

Case Study



TRIPLING CONVERSION RATES AND CRUSHING YOUR COMPETITION.

Three Online Marketing Case Studies that Mean Business

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The new attitude appreciates the potential and the payoff of the new normal. And it accepts nothing less than monumental improvement.

Preface

According to [eMarketer](#), 39% of marketers are not satisfied with their conversion rates. When I first read that, my immediate thought was *how can that be?* How can nearly two-thirds of marketers be *satisfied* with their conversion rates?

The [Fireclick](#) index at about the same time as the eMarketer article showed keyword & email conversion rates of 4.00% and 3.10% respectively. So a small leap of faith tells me that most marketers believe that it's okay for 96%+ of their campaign traffic to walk away.

The only explanation for this being 'okay' is that it's normal. The thinking must be that if the average is 4% and I'm in that neighborhood, then status quo is good enough. It's normal.

It may be average, but it's not normal. In fact it's orders of magnitude removed from normal. Normal needs to be re-calibrated. There are many marketers today that have successfully re-calibrated the notion of what's normal. For them, normal is now 12% instead of 4%. Their cost-per-acquisition is dramatically lower than their competition's and they're winning more customers.

But who are these companies that are redefining normal? How do they do it?

I wanted to write this paper because it's inconceivable to me that more than 1% of marketers are satisfied with their online conversion rates. I've seen the competitive advantages taken. I've seen the momentum change. I've seen the online budgets expand and I've seen the champions get promoted. How come everyone isn't on the bandwagon?

More than anything else, what's required to shift normal is a change in attitude. The new attitude appreciates the potential and the payoff of the new normal. And it accepts nothing less than monumental improvement. It pushes aside the perceived barriers to success and asserts that the status quo is broken.

Instead of examining a single case study, I've tried to weave a few of these marketing leaders together into a story. What they have in common is that they made significant positive business impact to their organizations in a very short time. They truly changed the game — not only for themselves, but also for their competitors.

Better clicks. More business.

It's not only about how many people click, but also who they are. When the right people click, they convert too. And they buy. And they stay. When you're transparent about who you are, you get the same in return. When both the marketer and the user are honest, everyone finds success. It's like matchmaking.

That transparency makes it much easier to see where your best customers and prospects come from. When you can see that clearly, you can also see where they don't come from. Then it becomes easy to shift your spend to the best sources. It's much harder to confidently make that call without trustworthy data beyond click-through-rate. But that's really the weeds-eye view.

Using post-click performance and behaviors to impact the streams of clicks that feed your marketing machine represents a strategic overhaul. It means that a sizable piece of your marketing emphasis moves from ads to pages. It means treating pages like extensions of ads. It can't be the web content team that makes this happen. It has to be the advertising or marketing teams.

Extend the ad through the pages that follow. Learn more about users. Use that learning to optimize your spend. Here are a couple of examples of this strategy.

More intelligence. Less spend.

Bronto Software focused their pay-per-click (PPC) spend by using post-click metrics to determine where the right people were coming from. A click was not a click. A click became a person with intent. Understanding that intent led to a 65% reduction in paid-search spend resulting in a net increase in the number of leads and the quality of those leads.

Bronto's post-click emphasis informed their media spend. How did they get at user intent? By asking. They attached meaning to the decisions that users made in highly specialized landing experiences. For Bronto it wasn't about behavioral targeting or inference, it was about the explicit choices users made in navigation- and distraction-free environments. These campaign-specific pages were nimble extensions of their marketing messages — made possible by Bronto's decision to have them live outside of their website infrastructure. Only there could they exercise the message and offer agility they needed.

Specific options were put in front of users in the form of targeted landing experiences called conversion paths. Within two quarters of adopting this strategy, Bronto had multiplied their conversion rate from 2% to over 18%. They did it with 159 conversion paths on 80 specific sources of traffic. Over 800 campaign-specific pages drove this unprecedented change.

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average conversion rate of just under 22% across both PPC and email marketing. That's over 3,600 agile web pages delivering remarkable value.

Bronto's online marketing success is truly game changing. The company enjoys a three-year growth rate of over 284% and was recently named number 1,096 on the Inc. 5000.

Micro-targeted spend.

Another example of click optimization comes from Citrix Systems. The \$1.2 billion enterprise software company adopted a similar strategy to that of Bronto, but they did it while micro-targeting via paid search. They found their needle in a haystack niche of hospital administrators, but they also found that over 70% of the clicks they were paying for were not even in the neighborhood of their target audience.

They too moved to agile pages outside of the confines of their website infrastructure. Beyond the grind of IT and multi-departmental processes, their landing pages flourished. They created these pages without navigation or other distractions and as extensions of the ads that were feeding them traffic.

As it turned out, Google was much more likely to deliver the target than Yahoo was. So after a year of splitting the spend between the two vehicles, post-click data empirically revealed the truth within two weeks of the strategy change. The Yahoo spend was moved to Google and the post-click landing experiences were further optimized. Ultimately, the result of the three-week effort was 2,500% improvement over the original baseline.

This all happened when marketing took ownership of campaign-specific pages. Those pages became tightly integrated with the ads that fed them and the result was game changing for Citrix.

The long tail of retail.

American Greetings toiled for years with just a few landing pages. This was despite the knowledge that they had highly diverse streams of traffic feeding the \$1.7 billion company. But their landing pages were part of the multidisciplinary website team's responsibility. And they just weren't a top priority. But lowering the cost-per-acquisition on their millions of monthly unique visitors was certainly a top priority.

American Greetings had already tested and optimized a few landing pages using multivariate methods. They needed something much more dramatic to move their needle much further. American Greetings' marketing team took ownership of their campaign pages for paid search and began their effort to redefine what they considered to be 'normal'.

In the first three months of their new strategy, American Greetings deployed over 40 campaign-specific multi-page landing experiences. They tested a wide variety of

diverse pages, offers, price points and messaging on over 200 audience segments.

Almost immediately, American Greetings saw an unprecedented 30% increase in conversion rates resulting in a 20% reduction in fully loaded cost-per-acquisition (CPA). Multiply that performance times millions of monthly uniques and you start to see what's at stake.

Within five months of beginning their program, American Greetings had created over 700 unique landing pages being tested across hundreds of sources of traffic. Today they have 989 landing experiences across 489 sources of traffic. That translates to thousands of unique, audience-targeted, campaign-specific pages — all driven by marketing. All driving 'normal' online marketing performance to a whole new level.

American Greetings continues to push higher and higher with conversion goals set 40% higher in 2010 and another 33% higher in 2011. That's anything but status quo.

Seeing the trends.

I hope you're seeing the patterns here. It's pretty exciting stuff. When marketers take control and produce niche, long-tail pages, good things happen. In fact great things happen. Things that are so far beyond the average that everyone should be doing them. And then we'd have a whole new average to exceed.

But there's some between-the-lines learning here that I want to point out too. My motive for giving you a shower of big numbers is partially to show that this strategy is realistic, but also to illustrate a little-known facet of what's going on here: these campaign-specific pages are highly disposable. They have to be. If marketers are married to their landing experiences because of over-investment of time and money, they'll never be willing to kill the poor performers.

All of these successes are built on disposable pages.

The somewhat cavalier sales saying goes 'some will. some won't. so what. move on.' and the same could be said of online marketing funnels. Some will work. Some won't. Kill the ones that don't. In order for that approach to work, you cannot over invest in any one funnel.

I'm in no way advocating unprofessional, ill-branded or half-hearted pages. You need an agile method to deliver nimble, professional pages in minutes — not hours, days, weeks or worse. You have to keep the total cost of a page relatively low and the quality very high.

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Link stability is not the same as page stability.

The disposability of pages does not lend itself to the web development world. In web dev, pages and their links are preserved. In the online marketing world, links are divorced from pages, so that they can persist even when the pages behind them die. The way to think about it is that you link to a place — what gets displayed in that place changes all the time, but the place itself is stable. It's unlikely that a website content management system is going to make that sort of flexibility easy — if it supports it at all. Your website is about stable pages in stable places. The best online marketing experiences are always in flux.

This is the crux of testing that yields dramatic results. The re-calibration of normal happens when you can easily vary what's shown to users. Why? To find the pages that are most likely to convert them from casual, impulsive clickers into engaged prospects or customers.

American Greetings, Bronto and Citrix are three examples of the redefinition of normal. Their businesses have been transformed by online marketing. In all three cases the transformation happened within weeks or months. They let nothing stand in their way and they were rewarded for their persistence.

What reasons could organizations have NOT to make this change in strategy an imperative? What could be more important than this sort of impact on revenue and income? The reasons I hear most often are trivial.

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To reiterate: According to [eMarketer](#), 39% of marketers are not satisfied with their conversion rates. The [Fireclick](#) index at about the same time as the eMarketer article showed keyword & email conversion rates of 4.00% and 3.10% respectively. A strategy exists that redefines online marketing's value proposition. Normal should be 3x today's 'averages'. It's doable. And doing it changes the game.

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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.

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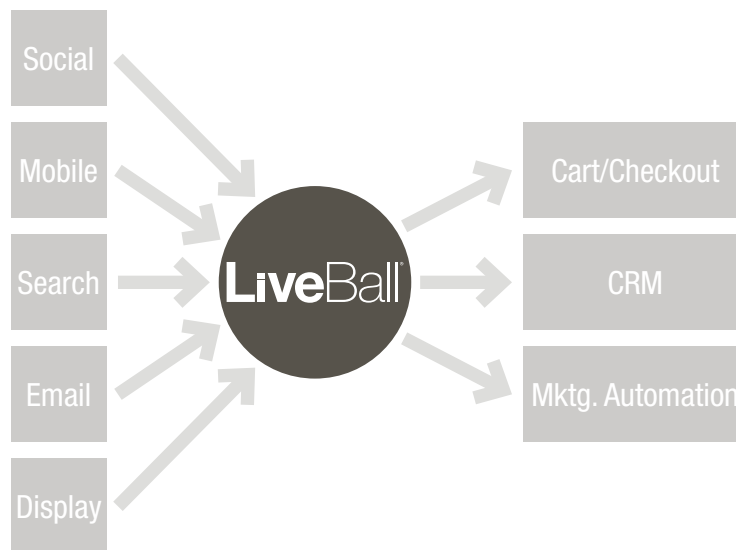
LiveBall optimizes the performance of online campaigns by delivering ideal user experiences. It significantly reduces the resources required to manage long-tail content.

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.

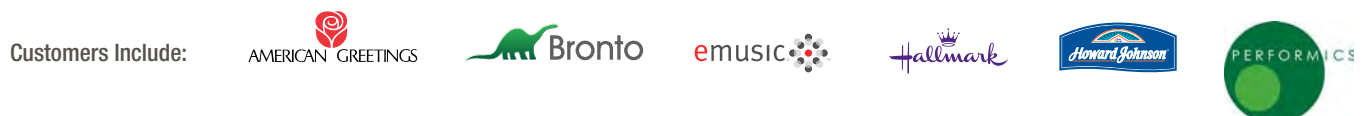
Optimizing the gap between ads and results

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.



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 end 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.



POWERed by LiveBall®

Catch more conversions with
landing page software for agencies.



ion



LiveBall is a whole new kind of 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 landing page friction into freedom by delivering enterprise-scale agility. Subscribe to LiveBall, setup client portfolios and start making and launching pages fast.



- ▶ **Produce & launch** client-branded multi-page campaign landing experiences — microsites, conversion paths & landing pages — without code or developers
- ▶ **Target & track** content, offers and forms with codeless segmentation & conditional rules
- ▶ **Test & optimize in real time** using instant, integrated A/B and multivariate methods

Some of ion's agency alliances...



Services to help ensure that you are truly empowered by LiveBall.

You want to maximize your clients' PPC, email, social, affiliate, direct and online advertising results. You're in the right place. Our agency-focused services complement your LiveBall subscription by giving you all the expertise you need to be successful.

ion has been delivering technology-driven services since 1997. We're passionate about helping our agency-customers achieve success. From implementation to optimization, our team will help you make LiveBall an integrated and productive piece of your digital workflow.

Whether you need a little guidance or a boatload of help, we've got your back.

Some of our typical service packages are outlined below. When you subscribe to LiveBall, let us know which services make sense for you. Not sure? We'll help you figure it out.

Service	LiveBall Support	Coaching	Easy Launch	Custom Engagements
Your Need	Implement LiveBall	Expert guidance	Expert help launching LiveBall	Let's talk
Description	We show you how LiveBall works	We coach you to use LiveBall to its fullest potential	We do the initial work to get you off on the right foot	Personalized services based on your needs
Timeline	Lifetime of your subscription	2-4 months	2-6 months	Based on needs
Price	Included with your LiveBall subscription	From \$2,500 / month plus subscription	From \$5,000 / month plus subscription	Based on scope



LiveBall gives agencies 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 clients.

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 flexible templates, custom-branded for your clients.

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 agencies 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, scalable and fast.

Enterprise-class software-as-a-service (SaaS) 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 your LiveBall pages — from 10,000 to millions per month — starting at \$1,295 per month.

- **Content management** — make all the pages you want
- **Testing** — powerful A/B and multivariate 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



1.888.ion.idea (466.4332) or +01.561.394.9484 outside the U.S. & Canada

www.ioninteractive.com

Look who's powered by ion's LiveBall platform:

