



Code-free landing page testing



A LiveBall case study featuring
SurePayroll, American Greetings and the
University of St. Thomas.

Testing for better results

As marketers we all want the same thing: better results. We can tweak ad or email copy to be more enticing and we can look into different traffic sources, but we ultimately can't control whether or not our audience clicks. What we can control is their experience after the click.

The fastest way to boost your ROI is by perfecting your landing pages. The best landing pages are targeted and relevant to user's needs. There isn't an easy or 'one-size fits all' answer for what targeted, relevant landing experience should look like or say. The only way to learn what your prospects will respond to favorably is to test. We can guess and follow our marketer's intuition, but testing is the only way to know for sure what's helping to increase conversions and what's not working.

Too often, landing page creation and testing is out of marketing's control. Manual A/B and multivariate testing with hand-coded landing pages requires a lot of resources and a lot of time. Plus, relying on IT or a third party limits your control over testing speed, analytics and results. With ion's software, LiveBall, marketers can create and optimize hundreds of landing pages without code or IT on marketing's schedule — fast.

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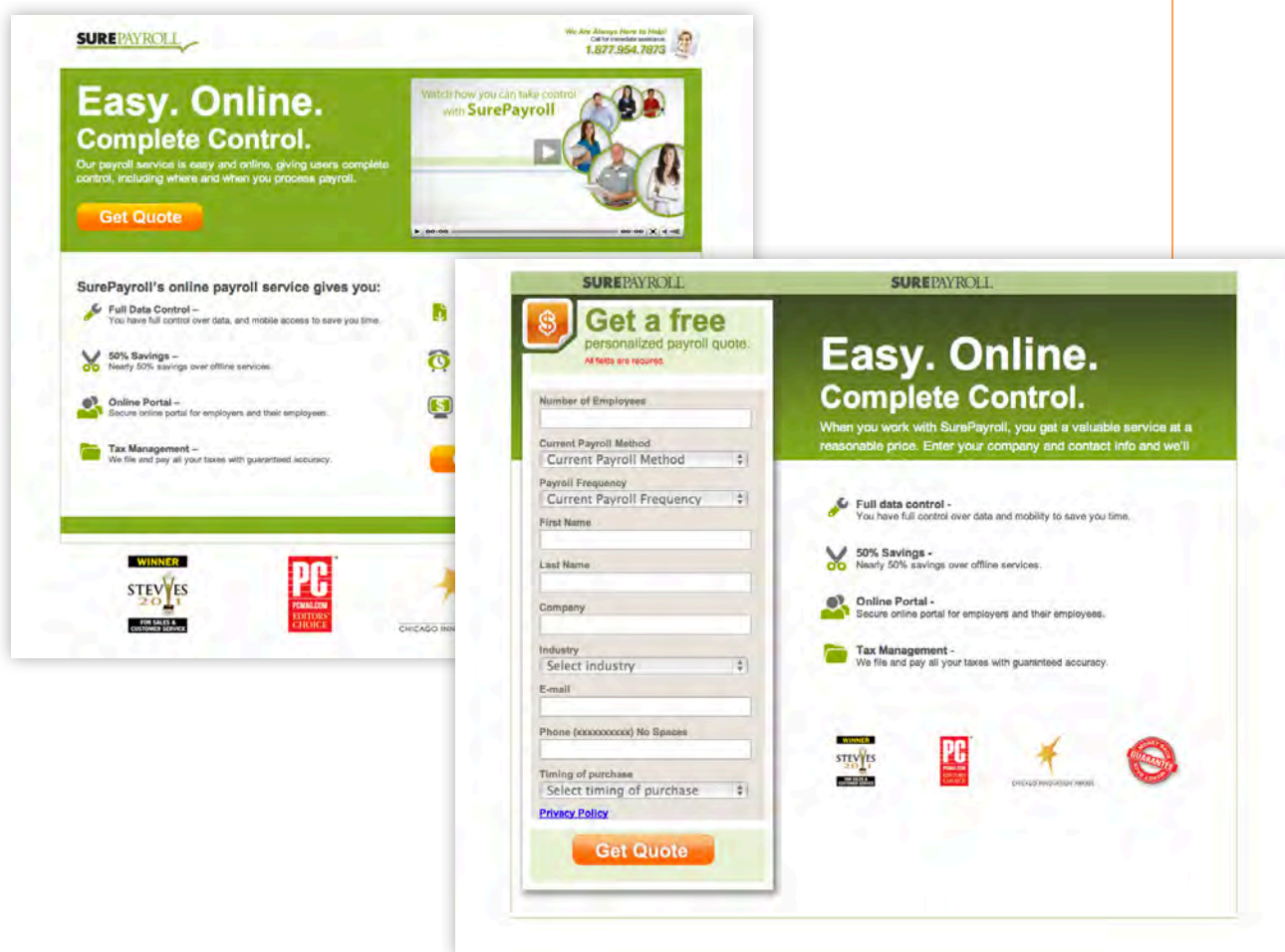
SUREPAYROLL

The Online AlternativeSM

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.

Results on marketing's schedule

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."*



Total testing control

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 Salesforce 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.

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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.

Optimized marketing spend

Scott’s ‘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 marketer-created landing experiences and 220 sources of traffic.

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.”



AMERICAN GREETINGS

Aggressive testing to lift conversions

American Greetings has the largest collection of electronic greetings on the web, including cards available at AmericanGreetings.com through AG Interactive, Inc., the company’s online division. AG Interactive drives millions of unique visitors from paid search and other online media sources. Their goal is to convert this traffic using online registration for a free trial subscription (which later converts to a paid subscription to AmericanGreetings.com). In the past, this online traffic funneled into the www.AmericanGreetings.com home page, or to a single, MVT-optimized landing page.

The marketing team knew they needed to launch aggressive landing page testing in order to lift conversion rates, but faced some executional roadblocks. Implementing testing though IT on the one landing page was slow and arduous, with a multi-month feedback loop to the marketing team. Experimentation with alternative design and content was slower still. When test results were extracted from this process it was months behind and often gave little reliable cause and effect determination.

In order to lift online conversions and reduce cost-per-acquisition, American Greetings needed to develop context-specific landing pages, experiment more broadly with content &

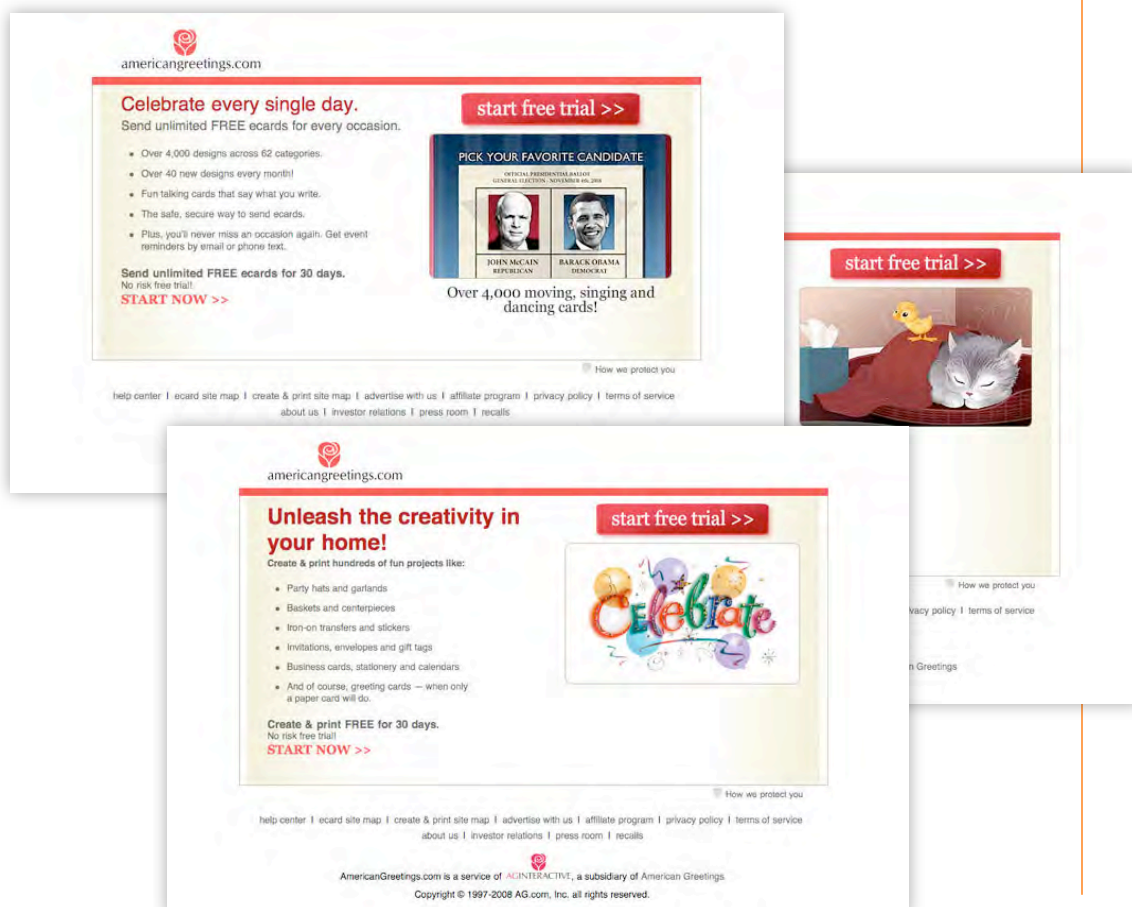
layout and view test results & analyses in real-time. They turned to LiveBall, ion's enterprise landing page platform.

Increased testing agility and speed

American Greetings adopted LiveBall in order to increase agility, speed-to-market, specificity and to ultimately improve conversion performance to lower cost-per-customer-acquisition. With LiveBall, AG Interactive's marketing team can easily create, test and optimize landing pages without IT resources. ion's team worked closely with AG Interactive marketing manager Tessa Fraser to launch and test alternative landing experiences that were specific to market segments and traffic sources.

Within the first 3 months of testing with LiveBall American Greetings moved from a single, optimized landing page to over 40 unique landing pages, each context-specific to its source of traffic. Three entirely different design formats were tested with 12 different price points across over 200 different audience segments. By speaking to each segment much more specifically, American Greetings was able to increase conversions despite economic fallout that actually reduced the flow of traffic.

Each unique landing page format was quickly customized and messaged to closely match the PPC ads that were sending traffic. The testing resulted in an almost immediate 30% increase in conversion and a subsequent 20% decrease in cost-per-acquisition (which is a net benefit that includes the added expenses associated with ion's LiveBall platform and conversion services).



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After a few months of ion’s full-service landing page management to get them started, American Greetings now runs their landing page program on their own, using the LiveBall platform to easily create, test and optimize in real-time. Tessa says *“There’s so much flexibility in the templates. We run 13 or 14 tests simultaneously at any one time and get quick, actionable learning. And we’ve easily extended LiveBall with additional brands like BlueMountain and PhotoWorks.”* Over their first five months using LiveBall the American Greetings online marketing team created over 700 unique landing pages, being tested across hundreds of unique sources of traffic.

The real-time testing & analytics in LiveBall ensure traffic arrives at best performing landing page for each unique traffic source. Tessa says, *“As soon as we get statistical significance on a test, we drive immediately to a champion in real time. On Mother’s Day alone, the real-time change in traffic splits resulted in over \$45,000 in incremental revenue. That’s revenue that would have been lost without LiveBall’s actionable, real-time approach. We don’t continue to lose on any test — we auto-optimize as soon as we have significance.”*

Driving real ROI at scale

New tests are always in the works at American Greetings. The conversion goal for 2010 was over 40% higher than 2009 and 2011 is targeting another 33% lift over 2010.

Perhaps the most substantial opportunity for conversion rate improvement lies in optimization of the pages that follow the initial landing page — the product romance pages. To this point, American Greetings’ optimization efforts have focused solely on the initial landing pages of multi-page experiences. Initial tests of alternate romance pages suggest that even the smallest adjustments result in significant increases in conversion performance.

American Greetings uses ion’s LiveBall platform to drive real business ROI at scale. Tessa says *“The little things make the biggest differences. LiveBall gives us incredibly fast speed to market and learning. It’s a visual tool that lets us focus on what’s working to improve our results.”*



UNIVERSITY of ST. THOMAS

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.

Targeted, high-quality microsites

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 to help them reach their goals.

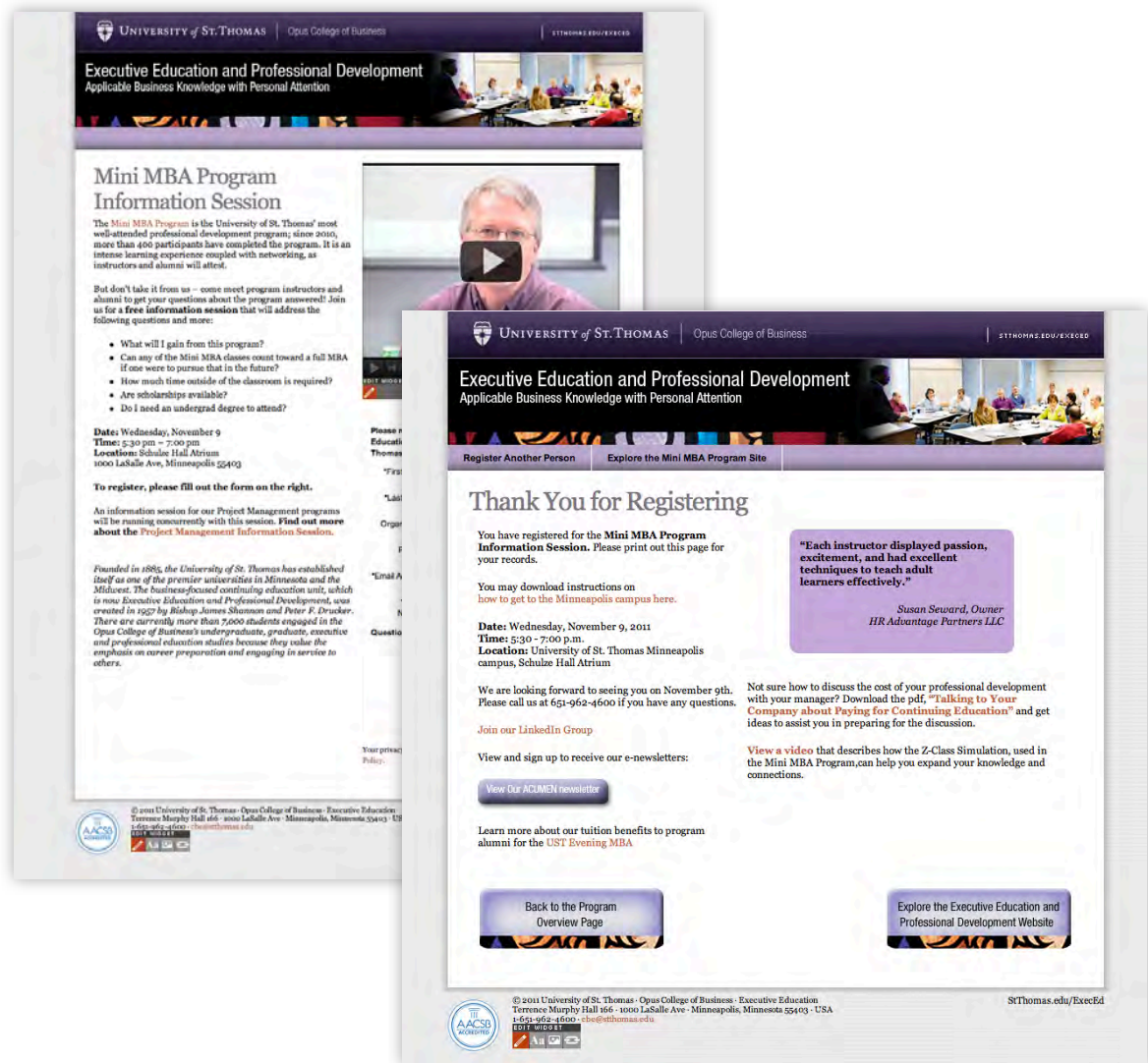
Tripling conversions in just a few months

The University of St. Thomas' three-person team quickly went to work. They had one version of a microsite launched in short order and, over the course of five months, they 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

"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 Sarazhynsky, Marketing Manager, The University of St. Thomas

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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.

Optimize your results

Marketers at SurePayroll, American Greetings and the University of St. Thomas took control of their landing page programs and optimized their landing pages to generate remarkable results. They created and tested targeted messages for their ideal customer, tailored unique pages to ensure message match with paid search ads, and created better user experience flows. They launched A/B testing to find out how well their new pages were performing and kept tweaking existing pages with MVT. They did all of this within their marketing departments using ion's LiveBall landing page platform.

A common thread between each of the three stories is the need for more landing pages. In each case, their testing success was based on their ability to quickly produce new landing pages. If you're hand-coding pages you simply can't move at the rapid pace that is needed to achieve higher conversion rates. Investing time and emotion into a page that may bring subpar results will only make testing a frustrating process. Instead, it's important to embrace a more disposable view of landing pages. Pages created with software like LiveBall are quicker to make because of how content is centrally managed, but they are just as effective. Since you don't sink the same resource investment into creating a page with LiveBall, it's easier to move on or to suggest a new alternative.

With LiveBall, you'll have the freedom to turn your ideas into a reality and then to test whether they work. You'll have the ability to quickly create sophisticated code-free pages, and the flexibility and agility to change page content whenever needed. All of this leads to better marketing results and higher ROI.

With LiveBall, you can make landing pages that get better results.

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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