Guide

Building an enterprise-level landing page program.

Your guide to why size is an advantage.

ion

To thrive and succeed, an enterprise post-click marketing program for landing pages must be well-defined, systematized, and integrated with the overall marketing engine.

How are landing pages for large organizations different than landing pages for anyone else?

The objective is the same, to provide a better landing page experience for respondents after they click through from online advertising or email marketing, and to thereby increase your conversion rate and ROI. Regardless of your company's size, perfecting the post-click experience – the landing page, microsite or whatever comes after someone clicks on your ad – is the most direct way to improve your marketing results.

The tactics and creative options for the design and content of the pages — the best practices that are usually written about the subject — are largely the same for both small and large organizations:

- Maintain continuity from click to conversion.
- Constantly test with innovation and iteration.
- Segment respondents with conversion paths where applicable.
- Speed and agility are critical.
- Embrace the diversity of The Long Tail.
- Optimize for ROI, but don't optimize away your brand.

The big difference is behind the scenes. Enterprise landing pages have:

- More **people** involved in the lifecycle.
- More **complexity** in the process.
- More **scale** in the overall marketing portfolio.
- More **risk**, both real and perceived.
- More **upside** potential.

Although these aspects may seem tangential to most landing page best practices, these factors have an enormous impact on the implementation of such best practices in large organizations.

In an enterprise-scale environment, an under-the-radar, ad hoc approach to landing pages is almost guaranteed to underperform, because the absence of structured processes for post-click marketing robs them of attention, budget, and priority. To thrive and succeed, an enterprise post-click marketing program must be well-defined, systematized, and integrated with the overall marketing engine.

The goal is to turn your size to your advantage.

Here are specific ways to make that happen, to help define your ideal team and supporting infrastructure, and to address the challenges of enterprise post-click marketing on each of these 5 dimensions.

More people

Call it the axiom of the org chart: the larger the company, the more people involved in an activity. Online marketing, however, is a particularly chaotic intersection of marketing managers, website managers, search specialists, product managers, business intelligence analysts, IT administrators, legal, and at least one floating contractor. Then you go up: your boss, your boss's boss, your dotted line boss, and probably a committee.

And that's just inside the organization. There are potentially a plethora of out-sourced vendors and agencies in the loop as well: a search agency, an ad agency, a brand agency, a web development firm, an email marketing company, a PR firm, a social marketing consultancy, etc. And across all of these constituencies, personnel are constantly in flux.

This large cast of players isn't a bad thing, per se. Online marketing is multidisciplinary, and as the centerpiece for almost every company's interface to the market these days, it's well deserving of the attention and input from these disparate groups.

To survive this juggling gauntlet of many hands, though, post-click marketing initiatives need to meet the requirements of each group — and leverage their talents and contributions — in an efficient and orderly fashion.

Here are 9 steps for incorporating landing pages in online marketing with a large cast of players:

1. **Start by building recognition that landing pages are an important piece of your online marketing ecosystem**: bring all the stakeholders and participants together to discuss the objectives, address their needs, and brainstorm ways to optimize the process. Competitive benchmarking can be a strong motivator to kick-start this. References such as the search marketing maturity model can help illustrate the interdependencies between the different participants in the online marketing ecosystem.

2. **Officially assign responsibility for post-click marketing**, either with the people running the pre-click campaigns (advertising, paid search, email) or with a dedicated post-click marketing manager. It needs to be a primary part of someone's job description, not something that gets tacked on to an already overloaded schedule (and thereby drops off the end). This role will need to have a budget and either leverage other participants and/or have its own dedicated headcount — i.e., post-click responsibility and the authority to execute it properly must go hand-in-hand.

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3. **Agree upon a way to measure the performance of landing pages and connect it into the overall online marketing ROI funnel**. In the New Marketing landscape, nothing is defensible unless it can be measured — the mantra of performance marketing. This doesn't have to be airtight, as there are diminishing returns to being too pedantic — the stage may be digital, but the actors are all human and full of infinite possibilities — but it does need to credibly connect the dots in a way that the other people in the ecosystem can appreciate.

4. **A pilot program is a splendid way to introduce post-click concepts and processes into an organization**, both to demonstrate the value and to discover the interconnections and latent serendipity of the various participants in the online marketing ecosystem. For this to be successful, however, it's vital that initial progress has been made on the previous three steps for cooperation, responsibility, and performance measurement — an orphaned post-click pilot rarely ends like Oliver Twist.

5. **Determine an overarching post-click marketing strategy that people can navigate by, even as tactics change fluidly on the battlefield**. This must be aligned with the metrics in #3, or people get yanked between what is right for the strategy and right for their performance review — nip that conundrum in the bud whenever you can. Great strategies are often simple in concept: clearly identify the competitive advantages and unique selling propositions of the company across its markets, segmented as finely as possible, and creatively represent those advantages to their respective audiences in a consistent and cost-effective manner. If you get stuck, fall back on the core questions: Who are our best customers? Why do they buy from us? How can we attract more of them? Post-click marketing strategy is all about meeting — or exceeding — the expectations of those best customers as they enter your online marketing funnel.

6. **Establish a documented way to coordinate continuity between pre-click ads and post-click landing page experiences — even if they're controlled by the same people — such as a lightweight message map spreadsheet**. This is essential for continuity and message match, the backbone of post-click marketing. It's also important when you're running tests with different ads and different landing pages to be consciously aware of any interaction effects. A centralized reference like this makes it possible to scale the number of participants in the marketing mission while maintaining synchronization. (It also helps as personnel changes require new participants to quickly come up to speed.) If you don't already have a way to easily share file updates and discussions around them online, across both internal and external participants, you might consider Basecamp.

7. **Harness the very best creative talent you can — post-click is a creative channel**. Tactical superiority can be achieved by crafting landing experiences that look, read, engage, and flow better than the competition. Take advantage of the broader array of human resources within your ecosystem to tap the best designers, graphic artists, copywriters, Flash programmers, and widget makers. These don't have to be full-time positions for post-click — in fact, you can handily outsource this on a project basis, if that's easier — but wielding these creative professionals in your landing experience production improves engagement, branding, and visual resonance in ways that lesser competitors can't readily match.

8. **Communicate regular updates and feedback with the whole online marketing team**. Not a cacophony of boilerplate multi-page reports, but concise highlights of the most interesting results once or twice a month. Because landing page experiences sit in the upper middle of the funnel — often the murkiest stage in customer acquisition — they can reveal substantial insight about your market. Behavioral post-click segmentation is golden here. Sharing this information helps your peers — advertising, site optimization, lead nurturing, etc. — gain new perspectives on their slice of the funnel, encouraging reciprocity and cross-border innovation. Everyone needs early funnel empirical data at some point in a marketing initiative — let them know that post-click is available to help collect it. Post-click isn't a silo, it's an interconnected fabric. Embrace this role of "funnel facilitator" and legitimately build political capital for the post-click marketing function.

9. **Invest in education and plug into the global online marketing community**. Events such as Search Engine Strategies (SES) and Search Marketing Expo (SMX) let you step outside your daily routine, take a fresh look at what you're doing, benchmark it against a wider range of contemporaries, cross-pollinate ideas from other industries, and network with potential new collaborators. This community interaction — learning best practices from the successes and mistakes of others — can be a catalyzing inspiration and helps inoculate you from "not invented here" (NIH) myopia. Regular blog reading, such as Search

Engine Land and MediaPost's OnlineMediaDaily, is a must. In such a rapidly evolving field, you've got to consistently work to put the "knowledge" in "knowledge worker".

Of course, more people are inexorably tied to more complexity and more scale — so many of the suggestions in the next two sections will also help maximize the productivity of this larger cast.

Just remember: more people should be an advantage, and the foundation of successful enterprise post-click marketing is to make that statement true.

More complexity

To paraphrase Arthur C. Clarke: any sufficiently complex system is indistinguishable from chaos. And let's face it, enterprise online marketing is a pretty darn complex system. To properly incorporate post-click marketing into a large organization, the goal is actually to simplify processes as much as possible.

Landing page production in large organizations must deal with:

- More extensive **brand standards**.
- More rigid protocols for **IT involvement**.
- More requirements for **legal approval**, even in the tiniest campaign.
- More stringent **rules for data collection**.
- More demands for **interoperability with existing systems**.

Overall, more coordination is required with more things in the organization as a whole — more channels, bigger channels, more independently moving pieces in The Great Marketing Machine.

The impact of this complexity is an inflation of the “soft costs” — overhead and time — for producing and managing landing pages and post-click marketing. Every touchpoint adds delays and indirect costs, diminishing your agility and ROI. It’s not unusual to hear tales of big companies taking weeks to launch a new landing page.

Some people might object that formalizing post-click marketing will only make things more complex. But post-click marketing happens whether you consciously manage it or not — people click on your ads, land somewhere in your web universe, and experience an impression of your company. Letting this happen on an ad hoc basis ironically creates more complexity because it causes a drag on the performance of the entire marketing funnel — like trying to bicycle uphill with your brakes on — and generates interrupt-driven exception management every time someone tries to fix the post-click experience for a one-off campaign.

The antidote to that inefficiency is partly organizational structure, partly business process management, and partly software automation. Ultimately, all these ideas share the same underlying strategy: reduce the number of manual touch points when launching and managing landing experiences. The goal is to asymptotically approach frictionless post-click marketing.

Here are 10 suggestions for taming post-click complexity:

1. **Establish a central repository for all landing pages and their components**. At the very least, this should be a source-controlled directory structure in your web site environment. However, it’s much better if this is implemented as a database-driven application — essentially a content management system (CMS) for landing experiences — which can be searched, analyzed, and automated. This can be a partition of your existing CMS platform, or a separate software package, possibly even a software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution. The benefits of this approach include a foundation for software-mediated workflow, de-duplication of content, better security through centralized access control, and a master archive that can serve as a reference point for all previous and current post-click initiatives. No more having to track down who was running what landing page where with email, voicemail, or stalking them at the coffee machine.

2. **Provide a standardized mechanism to “preview” and “proof” landing experiences**. Preview should give you the ability to walk through a landing experience — be it a single landing page, a multi-step conversion path, or a microsite — exactly as it will appear to real respondents. You need to be able to do this before it goes “live” in production, while it’s live — but without contaminating the statistics of real users — and after it’s been disabled and archived. Unauthorized parties should not be able to view these pages when they’re not live. A “proof” feature is similar, but instead of walking through the experience as a simulated respondent, a proof provides a condensed map of the complete landing experience, with all the content, behavioral rules, and tracking scripts listed in an organized fashion. With a proof, someone can

quickly review a landing experience in a comprehensive and consistent manner, knowing exactly how the experience will behave in all cases.

3. **Minimize IT dependency for daily landing page production and management**. The IT processes surrounding changes to a company's website are usually pretty involved — after all, the global website must serve all constituencies and can impact everyone. Landing pages, however, are more of a pure marketing initiative — more a part of the advertising for specific campaigns — that typically target small subsets of your overall audience. Agile experimentation is what's needed. To facilitate that, you should consider setting up a lightweight environment specific for landing pages — a landing.yourcompany.com subdomain — that marketing can use as a sandbox, without interfering with (or bearing the burden of) the primary website management overhead. This both reduces the number of participants in front-line landing page production and eliminates delays at the marketing/IT divide.

4. **Create a set of design templates for landing pages that adhere to your brand standards**. These master page layouts strategically separate design and content. Talented designers can produce these layouts and visual themes once — test them on all browsers and receive sign-off from branding — and then they can be reused for dozens or hundreds of landing experiences by front-line marketers. Ideally, your landing page management system (or plain CMS) should tightly control which parts of pages can be dynamically edited by front-line marketers — the content for specific campaigns — while assuring that the design cohesion and brand standards of the templates are unbreakable. This approach saves time for designers, who have their work leveraged repeatedly without their ongoing involvement; it saves time for the marketers authoring new pages, as they aren't entangled in design issues; and it saves time in deployment, as the guaranteed consistency of these pre-approved templates reduces the number of back-and-forth cycles for reviewing new landing pages and fixing minor interface issues. You end up with landing pages that always look good for your brand.

5. **Maintain pre-approved content elements that can be reused across multiple landing pages**. Such a digital asset management system can include a collection of categorized images and Flash animations that have been blessed as "allowable art", email messages and fulfillment files that have been proofed and signed off on by legal, and links to your privacy policy and copyright notice built directly into the templates. Reusability helps cost justify better creative investment, as the payback is spread across multiple deployments. Sharing elements from a common source means that alterations — even thing as simple as fixing typos — can be automatically inherited by all landing pages referencing them. Overall, this approach speeds things up by reducing the production time and cutting down approval processes when deploying new pages synthesized from these existing elements.

6. **Standardize data collection and form handling**. One of the biggest time sinks in ad hoc landing page production is constructing and debugging forms and data collection processes — often a source of painful iterations between marketing and IT. Again, the solution is to separate these requirements into centralized and reusable components. We recommend 4 conceptual pieces: **(a)** definition of data fields and their permissible values, i.e., the fundamental data structure; **(b)** the assembly of forms that collect user responses and map them to the defined data fields — so marketers can change the way the question is asked without tampering with the underlying data fields; **(c)** placement of the forms on particular pages, including the freedom to collect some data "passed in" from the query string or from several forms spread across multiple pages that progressively build a respondent's profile; and **(d)** the formatting and exporting of all collected data to back-end systems — your CRM, your lead nurturing platform, Salesforce.com, etc. — using procedures that take advantage of the standardized data fields, regardless of marketing-level content on the pages from which it was collected. With this approach, the IT elements are configured once and then repeatedly leveraged across a plethora of campaigns — and updates at any level can be seamlessly inherited — without triggering a costly end-to-end fire drill.

7. **Don't fragment your respondent data by turning your landing page environment into a data silo**. While it is highly advantageous for marketing to have its own sandbox to create, deploy, and optimize landing experiences — and to use those landing experiences to collect valuable respondent data — you want to make sure that your collected data is quickly and properly transferred to a common CRM or lead nurturing system, inheriting all the security and backed-up redundancy built into that infrastructure. You don't want the data to grow stale or end up causing integration problems down the road. By using standardized data formats and exchanges — as described in #6 above — you can pass data in real-time (or daily batches at the latest), nicely scrubbed, into existing IT systems designed to maintain a holistic view of prospects and customers. Post-click marketing is a contributor to that data warehouse, not a rogue competitor to it.

8. **Interface consistently with enterprise-wide web analytics**. Although there is immense value in analyzing respondent data and behavior in the focused context of your landing pages — and their interplay with different traffic sources — it's important that this activity also be transparently shared with whatever web analytics and/or business intelligence platform(s) you have standardized on for your primary/other web properties. Again, your post-click marketing environment should be a contributor, not a competitor, to any such global infrastructure. Luckily, this is usually very easy to accomplish, by including standardized bits of Javascript tracking code on your landing pages. Ideally, you want to configure these scripts in one place for an entire campaign, and then have them automatically inherited by all pages within. Like many of the strategies above — setup once, leverage multiple times — this makes it simpler to deploy new pages as well as update and maintain existing ones.

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9. **Favor A/B testing over multivariate testing (MVT) for landing pages**.
   MVT is a more mathematically complex methodology — testing many simultaneous variations of elements on the same page — that typically requires more configuration to set up and more traffic to reach statistical significance. This complexity can make life difficult for a marketer to design tests with a clear hypothesis and can run into trouble with bizarre interaction effects among the different elements. In contrast, A/B tests are easy to visualize, straightforward to implement, quick to achieve statistical significance, and logical to draw conclusions and learning from. They also support apples-to-oranges testing of different kinds of experiences, encouraging bolder experimentation — a strategic luxury of independent landing pages that is rarely feasible in your primary web site. A/B testing promotes simplicity, speed, and flexibility in post-click marketing optimization. Keep it simple!

10. **Handle special-case rules in a standardized manners**.
    At first this might sound like a contradiction in terms, but this is a vital concept for keeping complexity under control. There will always be exceptions and custom behaviors requested for the content and flow of particular pages: substitute a different headline if the respondent is a repeat visitor, send an email alert to a specific mailbox when a user submits a particular answer on a form, deliver a different version of a download if the person is connecting from outside the country, etc. What you don't want is for each special case to be hacked together in its own way — some Javascript here, some server-side code there, some jury-rigged contraption somewhere else — as it's near impossible to maintain or reuse. Instead, you want a systemized approach that can provide customized experiences using standardized methods, such as something similar to how rules for handling messages are configured in most email programs. When you need more features, extend the shared set of rule options.

By structuring your post-click marketing so that responsibilities are cleanly separated into Lego-like blocks of functionality — that can be quickly and safely assembled into new landing experiences by front-line marketing staff — you can keep the complexity under control while increasing the overall sophistication of your post-click capabilities. Expertise is leveraged where it delivers the most value — in a business process architecture that emphasizes reusability — and is not unnecessarily ensnared in day-to-day production or management.

This distributed approach can dramatically reduce your soft costs, making individual landing experiences much more cost effective. This, in turn, sets the stage for scaling up.

More scale

Marketing in a large organization is all about “more”. Not just more personnel and more processes connecting them — which we covered in the previous two sections — but more prospects and customers, and more vehicles to reach them in more markets.

- As input into post-click marketing, this means:
- More search marketing across more keywords.
- More banner advertisements across more networks.
- More email marketing initiatives across more lists.
- More respondent traffic from each of these sources.
- More audience segments/niches within this traffic.

All of this translates into **the need for more distinct landing pages**, scalable on demand, with targeted landing experiences designed to match the expectations of each of these streams of respondents.

This, however, is a key advantage for larger players. Your scale can enable broader coverage of The Long Tail, investing in more niche exploration, increasing the likelihood of discovering new segments with outsized returns. (This is also one of the secrets for dealing with more risk/reward, as we’ll examine next.)

Another benefit of scale is the ability to cost justify investments in talent and infrastructure. All of the people and processes discussed in the previous two sections are sources of competitive advantage. They’re also mostly fixed costs. With larger scale, you can leverage those fixed costs across a greater number of landing pages with a greater number of respondents, for more efficient utilization and faster payback. The same effort is required to create a landing experience that serves 1,000 people as one that serves 100,000 — but the latter delivers orders of magnitude ROI.

All of this translates into the need for more distinct landing pages, scalable on demand, with targeted landing experiences designed to match the expectations of each of these streams of respondents.

But to make scale work for you — and not against you — you need to structure your post-click marketing so that increases in the number of advertisements, the number of landing pages, the number of respondents, and the number of tracked audience segments in those respondents do not require a linear increase in your fixed or variable costs.

In other words, averaged out, you want more for less. Here are 10 ways to achieve such scale advantage:

1. **Organize your landing page initiatives into campaigns and portfolios of campaigns**. As the number of landing pages under your direction grows, it's helpful to divide them into logical groups. A campaign is a collection of landing experiences and the traffic sources that drive respondents to them, all bound by a common purpose or characteristic. For instance, for paid search, a post-click campaign would naturally correspond to a campaign in Google AdWords — with different landing pages and traffic sources for each ad group within that AdWords campaign. Portfolios are then related sets of campaigns, perhaps clustered by product, audience, or geography. In such a tree-like arrangement, you can deal orderly with thousands of post-click initiatives. You can distribute responsibility and delegate authority for different portfolios and campaigns. Ideally, you want to review performance and analysis not only on individual landing pages, but also in aggregate across a campaign or an entire portfolio.

2. **Recycle and test good ideas from one landing page in other contexts**. To maximize the ROI from work already done — including those soft costs such as content approval cycles — test your ideas across multiple venues. In the context of a specific campaign, it should be as straightforward as including the same landing experience in the A/B testing rotations for multiple traffic sources. For example, for a search keyword group, you might test the same path across Google, Yahoo!, and Microsoft Live traffic sources — while still tracking their performance independently. You then might try them with related banner ads or email marketing messages, perhaps copying a landing experience and making only minor tweaks for vehicle-specific continuity. If performance for the same concept varies across traffic sources, this helps reveal the characteristics of those different audiences.

3. **Consider software-as-a-service (SaaS) for your landing page environment to grow smoothly**. Because post-click marketing is more of a marketing function than an IT one, you can take advantage of SaaS products for marketers — such as LiveBall — to move your landing page management into the cloud. In-house IT infrastructure investments tend to require upfront capital expenditures, with their own byzantine approval processes, as well as ongoing

maintenance. SaaS offerings, in contrast, can be subscribed to on an as-needed basis, where you're always prioritized as a customer. And since SaaS vendors are specialists, you inherit their economies of scale. By virtualizing this capability, you further eliminate IT dependencies, increasing your agility to scale campaigns on demand — when you hit a winner, you can quickly exploit it and reallocate when opportunities shift. You're probably already using SaaS elsewhere, such as Google AdWords, Salesforce.com, Google Analytics, etc.

4. **Rig your landing pages to automatically expire when their content is outdated**. As you increase the number of landing pages you have on active duty, you want to minimize the conscious effort required to manage them. For time-limited offers, promotions for particular events, or content that is regularly changed, it's best to give associated landing pages an expiration date that will automatically take them out of rotation when their time is passed. This prevents outdated pages from slipping through the cracks, floating around indefinitely, and causing bad impressions or expectation mismatches for respondents. Expired landing pages should still, however, be archived for reference purposes in your landing page management environment.

5. **Have A/B tests automatically remove underperforming alternatives once statistical significance has been reached**. Keep in mind, A/B tests may actually be A/B/C/D/etc. tests with many variations being evaluated simultaneously. As soon as it can be determined that one or more of those alternatives under-performs the other(s) — using statistical significance of at least 80% for "lead generation" campaigns, or up to 95% or 99% for high-traffic or e-commerce campaigns with a transactional conversion — you want them immediately removed from rotation. You don't want to waste a single click once your trials have born fruit, but you don't want to manually babysit them all either. Auto-optimization — letting your landing page software do this work for you — is the answer.

6. **Take notes on your experiments, briefly documenting hypotheses and conclusions**. Annotating your landing pages and post-click campaigns with your ideas, questions, and analysis of results makes it easier to scale the number of initiatives that you can juggle effectively. These notes don't need to be long or extravagant — think Twitter, not Pulitzer — but simply quick comments on the thinking behind different tests and campaign organization. You can then pick up a thread weeks or months later, without straining your memory, and jump right back in the flow. This also facilitates hand-offs among team members, who can more readily pinch hit when a colleague is on vacation or called off to another project. Writing down your thoughts can also provide clarity, help you discern insightful patterns across your different efforts, and make status updates and management reviews a breeze to pull together.

7. **Promote the development of reusable/parameterized widgets and Flash objects**. Interactivity, video, animation, and other engagement devices have been shown to significantly improve conversion rates and respondents'

impressions of a brand. But building one-off applications in Flash or Javascript is expensive and becomes hard to maintain with scale. A better approach is to create widgets and/or Flash objects that accept configurable parameters — and therefore can be reused across multiple landing pages. For example, a reusable Flash object might have a "carousel" mechanism for rotating between several images and links, but the specific images and links shown are dynamically passed in as parameters. Expert designers and programmers can create these dynamic objects once, and then front-line marketers can plug in the parameters for their specific campaigns. The more reuse these objects get, the higher their ROI, and the more engagement features are distributed across your post-click marketing.

8. **Install marketing dashboards to continually "scan the horizon".** The more landing pages campaigns you have running simultaneously, the more important it is to configure performance gauges that will quickly alert you to any unusual activity — either good or bad. The objective is to facilitate continual partial attention across a broad range of initiatives, while focusing on a small subset. Good visualizations can be very helpful in this process. For instance, a bubble chart that shows three dimensions: conversion rate along the x-axis, engagement score up the y-axis, and the size of the bubble representing the quantity of respondent traffic. Small bubbles in the upper-right corner reveal excellent opportunities; large bubbles in the lower-left corner uncover high-traffic under-performers. Ideally, your dashboard should let you drill down in real-time to examine the causes.

9. **Grow the different stages of your online marketing funnel in proportion to each other.** As the truism goes, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Although post-click marketing usually starts off as one of the least developed capabilities in an organization, your adoption of the concepts described in this article will change that. At some point, however, to grow further, the next weakest link in the online marketing chain will need to be addressed. Maturity models, such as the search marketing maturity model, can be used to manage balanced development of the funnel as a whole. Since post-click marketing sits in the middle of the funnel, it can help illuminate a broader funnel perspective and assist with improvements upstream and downstream — incoming traffic and outgoing conversions. Keep an active dialogue with your counterparts up and down the funnel for cross-stage insights, multi-stage opportunities, and a collaborative culture of continuous improvement.

10. **Support international landing pages properly in your environment.** Sooner or later, as you scale your post-click marketing, you're going to need to publish pages in other languages. The world may be flat, but it's not homogenous. People have an affinity for their native tongue, and post-click marketing needs to build rapport every way it can. You don't want to be holding back for technical reasons on global growth opportunities, so make sure that your landing page production system fully supports internationalization —

Unicode is usually best — and that your pages can be served in any major language.

Remember, however, that the secret of scale is turning a tiny prize garden into a thriving farm — without sacrificing organic, homegrown goodness. You want to leverage economies of scale and optimized production processes, without forgetting that at the end of the day, the tastiest tomatoes win.

All the capabilities for scaling post-click marketing still rely on taking strategic and creative chances to deliver extraordinary landing experiences to your audience. So let's talk about taking chances the smart way.

More risk

The difference between small business landing pages and enterprise post-click marketing is analogous to the difference between piloting a two-seater prop plane versus captaining a Boeing 747 jumbo passenger jet. Sure, it's all flying — altitude, airspeed, compass — but the stakes are higher. Aerobatic stunts that would be fun for a single aviator would be reckless insanity for an airline pilot.

In the context of enterprise online marketing, more risk is perceived because, simply due to scale, a small mistake can quickly become a high profile failure, both inside and outside the organization. And to a real degree, there is — hopefully! — substantial brand equity and goodwill out there that you don't want to tarnish.

However, the risk of inaction is arguably far more dangerous. The online marketing agility of smaller competitors can pose a serious threat to larger firms that get mired in either their own overweight processes — which many of the suggestions in the previous sections are designed to fix — or their own overly cautious worldview and a reluctance to conduct bold experiments. The market does not stand still.

The objective is to have the best of both worlds: safe and sensible agility.

Luckily, many of the capabilities that should be put in place for efficient scaling also serve as safety mechanisms:

- Standardized brand templates reduce the risk of layout mistakes or browser incompatibilities.
- Auto-optimization features make certain that underperforming alternatives are swiftly taken offline.
- Automatically enforced expiration dates guarantee that outdated content is never left in rotation.
- Standardized data collection process make sure the right information is collected the right way.
- Favoring A/B testing over MVT avoids inadvertently bad combinations (the Russian roulette caveat) and minimizes the chance of misconfigured tests.
- Good dashboards quickly alert you to any unusual patterns that need your attention.

Well-managed, the ability to take smart, calculated risks is a powerful cultural advantage.

But there are further ways to assuage risk in post-click marketing, where you can use your size to your advantage. Here are 4 recommendations for managing risk:

1. **Leverage a portfolio strategy: more experiments = more opportunities to find gold**. Take a cue from early-stage venture capitalists, who make relatively small investments in 10 companies, knowing that it only takes one winner to make up for all the others going bust. As a large organization, you should have the ability to experiment with a tremendous number of post-click marketing ideas — far more than smaller competitors could afford — as long as you keep the costs of individual experiments low. This is the art of mining The Long Tail. You want to minimize the loss on the ones that don't work, by testing on a small scale and promptly jettisoning any that don't bear fruit — don't build a castle on swampy ground. Meanwhile, when a specific idea hits a home run, be ready to leverage it for all it's worth, expanding its reach and iterating further refinements.

2. **Learn from your shared, centralized campaign history.** Two things that hurt a lot of organizations in their post-click marketing: **(1)** blindly following tactical advice that worked for other companies but isn't right for their own market — creative ideas are rarely reducible to universal best practices (e.g., "have navigation", "don't have navigation"); and **(2)** a failure to recognize what does — or doesn't — really work for their specific market

because they don't share the information across all of their post-click initiatives. As they say, those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Make full use of your centralized systems, dashboards, and note taking to exploit hard-won knowledge into your own best practices. But be enlightened from history, not chained to it. Don't be afraid to revisit old ideas with new perspectives — just do so with an informed background. When in doubt, run a small test and document the results.

3. **Use disproportionate traffic allocation for champion/challenger tests**.
   Once you have a winning landing page in a high-volume campaign, you'll obviously want to reap the benefits of that champion. However, major breakthroughs can usually be enhanced by further refinements, so you want to continue to run subsequent "challenger" landing pages. To balance both those objectives, keep the majority of traffic directed to your champion, and only siphon a sliver for your new challengers — just enough to obtain statistical significance in a reasonable period of time. For high-volume campaigns, that's probably less than 10%. If the challenger doesn't work as well, it's impact on your overall performance metrics will be negligible; if it does work, it can be quickly elevated as your new champion.

4. **Mitigate unsuccessful tactical ideas by always representing the brand well**.
   Part of the deal with a portfolio strategy is understanding that many experiments — maybe even most experiments — will not pan out. The upside is that this is how you learn and discover what works spectacularly. Even though you keep those tests small, you still want to respect the value of every respondent. To do that, always make sure that your landing pages are quality work that represent your brand well. Landing page experiments should be quick and cheap, but they shouldn't look quick and cheap. And they should always live up to the expectations set before the click. Even if someone doesn't convert on an experimental idea, you want to make a good impression that positively contributes to brand awareness and favorability — the world keeps spinning, and those prospects may very well come back to you on a separate campaign.

Well-managed, the ability to take smart, calculated risks is a powerful cultural advantage. In an online marketing arena where you're either the quick or the dead, being aggressively innovative — but never reckless — is key to staying ahead of the curve, ahead of your competition.

With intelligent risk can come great reward.

More reward

For all the challenges of a landing page program at the enterprise level, the rewards of success make it all worthwhile. Conversion rate improvements as a percentage translate into much bigger absolute wins — a 100% increase in conversion rate is awesome in any context, but when it's a doubling of millions of dollars in sales, that's objectively even more impressive. After all, the bigger you are, the harder it is to move the needle.

Once you achieve this success, the tough part is over — congratulations on all your hard work — at least for that campaign cycle. However, there are 3 closing pieces of advice to keep in mind for making the most of your accomplishments:

1. **Celebrate and share the credit — remember, post-click marketing doesn't exist in a vacuum**. Recognize the contributions upstream and downstream in the funnel, and use these successes as a catalyst to further closer collaboration. For major improvements, a party is most definitely in order. Tequila shots are optional.

2. **Review your ROI, even beyond the scope of your official landing page performance metrics**. Particularly in lead generation, which is early in the sales cycle, but also with transactional respondents that can have repeat business, it's often helpful to look beyond the immediate metrics of post-click marketing (e.g., engagement, conversion rate, quality score, initial transaction amount) and explore the patterns of long-term, deep-funnel value. The same applies to evaluating the indirect and soft costs. Understanding these factors can inspire new strategic post-click ideas and improve your business case, justifying further NPV and IRR investments in your post-click marketing capabilities.

3. **Finally, don't rest on your laurels — online marketing is a highly dynamic environment**. Things change quickly: user expectations, competitor responses, the culture and issues of your different Long Tail marketing niches. Left un-attended, the arc of every successful campaign eventually wanes. To keep your edge, you must be proactive. Take full advantage of all the infrastructure you've put in place for testing, low-cost updates, dashboard alerts, and regular brainstorming from an extended team of experts up and down the funnel.
   Above all, keep your post-click marketing authentic, genuine, and fresh.

Ultimately, all of the recommendations in this report — 36 in total — come down to one fundamental concept: agility. Speed and efficiency in post-click marketing translates directly into speed and efficiency in bringing new customers — the right customers — through your funnel. It's not easy, but if you invest in the right structure, you can obtain a magnificent competitive advantage.

As Lou Gerstner, the famed turnaround chief of IBM in the 1990's stated: who says elephants can't dance? ■

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