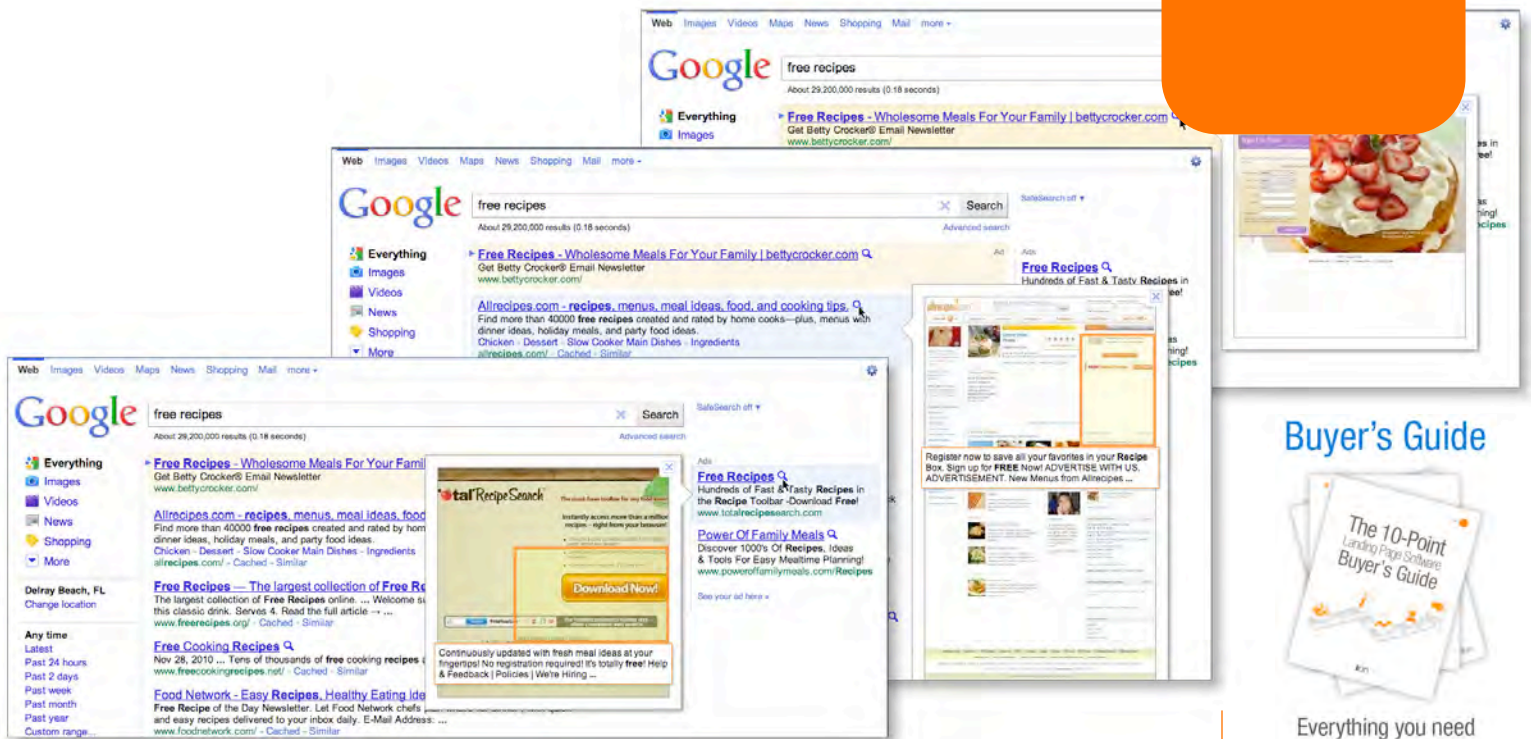
Many successful landing pages are actually multipage experiences. By splitting content up into shorter pages, each page appears less daunting and more inviting. Instant gratification is rewarded in search marketing with high conversion rates and low bounce rates. In order to present a compelling instant preview that suggests instant gratification, the first page of your multipage experience must be short and simple. This makes the preview easy to read and easy to judge as relevant.

Can paid outflank organic?

Without instant preview, paid ads might be at a disadvantage to organic listings. Despite being positioned in premium spaces, paid ads have less to work with and less credibility than their organically ranked counterparts. With preview, that balance can change.

Organic previews are generally long, cluttered pages loaded with content. While that might be good for getting crawled and ranked, it doesn't look inviting in an instant preview. In comparison to a well-designed landing page, many organically ranked pages can appear heavy and overwhelming. Before we had the previews, those comparisons were mute. With preview, they're inevitable.

Marketers have increased incentives to make their landing pages great. Now that their pages are competitive weapons that directly impact their click-through-rates, those pages also begin to affect cost-per-click and ranking.



Perhaps there's another new opportunity tucked inside Google's instant preview? Using paid to persuade away from organic? Which one looks tastier to you?

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Google has elevated the landing page to become part of the ad — an extension of the promise and a highly persuasive element in a split-second decision.

Great Landing Pages are Imperative

Without a doubt, the moral to Google's introduction of instant preview is that great landing pages are imperative to paid-search success. Pre-click metrics — including cost-per-click (CPC), click-through-rate (CTR) and average position now depend upon a lot more than 135 characters of text. What people click on now depends on what they **see** in addition to what they read in the ad.

And then there's conversion — the ultimate reason most of us buy paid search. Quality landing experiences have always lead to higher conversion rates — more people buying your product, submitting your lead form or following or liking your brand socially. Whatever conversion is for you, best-practice-driven multipage landing experiences will get your search spend to yield more conversions.

Now your incentive is much higher. Incremental conversion rate increase is no longer THE reason to engage in a structured landing page program. Now your pre-click search metrics are directly impacted by your landing pages.

Google has challenged paid-search marketers to improve the user experience. They've elevated the landing page to become part of the ad — an extension of the promise and a highly persuasive element in a split-second decision.

The dynamics of search marketing have been forever changed. Google instant previews makes a structured landing page program absolutely essential for paid search success.

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The Best Landing Pages Start with You. And LiveBall.

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

Next steps for your landing pages:

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

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

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

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



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