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QUARTERLY RESEARCH DIGEST

FIRST QUARTER 2013

THE MECLABS QUARTERLY RESEARCH DIGEST

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EDITORIAL STAFF

Executive Editor	Editors	Content Writers	Copy Writer	Designer
Flint McGlaughlin	Selena Blue Daniel Burstein	Austin McCraw Paul Cheney	Shaun Metzger	Leah Kilgore

CONTRIBUTORS

Selena Blue
Brad Bortone
Daniel Burstein
Brian Carroll
Courtney Eckerle
J. David Green
Andrea Johnson

David Kirkpatrick
Lauren Maki
Pamela Markey
Jon Powell
Adam Sutton
John Tackett

FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Dear Reader:

Welcome to the *MECLABS Quarterly Research Digest*. At a time when most marketing leaders are being overwhelmed with information and "asks," why would we need yet another publication?

The *MECLABS Digest* is different. It exists at the request of our own readers. MECLABS is a science institution; we are constantly experimenting and conducting research. Indeed, **the volume of our experimentation is so high** that it is difficult for marketers to keep up with our own discoveries.

This digest is designed to make it **simple for you to scan and find** the experiments and case studies that are especially useful. It is also **complimented by a directory** of all the content produced in Q1 of 2013 including:

- 24 MarketingSherpa Case Studies
- 37 MarketingSherpa How-to Articles
- 12 Charts of the Week, from 3 Benchmark Reports
- 37 MarketingExperiments Articles
- 12 B2B Lead Roundtable Articles
- 8 Video Presentations

Three of the more **interesting case studies** are listed below:

- Page 37 - When Should You Send an Email? - How one of the largest banks in the world discovered the optimal time
- Page 97 - The Web as a Living Laboratory: The Three Most Important Discoveries from Over a Decade of Experimentation
- Page 17 - Do Optional Form Fields Help (or Hurt) Conversion? - How one required form field was hindering a 275% lift in conversion

We trust you will find this digest helpful. The goal is to **put all of the recent research at your fingertips**. We are grateful for your trust.

Flint McGlaughlin
Managing Director, MECLABS

P.S. If you find this research useful, consider telling a friend. Almost all of our content can be accessed at no cost, and every time you tell someone, you help us build a community of marketers who are honestly trying to understand what truly works.

MECLABS Research Digest

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content by Topic

SITE OPTIMIZATION

EMAIL MARKETING

MECLABS Research Digest

MECLABS Research Digest

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Index of Content by Type

In addition to the Table of Contents, we have indexed the articles by type to better assist you in finding the content you need.

MECLABS Research Digest

Web Clinics

x

Dear Marketer,

The *MECLABS Quarterly Research Digest* is a snapshot of the research and content across MECLABS.

In this report, you will find a collection of our most popular work from the first quarter of 2013. When we developed this Digest, we wanted to include the most useful content published by the MECLABS' brands.

To do that, we turned to our readers to find out what pieces of content they have found most helpful over the quarter. Our reader's social shares helped us to create this diverse, valuable digest of our most popular content:

- **MarketingExperiments** – The most popular post of each month, as featured in the MarketingExperiments Best of the Month newsletter

- **MarketingSherpa** – The most-shared case study or how-to article of each week, as featured in the MarketingSherpa Best of the Week newsletter

- **B2B Lead Roundtable Blog** – The most-tweeted post of each month

Additionally, we included a special report for each MarketingExperiments Web clinic published during the quarter. You'll gain access to the latest research findings, along with actionable optimization advice, in these Web clinic reports.

In the appendix of this report, you will find two additional resources:

- **Marketing Research Charts of the Week** – A section dedicated to MarketingSherpa's benchmark studies, where we include all the research featured in the weekly MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week newsletter.

- **MECLABS Content Directory** – This comprehensive directory allows you to scan through the titles and summaries of every piece of MECLABS content to find additional works that could help your marketing efforts.

While this is a collection of our most popular work, not every piece may be relevant to your situation. That's why we developed a two-part table of contents to help you effortlessly find information important to your specific needs.

- **Topic of Content** – Easily filter through the table of contents by looking up the most relevant areas for your marketing campaigns.

- **Content Type** – Search our content by type, from case studies, how-to articles and Web clinics.

We hope this collection will be beneficial to you in your marketing efforts, and help you discover new learnings as you implement and test the tactics and strategies you find in this Digest.

Happy reading,

Selena Blue
Reporter, MECLABS
Selena.Blue@MECLABS.com

Creative Swipe Files

Here is a quick look at the creative executions for the experiments that you will find throughout this issue of the Digest. You can use this quick digest as a swipe file while you brainstorm new creatives for your marketing campaigns. And you can read about the full research behind these creative executions in the Major Experiment Briefings in this issue.

EXPERIMENT #1: EMAIL COPYWRITING TONE

Experiment ID: TP2083
Location: MarketingExperiments Research Library
Research Partner: ActiveNetwork

Research Notes:
    Background: ActiveNetwork is a large event management software provider
    Goal: To increase total lead inquiries (phone calls + form sign-ups) from visitors who abandoned the free trial sign-up process
    Primary Research Question: Which email tone will result in a higher rate of lead inquiries?
    Test Design: A/B single factor split
Read more on page 56

TREATMENT #1

Subject Line: Your Free RegOnline Access

Dear [Name],

<u>You're just one step away</u> from getting FREE access to RegOnline, our award winning Event Registration and Management Software. Quickly make an event website, try our event marketing tools, build a registration form template or even generate custom name badges.

<u>Click here</u> to finish your profile and get started. Your personal profile is kept secure and **we promise NEVER to sell or misuse your information**.

Have questions? Call us direct at 1-800-XXX-XXXX -- we can even set up your free access over the phone.

Sincerely,

Jon Powell
Customer Service Representative
RegOnline
Direct: 1-800-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX
<u>jon.powell@RegOnline.com</u>

TREATMENT #2

Subject Line: Your Free RegOnline Access

Hi [First],

I noticed that you started the process of getting free access to RegOnline but weren't able to finish. Are you concerned about giving out your phone number? Are you worried about high pressure sales tactics or mandatory contracts?

We believe our product sells itself, so **we're just here to provide you with whatever assistance you need in getting your event up and running** - in whatever way works best for you. We promise NEVER to sell or misuse your information.

Call me direct at 1-800-XXX-XXXX and I can help get you rolling. If you'd rather just try again online, use this link instead.

Thank you in advance for your trust!

Sincerely,

[Name of Representative]
Customer Service Representative
RegOnline
Direct: 1-800-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX
[name]@RegOnline.com

EXPERIMENT #2: EMAIL SEND TIME

Experiment ID: TP2087
Location: MarketingExperiments Research Library
Research Partner: *(Protected)*

Research Notes:

Background: A large financial institution offering a financial service requiring an application to consumers

Goal: To increase the number of completed applications

Primary Research Question: Of the send times tested, which time will result in the highest rate of completed applications to delivered emails?

Test Design: A/B multifactor sequential test
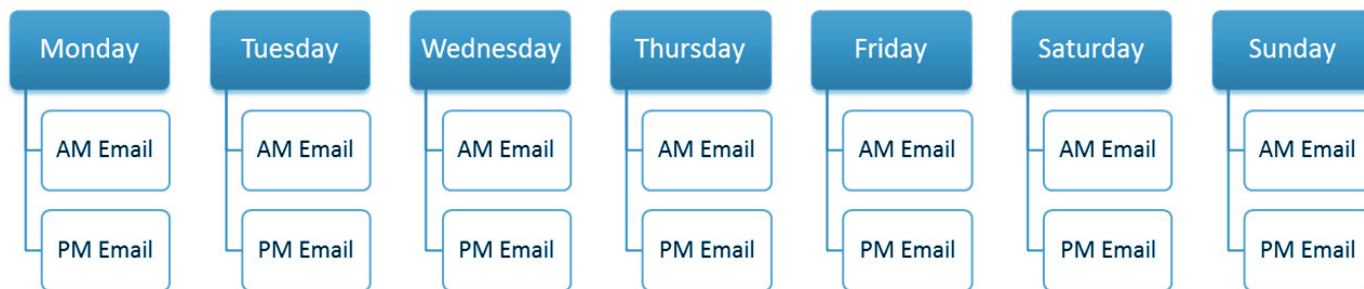
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM Email	AM Email	AM Email	AM Email	AM Email	AM Email	AM Email
PM Email	PM Email	PM Email	PM Email	PM Email	PM Email	PM Email
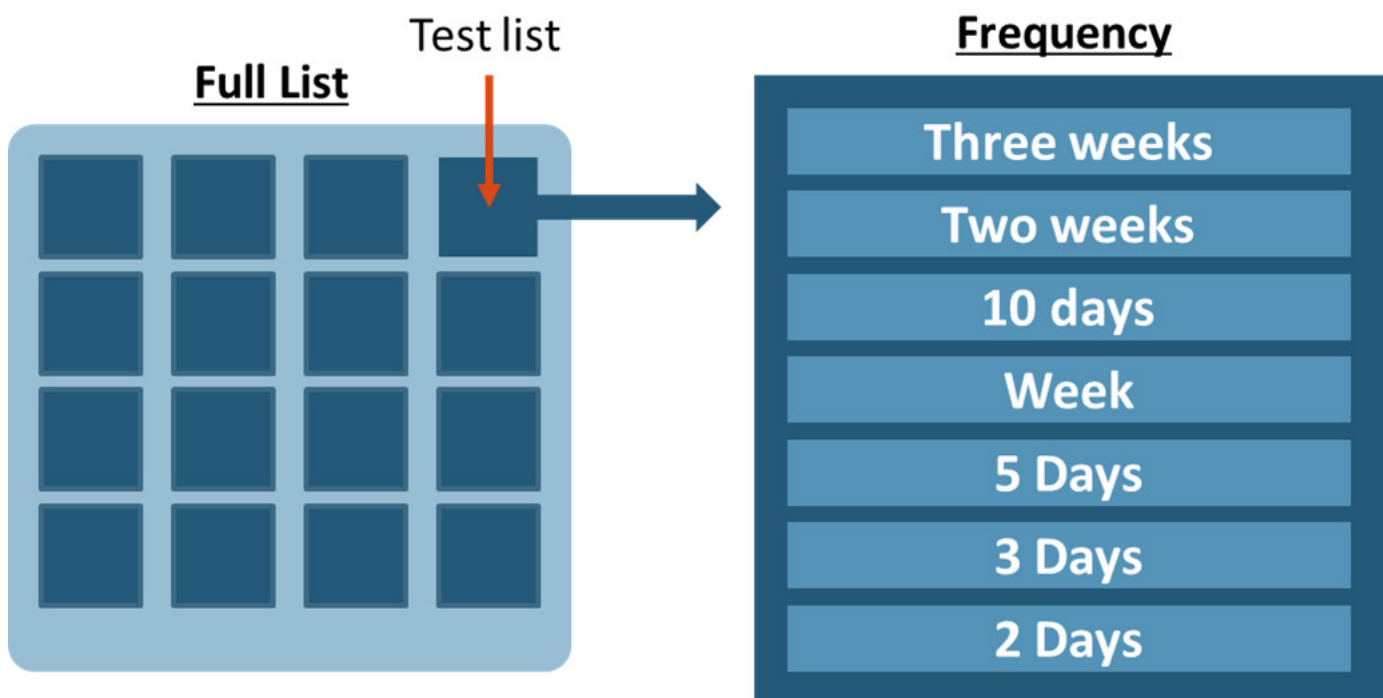
EXPERIMENT #4: Email Messaging

Experiment ID: *(Protected)*
Location: MarketingExperiments Research Library
Research Partner: *(Protected)*

Research Notes:

Background: The largest physician-only social network, which offers its knowledgebase to pharmaceutical companies

Goal: To increase email clickthrough from a rented list to the landing page

Primary Research Question: Which email will generate the highest clickthrough rate?

Test Design: Multifactor sequential (year-to-year) test

Read more on page 67

CONTROL

TREATMENT

EXPERIMENT #5: VALUE PROPOSITION

Experiment ID: *(Protected)*
Location: MarketingExperiments Research Library
Research Partner: *(Protected)*

Research Notes:

Background: Provides end-to-end market solutions for small- and medium-sized businesses

Goal: Increase the email capture rate of an online form

Primary Research Question: Which page will obtain the most form submissions?

Test Design: A/B multifactor split test that focused on improving overall communication of the value proposition

CONTROL

TREATMENT

EXPERIMENT #6: OPTIONAL FORM FIELDS

Experiment ID: TP1416
Location: MarketingExperiments Research Library
Research Partner: *(Protected)*

Research Notes:

Background: A large luxury-home builder seeking to attract high-end home buyers
Goal: To increase the number of leads
Primary Research Question: Which form page will generate the most leads?
Test Design: A/B single factorial split
Read more on page 17

CONTROL

TREATMENT

EXPERIMENT #7: PPC Landing Pages

Experiment ID: TP1306(b)
Location: MarketingExperiments Research Library
Research Partner: (Protected)

Research Notes:
Background: Provides end-to-end market solutions for small- and medium-sized businesses
Goal: Increase the email capture rate of an online form
Primary Research Question: Which page will obtain the most form submissions?
Test Design: A/B multi-factor split test
Read more on page 127

Control

TREATMENT

SITE OPTIMIZATION

DO OPTIONAL FORM FIELDS HELP (OR HURT) CONVERSION?
HOW ONE REQUIRED FORM FIELD WAS HINDERING A 275% LIFT IN CONVERSION

- Content created by Austin McCraw, Jon Powell, Paul Cheney
- Research conducted by Tony Doty, Taylor Kennedy, Boris Grinkot, Andy Mott, Jon Powell, and Martha Hubbard

The British philosopher Bertrand Russell once said, "In all affairs, it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted." Often, as we teach and lecture around the world, we receive varying questions from attendees and students, but there is one (somewhat unexpected) question we receive over and over again. The question is this: Does making a form field optional help improve conversion?

We have established through testing that removing form fields almost always increases conversion. But what if, rather than eliminating a form field, you simply made it optional? What is the effect on conversion in this situation? Or what about adding red asterisks to form fields that are truly required? Does that help or cause anxiety?

In this article, we will "hang a question mark" on this long-time marketing staple. We will analyze some recent experiments to help us peer into the mind of prospects as the engage with an online form. We will strive for a cogent methodology for knowing when (and when not) to make a form field required or optional. But first, let's review a recent experiment.

AN EXPERIMENT:
HOW ONE OPTIONAL FORM FIELD INCREASED CONVERSION BY 275%

This experiment, Test Protocol (TP) 1416, was conducted for, and in partnership with, a luxury-home builder seeking to attract high-end home buyers. The goal of the test was to increase the total number of leads coming from a particular form page, and the actual test was an extremely simple A/B single factorial test, which basically means we tested two pages against each other, and only one variable was changed on the second page.

The original page, as you can see in **Figure 1.1**, was already a simple form, having only four fields: First Name, Last Name, Email and Phone. All four fields required a response. In our treatment page (visible in **Figure 1.2**), we made the "Phone" field optional by putting the word "Optional" in parenthesis next to the name of the field. That is the whole extent of the changes we made to the form and the page as a whole.

Figure 1.1

Figure 1.2

Would this small change impact conversion at all?

Yes, the treatment page outperformed the control in terms of conversion by 275%. You can see the full results in **Figure 1.3**. What you need to understand is that by simply making one form field optional, the treatment was able to increase the total lead flow by 275%.

Design	Conversion Rate
Control	1.96%
Treatment	7.35%
Relative Difference	**275%**

Figure 1.3

THREE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES FOR OPTIMIZING FORMS

These results from the experiment above are powerful, but there is something deeper here to learn about the use of form fields. There are underlying principles about form fields that can be drawn from this test and many others we have conducted like it. Understanding these essential principles will arm marketers with the ability to determine when (or when not) to make a form field optional.

KEY PRINCIPLE #1: **Cost doesn't just exist where monetary transaction exists.**

It is easy for us to deceive ourselves in regards to our forms and offers. For instance, when we give something away for "free," we can slip into a mindset that says, "It's free. There is no cost to filling out this form." But in reality this is not the case. Hardly anything on the Internet is truly free. Any time you ask a prospect to spend time doing something (i.e., filling out a form, reading a headline, etc.) or give up some information (i.e., their name, email, address, phone number, etc.) there is an implied cost. They are giving up something, namely time and/or information.

To exemplify this concept, think about our MarketingExperiments webinars. Thanks to our sponsors, we are able to provide this valuable content to marketers around the globe for no monetary cost. But in another very real sense, they are not free at all. Attendees need to sacrifice thirty-five minutes of their schedule with us. Additionally, they need to fill out their names and emails to register for the Web clinic. When registering for the webinar, attendees engaged in an (likely) unconscious cost/benefit analysis, as portrayed in **Figure 2.1**. They had to decide whether the content they would gain access to by registering

$$Vf_{Ac} - Cf_{Ac} = Nf$$
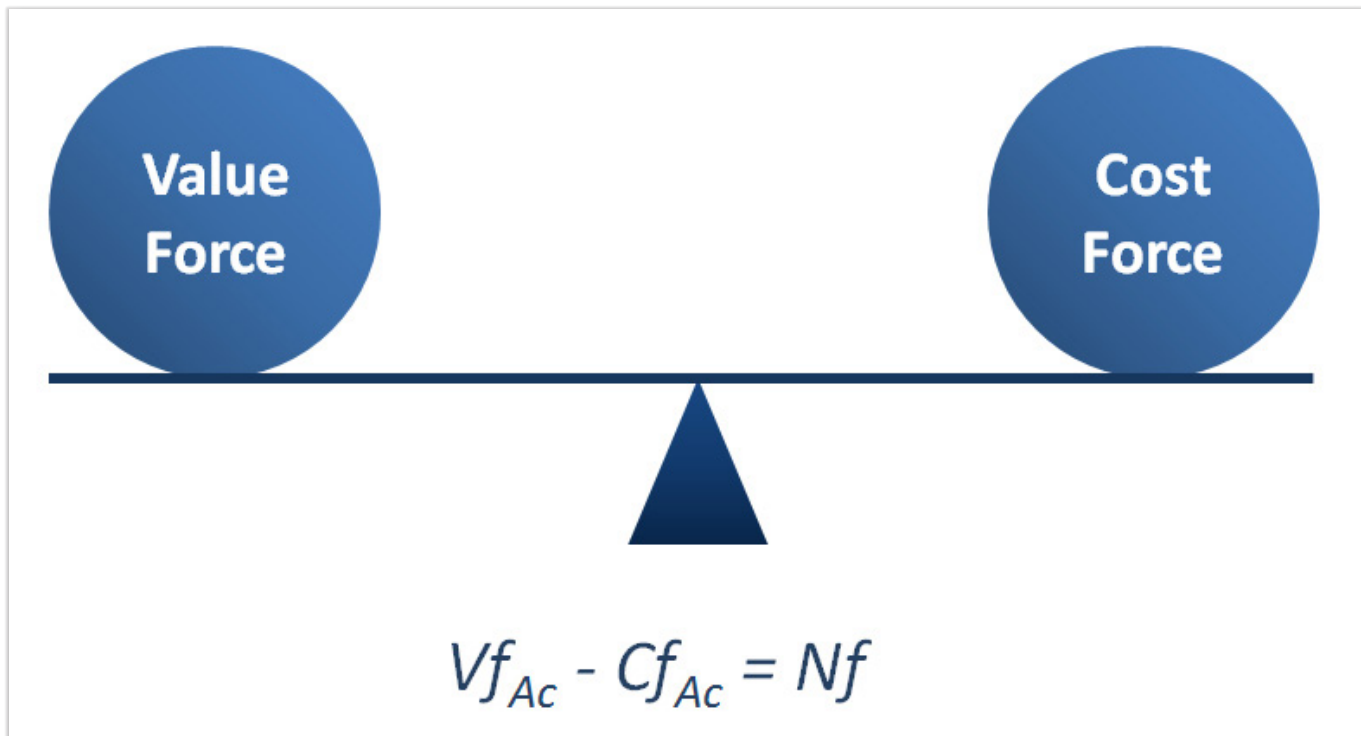
Figure 2.1

would be worth more than the cost of giving up their name, email and time. What we forget sometimes, however, is that our customers experience the exact same cost/benefit analysis every time they are presented with a form for a "free" product.

How then should we approach our own forms? We need to realize that only by becoming our customers, putting ourselves in their shoes, can we accurately see the costs facing our prospects in our forms. **The only way we're going to be able to help them, is if we become them.**

If we were to put up a form on the MarketingExperiments website that just said, "Enter your name," no one would fill it out. Looking at that form from the prospect's perspective, it is easy to see why. We would be offering no benefit in exchange for the cost of entering their name. This is obviously an extreme example, but this concept plays into so many of the forms we test at MECLABS. Either the marketer is overestimating the value of their offer to the prospect, underestimating the cost of the form to the prospect, or unaware that there is, in fact, a cost to the prospect. Our task then is to figure out how to balance the costs and benefits of all of our forms.

But how can we do this? Key Principle #2 gives us some insight.

KEY PRINCIPLE #2: There are two factors that impact the cost as it relates to requesting a prospect to give up information: the *amount* and *nature* of the information required.

Amount

We mentioned earlier that we had run previous tests that taught us that there is a correlation between fewer form fields and higher conversion. This is the "amount" portion of this principle. The greater the amount of information you ask for, the higher cost there is to the prospect. Let's look at a few of those previous experiments.

In **Figure 3.1**, you can see two forms we ran side by side. The control had 20 forms for the prospect to fill in. In our treatment, we condensed that down to four fields. As you can see, this resulted in a 189% increase in conversion. All we did was cut down the form to the bare essentials needed by the company to create a lead.

Figure 3.1

Figure 5.1

Nature

The second factor that impacts the perceived cost of a form is the nature of the information. This concept of the "nature" of information can seem a little theoretical at first blush, but the truth of this principle can be clearly grasped with a little explanation.

Not all form fields are created equal. Asking for a name is not the same as asking for a social security number. One has a much higher perceived cost. You tell strangers your name. You rarely tell anyone your social security number. It is helpful to picture form fields as existing on a sliding scale, like the one is **Figure 6.1**, which we have developed through testing. If you are asking for a social security number on a form, you need to have something incredibly valuable on the other side to tip that balance in your favor, because the cost is so high.

Nature of Information Cost Scale
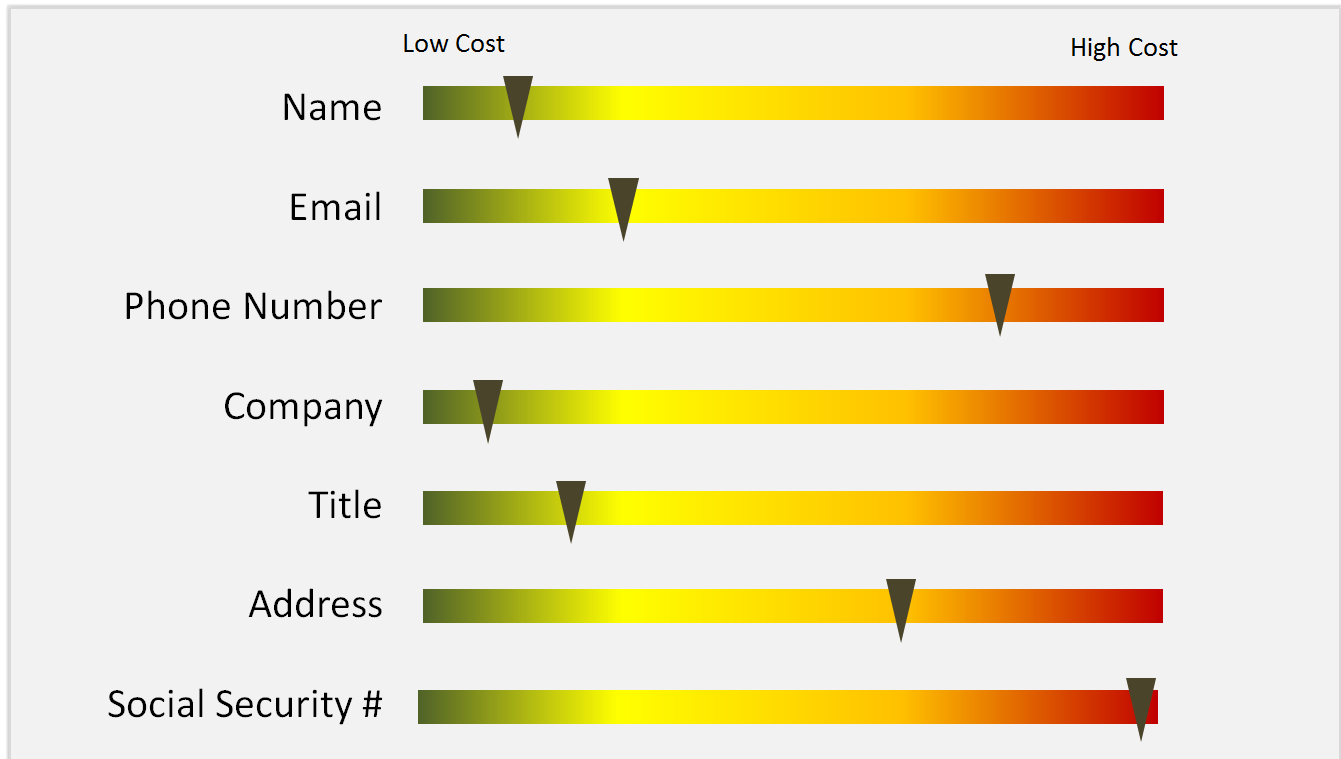
Figure 6.1

Going back to the experiment at the beginning of the article, we were able to achieve such significant results not just because we made a form field optional (we did), but because we made the right form field optional, namely the phone number field. Phone number is a high anxiety field, and by eliminating that anxiety, we greatly improved conversion.

This brings us to a question that has probably already occurred to you about this idea of optional fields: Doesn't making a form field optional hurt lead quality?

This is an intensely relevant and important question to marketers everywhere, and so it is the subject of our third Key Principle.

KEY PRINCIPLE #3: Marketers can leverage costs (both amount and nature) in order to determine the optimal number of required form fields.

This principle has immense implications for marketers because it means that cost is not just something to be minimized, but also a tool that can be used to optimize their lead generation tactics. The way we like to explain this concept is with an illustration of two dials (**Figure 7.1**), one representing quantity and the other representing quality.

Figure 7.1

Using optional form fields or a two-page form system, you can effectively turn these dials up or down to either increase the quantity of new leads or the quality of new leads. We will use the example of a two-page form to illustrate this principle.

Look at **Figure 7.2**. In this variation of the two dials, you have an equal number of fields on each page. In the first dial, you have the essential fields you need to create a lead. In the second, you have more qualifying (and likely more costly) fields. Even if a prospect balks at filling out the qualifying fields and abandons the form, you have still captured his less costly contact information (likely email) and can use this to enter him into a nurturing process.

Now, imagine that your sales department comes to you and begs you more leads. You can simply adjust your dials to increase the quantity of your leads, at the potential expense of the quality of the leads. You can see an example of this in **Figure 7.3**. Maybe you just require name and email on the first page, and then get to the qualifying information on the second page.

Form Page 1   **Form Page 2**

Figure 7.2
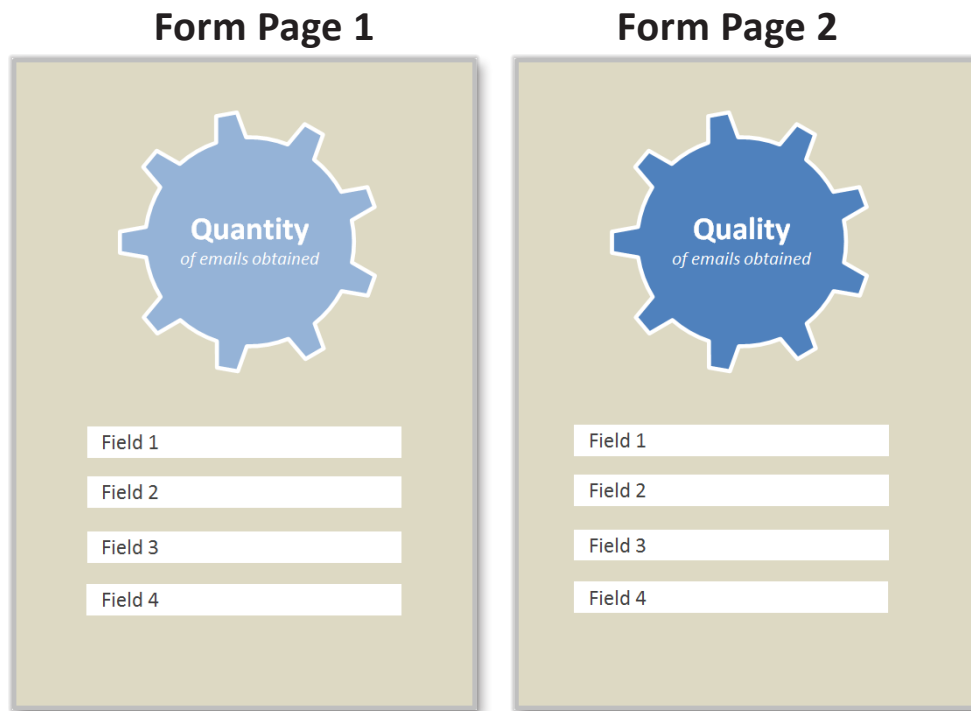
Form Page 1   **Form Page 2**
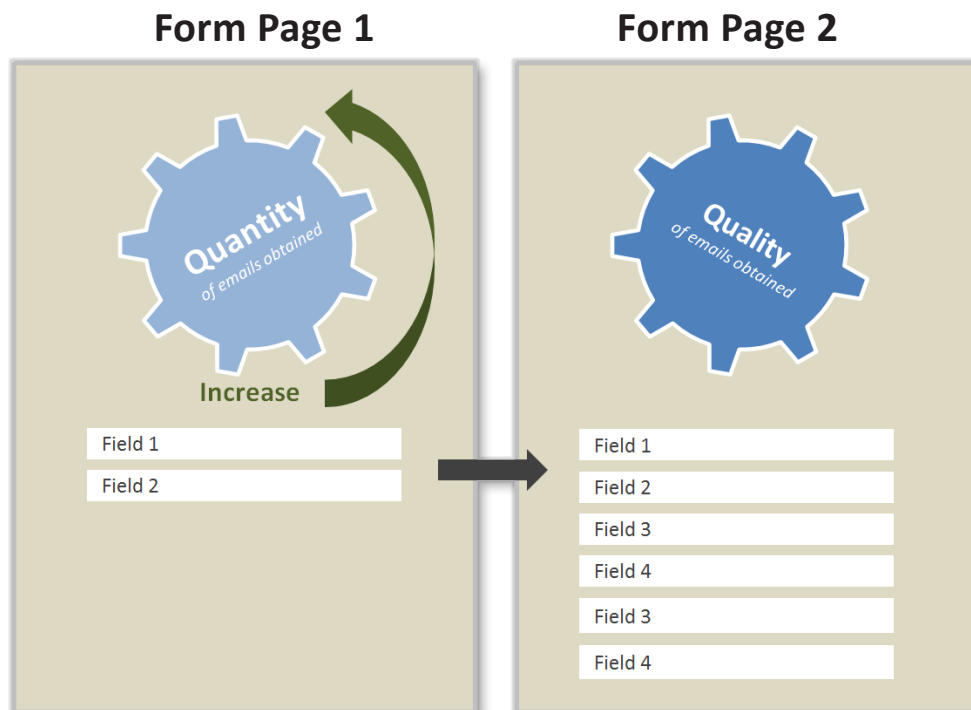
Output: More leads, lower quality

Figure 7.3

Conversely, if Sales then comes to you saying, "We have so many new leads! Is there anyway we can get fewer, but more qualified leads?" You have the ability to meet that request, too. You can adjust the "cost" dials to require more qualifying information upfront (**Figure 7.4**). This will depress overall conversion, but result in a higher quality lead.

Form Page 1   Form Page 2

Decrease

Quantity *of emails obtained*

Quality *of emails obtained*

Field 1
Field 2
Field 3
Field 4
Field 3
Field 4

Field 1
Field 2

Output: Less leads, higher quality
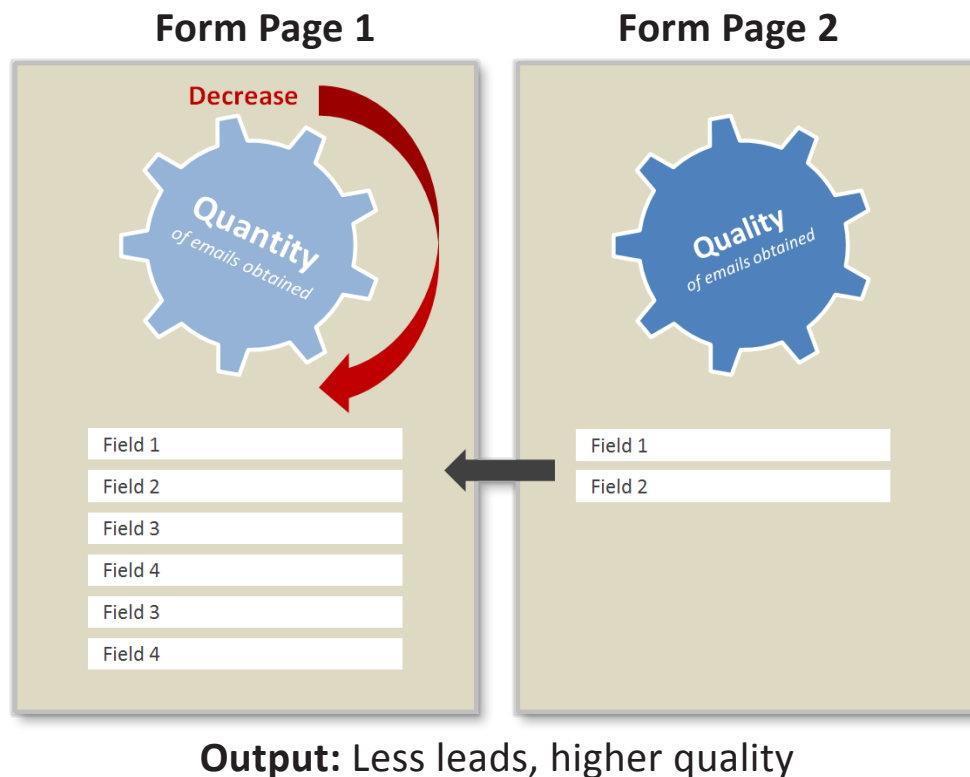
Figure 7.4

Let's look at a couple of real experiments that highlight these concepts. In TP1148, we were tasked with helping a company increase the volume of leads produced by its email capture form. However, within this email capture form, the company also wanted to qualify the leads to help its sales staff close the leads. You can see the control and treatment forms in **Figure 8.1**.

The control was one long form requiring all information to be included before the form could be submitted. In our treatment, we broke the form into two parts: one that captured the email address and name, and a second that qualified the lead. The control form produced 157 qualified leads during the test period. The treatment produced 155 qualified leads during the same period, but added an additional 77 non-qualified leads (leads that filled out the first page and not the second). So without giving up a statistically significant percentage of qualified leads, we were able to add 48% more leads to this company's email list (see **Figure 8.2**).
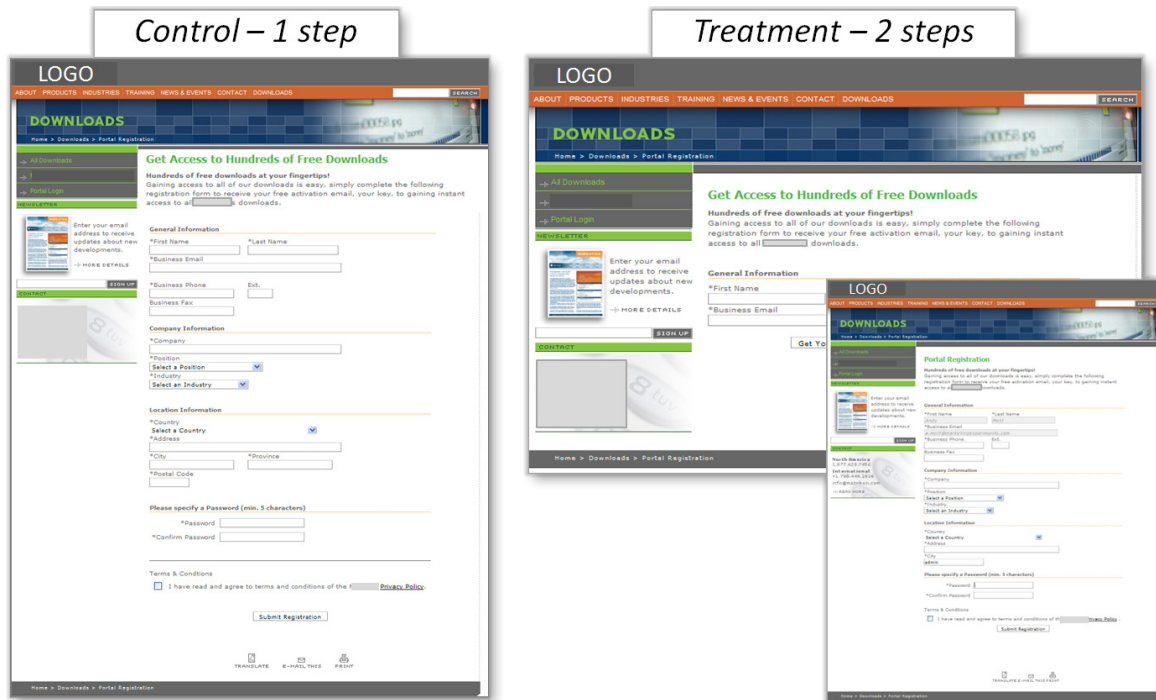
Figure 8.1

48% Increase in Total Leads
The new capture process increased lead rate by 47.7%

Capture Stages		Relative Difference
Control	(Stage 1)	0
	(Stage 2)	157
	(Total)	**157**
Treatment	(Stage 1)	77
	(Stage 2)	155
	(Total)	**232**
Relative Difference		**47.7%**

Figure 8.2

In our final experiment, TP1636, we partnered with a large media company to see if we could help it increase the number of high-quality leads they were generating with their online form. As opposed to the single-factorial test we discussed at the beginning of this article, this test was multi-factorial, meaning multiple variables were involved in the redesign of this form (see **Figure 9.1**). The reason for the many changes was that we were trying for a radical, but incredibly valuable, goal. We wanted to increase both the quantity AND the quality of the leads. This is obviously the ideal result for any marketer, so these results should be of particular interest to us.

Treatment (Form)

- We increased the total number of fields increase by four *(5 new fields were made optional)*

- We added copy that clearly explains value for filling out the form

- We added a testimonial and security image added to reduce anxiety

- We grouped the form fields visually and provided explanation text for each.

- We infused value into the call-to-action itself.

Figure 9.1

There were five specific changes we made that should be noted, and you can see these visually highlighted in **Figure 9.2**.

1. We actually ADDED 4 total fields to the form. However, we also made 5 fields optional.
2. We added a few sentences of copy to the top of the form, communicating the value proposition of the form.
3. We placed a testimonial on the side of the form to decrease anxiety.
4. We grouped the fields into logical clusters and provided an explanation of why the information was needed.
5. We infused value into the call-to-action button (i.e., "Get My Report" rather than "Submit").

Figure 9.2

So, while we actually increased the amount of information gathering fields, we also took steps to alleviate the perceived cost of the form in ways outlines above. **The result was a 109% increase in highly qualified leads (see Figure 9.3).**

So if the dials are turned correctly, it is possible to actually turn them both up and produce a greater number of leads that are of a higher quality.

109% Increase in Total Leads
The treatment form generated a 109% increase in lead rate

Form Page	Clickthrough Rate (%)	Relative Difference	Statistical Level of Confidence
Control	6.49%	-	
Treatment	**13.54%**	**109%**	93%

Figure 9.3

Summary: A Simple Checklist for Optimizing Forms

To help you implement these principles into your daily marketing life, we have put together a checklist of reminders to guide you as you analyze, test, redesign and, ultimately, optimize your website forms. It is provided to you here, free of charge and form submission.

- **Have you eliminated (or made optional) as many unnecessary fields as possible?**

This has to do with the amount of information you require. Do you really need it? If not, eliminate the field (or make it optional).

- **Are the forms organized to reduce friction? Are they sequenced to the visitor's thought sequence?**

You want to ensure your forms are organized in a way that is intuitive. There have been cases where we have increased conversion simply by rearranging the forms fields.

- **Is your value proposition being expressed throughout the entire conversion process?**

You cannot assume that because a prospect reached your form, they are sold on WHY they should fill it out. Continue to express the value they will receive for filling out the form.

- **Have you provided clear justification for all the high-anxiety producing form fields? Do you have security seals? Privacy policy?**

Take all possible steps to increase trust with the prospect and reduce their anxiety.

- **Does your error messaging clearly lead your visitor to completing the form?**

Errors can cause users to get frustrated and abandon your form. Make sure the error messaging guides the prospect to the exact fields that need to be corrected.

The Principles of Effective Form Field Management

The three principles we have discussed allow you to improve your form conversion and customize it to the specific needs of your business.

Key Principle #1: Cost doesn't just exist where monetary transaction exists. Any time you ask a prospect to give up something (material or mental), there will be an **implicit/explicit cost**.

Key Principle #2: There are **two factors** that impact the cost as it relates to requesting a prospect to give up information.

- The **amount** of information required
- The **nature** of the information required

Key Principle #3: Marketers can leverage costs (both amount and nature) in order to determine the optimal number of required form fields.

If you have been taking the forms on your site for granted, it is time to "hang a question mark" on them, and use these principles to increase your conversion. If you are constantly looking for ways to generate more leads or higher quality leads from your forms, you now have a simple methodology to calibrate and control the quantity and quality of your leads.

A/B Testing: Changing 3 words results in 43% increase in funded accounts

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

Research Notes:

Background: This test was implemented in the secure section of a large financial institution's website. The offer was an up-sell for a savings account

Goal: To increase approved and funded savings accounts

Primary Research Question: Which link copy will result in the highest impression to funded account rate?

Test Design: A/B Single Factor Split

Control

Here is the original conversion path …
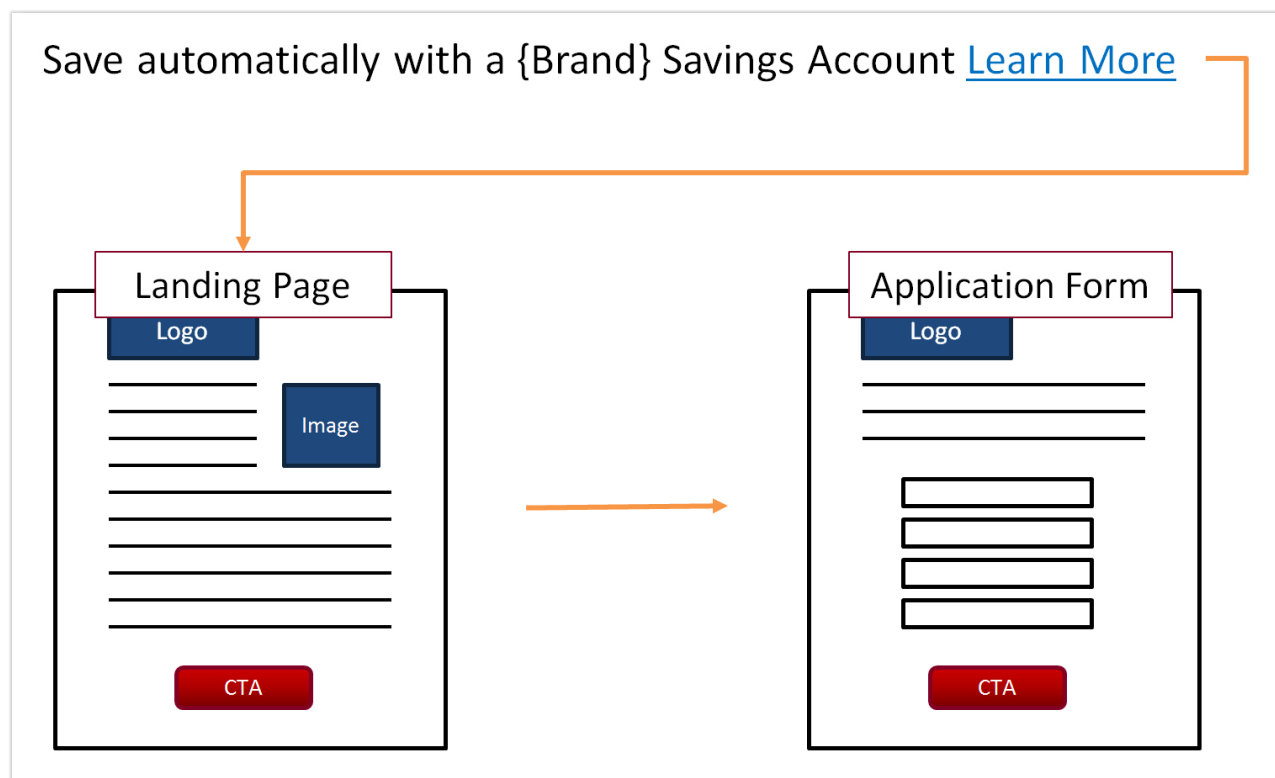
TREATMENT

After analyzing the path, the MECLABS team launched a single-factor test with a treatment that simply changed three words in a link. The only change in this test was the link text to begin the application process.

Save automatically with a {Brand} Savings Account Open an Account

Landing Page

Logo

Image

CTA

Application Form

Logo

CTA
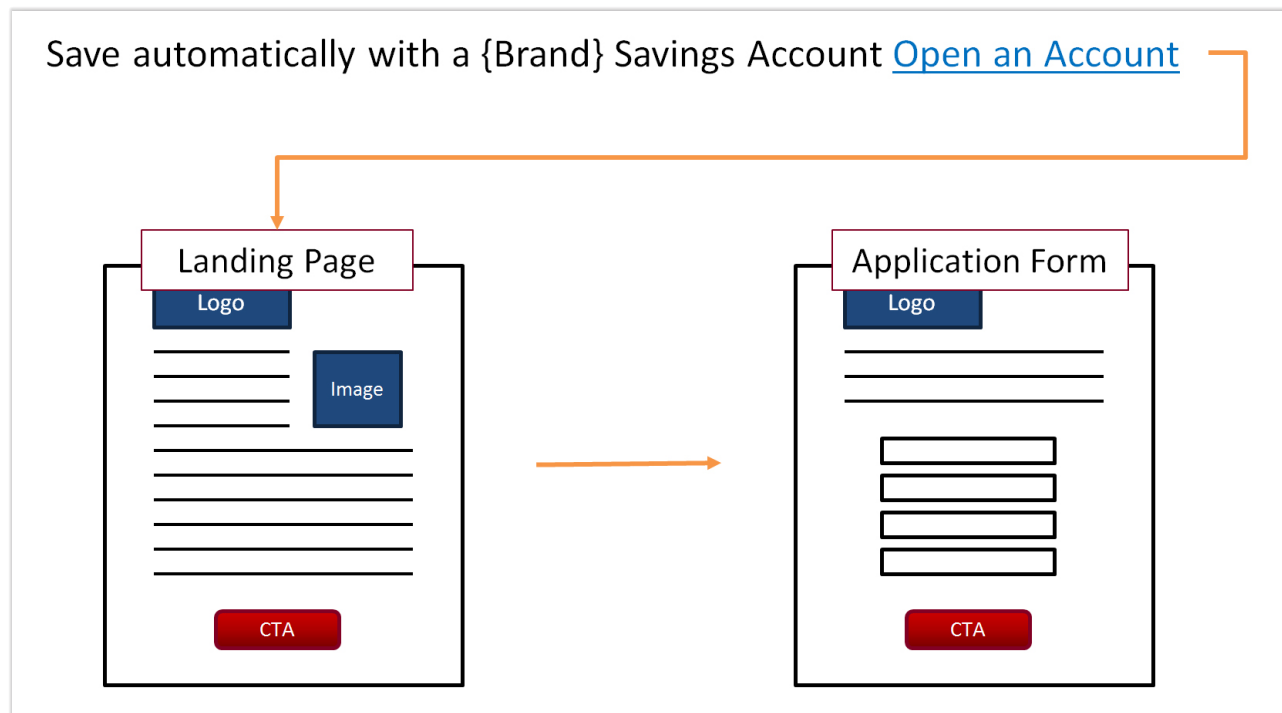
RESULTS

Version	CR	Rel. diff	Stat. Conf
Control Link: Learn More	3.0%*	-	-
Treatment Link: Open an Account	**4.3%***	**43.0%**	99%

Conversion rate has been anonymized to protect Research Partner.

By changing the copy in the link to communicate the more serious implication of opening an account, versus simply "learning more," the link attracted prospects with higher levels of motivation and resulted in a 43% increase in funded accounts.

EMAIL MARKETING

.... **Major Experiment Briefing**

WHEN SHOULD YOU SEND AN EMAIL?
HOW ONE OF THE LARGEST BANKS IN THE WORLD DISCOVERED WHEN TO SEND ITS EMAILS

- Content created by Flint McGlaughlin, Paul Cheney, Austin McCraw, Shaun Metzger
- Research conducted by Ashley Hanania, Heather Andruk, Bob Kemper, Gina Townsend, Jimmy Ellis, Aaron Rosenthal, Anand Shah and the Karmaloop team

With so many of the deadlines the average marketer must face, the question of when to send an email rarely carries with it the urgency to evoke action. In other words, we often don't have time to truly test the timing of our emails. **Often as marketers, we rely solely on best practices.** The problem is that when it comes to email timing, the best practices are all over the map.

According to MailerMailer, 3 a.m. is the best time to send an email.[i] MailChimp claims the best time is 2-5 p.m. [ii] And HubSpot claims weekends over weekdays. [iii] The list could go on … but the question remains: **When, really, is the best time to send an email? Does anyone know? Can I really know?**

In most cases, email send time is an easy change. We all know the difficulties of changing the programming of our conversion processes. We know the difficulties that can come from changing an email message itself. However, as we will see from the test below, changing the time of the day to send the email is one of the easiest things a marketer can do, and yet it can have a **significant impact on response rates**.[iv]

AN EXPERIMENT:
WHAT TIME OF THE DAY AND WEEK IS OPTIMAL FOR EMAIL SENDS?

The experiment that yielded the guiding principles for this article was test protocol 2087, which is available in our MECLABS library of experiments. The Research Partner was a very large financial institution, and the goal was to increase the number of completed applications produced by its email marketing campaign. The main question we sought to answer in the experiment was whether the time of day and time of week when the email was sent would impact the number of completed applications produced by the email, and, if so, what that impact would be.[v] Basically, of the send times tested, which would result in the highest rate of completed applications?

If you look at the chart in **Figure 1.1**, you will see the breakdown of when we sent emails for this experiment. There were 14 total emails sent during the week of the test, two per day at 3 a.m. and 3 p.m., resulting in 14 different paths to a completed application. Each email path has the same subject line and the same email body.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM Email	AM Email	AM Email	AM Email	AM Email	AM Email	AM Email
PM Email	PM Email	PM Email	PM Email	PM Email	PM Email	PM Email
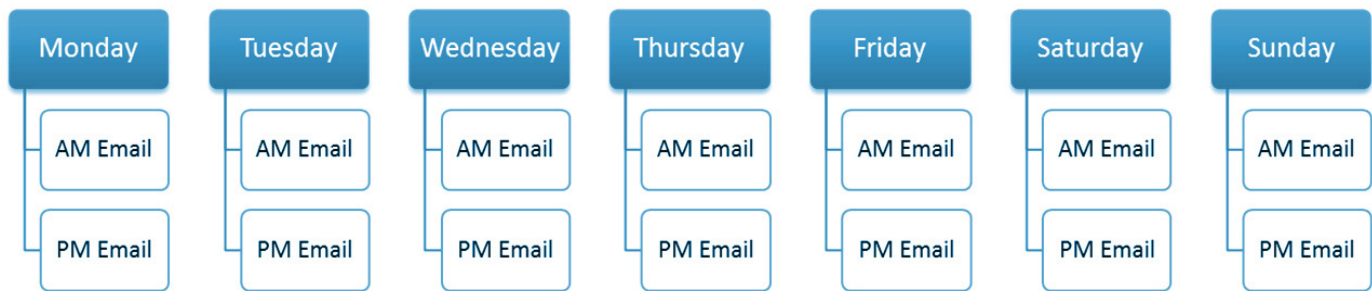
Figure 1.1

First, we need to look at the results and see whether or not we can make a verified statement regarding time of day. Is there a significant difference between an email sent at 3 a.m. and one sent at 3 p.m.? It turns out there is: **The emails sent at 3 p.m. outperformed the emails sent at 3 a.m. by 13.5%.**[vi] [**1.2 – Test Results**]

13.5% Increase in clickthrough rate
Sending at 3:00 PM increased clickthrough rate by at least 13.5%

Time of Day	Clickthrough Rate (%)	Relative Difference	Statistical Level of Confidence
3:00 AM	1.076%	-	-
3:00 PM	**1.220%**	**13.5%**	**99%**

Figure 1.2

That is a significant increase simply by sending an email at the right time of day. So that leads us to a couple more questions: What day of the week performed best? You can see the full results breakdown in **Figure 1.3**. The days increased in effectiveness as the week went on, in this order:

1. Tuesday
2. Monday
3. Thursday
4. Friday
5. Wednesday
6. Saturday
7. Sunday

Sunday, the highest converting day, outperformed, Tuesday, the weakest link, by 23.2%.

23.2% Increase in clickthrough rate
Sending on Sunday increased clickthrough rate by 23.2% over Tuesday

Day (in order of performance)	Clickthrough Rate (%) *	Relative Difference	Statistical Level of Confidence
1. Tuesday	10.47%	-	-
2. Monday	10.90%	4.1%	72%
3. Thursday	11.01%	5.1%	82%
4. Friday	11.59%	10.7%	99%
5. Wednesday	11.64%	11.2%	99%
6. Saturday	11.84%	13.1%	99%
7. Sunday	**12.90%**	**23.2%**	99%

Figure 1.3

Why did Sunday afternoon perform best? Based on the company we were working with, the industry it is in and its product, we were able to formulate some tentative conclusions as to why this test played out the way it did:

- There are less distractions on a Sunday.
- The advent of mobile technology makes email accessible 24/7.[vii]
- The personal nature of financial products causes higher clickthrough outside of work.

Once we have these tentative conclusions in place, we can begin to **test** them, further refine our discoveries, and fully **optimize** the email cycles.

Now, before you go off and start sending all of your emails on the weekend, it is important to note that we have done similar email timing testing like this with other organizations, and the results were hardly the same. This leads us to **three key principles** (based on testing across 1 billion email sends) on the optimal timing of an email that transcends this one test.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR OPTIMIZING EMAIL TIMING

Key Principle #1: **There is no "one-size-fits-all" time/frequency for an email send.**

As with many marketing and business studies, the ideal send time for emails will vary based on your specific situation. However, as we will see in a moment, there are fundamental truths that we can use to help our intuition place us in the right zone. And once we are in the right zone, we can begin to test and optimize.

Key Principle #2: **The universal goal of email timing is to synchronize your email's delivery with the cognitive psychology of the customer's purchase cycle.**

While there is no "one-size-fits-all" answer for specific timing, a universal principle can guide our thinking. Our ideal send time and frequency will have a direct correlation to how often the customer actually needs the product.

Key Principle #3: **There are 5 consistent factors from campaign to campaign that will impact your customer's purchase cycle:**

- **Decision cycle**
- **Utility**
- **Relevance**
- **Nature of product**
- **Expectations**

More specifically, in attempting to synchronize with the customer's purchase cycle, we have discovered these five factors that impact this cycle. We can use these to fine-tune our email campaigns in order to maximize the response and revenue return we see from them. These factors are consistent across all campaigns and industries, though the specifics will vary, so every marketer stands to gain from investigating these factors and applying the data to their email marketing strategy.[viii]

Now, let's look more deeply at each of these factors.

THE 5 CONSISTENT FACTORS THAT IMPACT A CUSTOMER'S PURCHASE CYCLE

Factor #1: Decision Cycle

A decision cycle is based on the period of time between purchases for your customers. For example, there is a short decision cycle for products like milk and deodorant, and a long decision cycle for products like car tires and renter's insurance. Now, here is the Key Principle we must know about decision cycles in relation to email frequency.

Key Principle: The optimal frequency of an email is directly related to the decision cycle of the offer (how often a decision is required) – the shorter the cycle, the greater the frequency.

To illustrate this principle, let us turn to a case study. The experiment itself is protected, but we may say that it was conducted for a large e-commerce company, and there is a great chance you receive emails from it every day. The company asked us to determine how its email frequency was impacting its results. While our marketing intuition told us we didn't need to test because our own inboxes were proof the company was sending far too many emails, scientific heads prevailed and we developed a MECLABS certified experiment to engage this question.

Our study was designed to decipher an email frequency that was optimal for this company. In **Figure 2.1**, you will see a chart that exemplifies optimal frequency (i.e., where total revenue and unsubscribes are at the ideal ratio). That ratio is where revenue is going up but your unsubscribed rate is not significantly increased at the expense of your revenue. We wanted to know whether sending more emails would continue to drive revenue without intensifying the rate of unsubscribes, so we took a segment of its very large subscriber base (more than a billion emails a year) and we segmented that group into seven different email frequencies as you can see in **Figure 2.2**. The frequencies were as follows.

An email every:
- 3 weeks
- 2 weeks
- 10 days
- Week
- 5 days
- 3 days
- 2 days
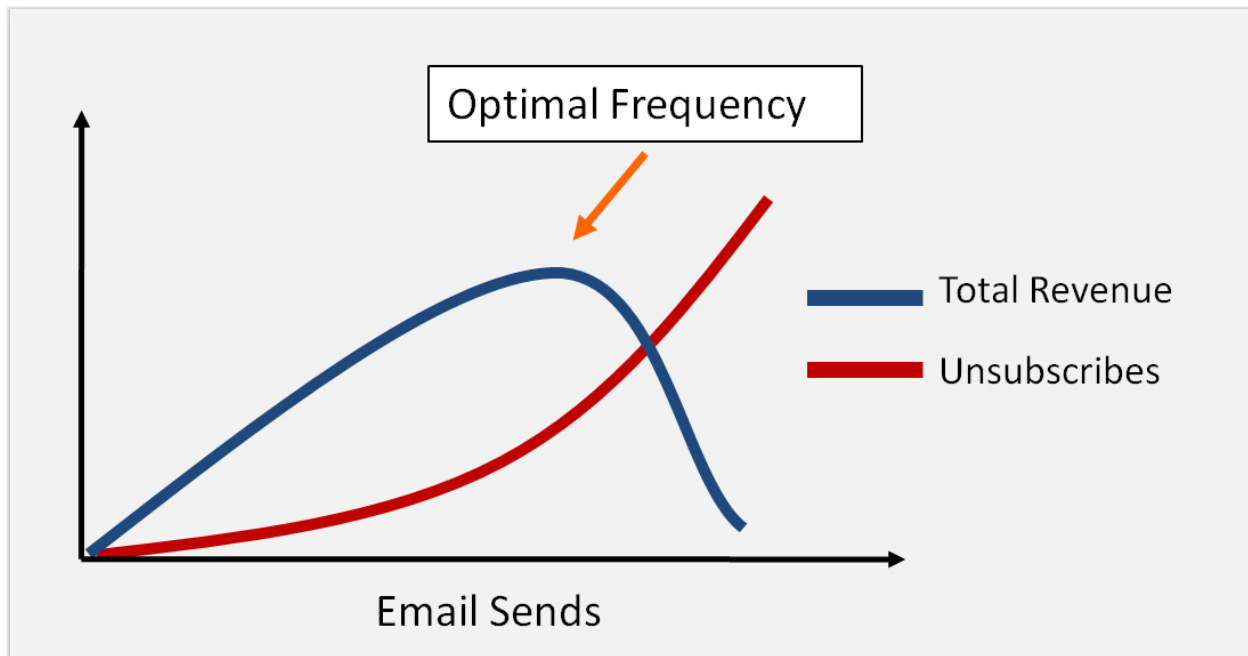
Figure 2.1
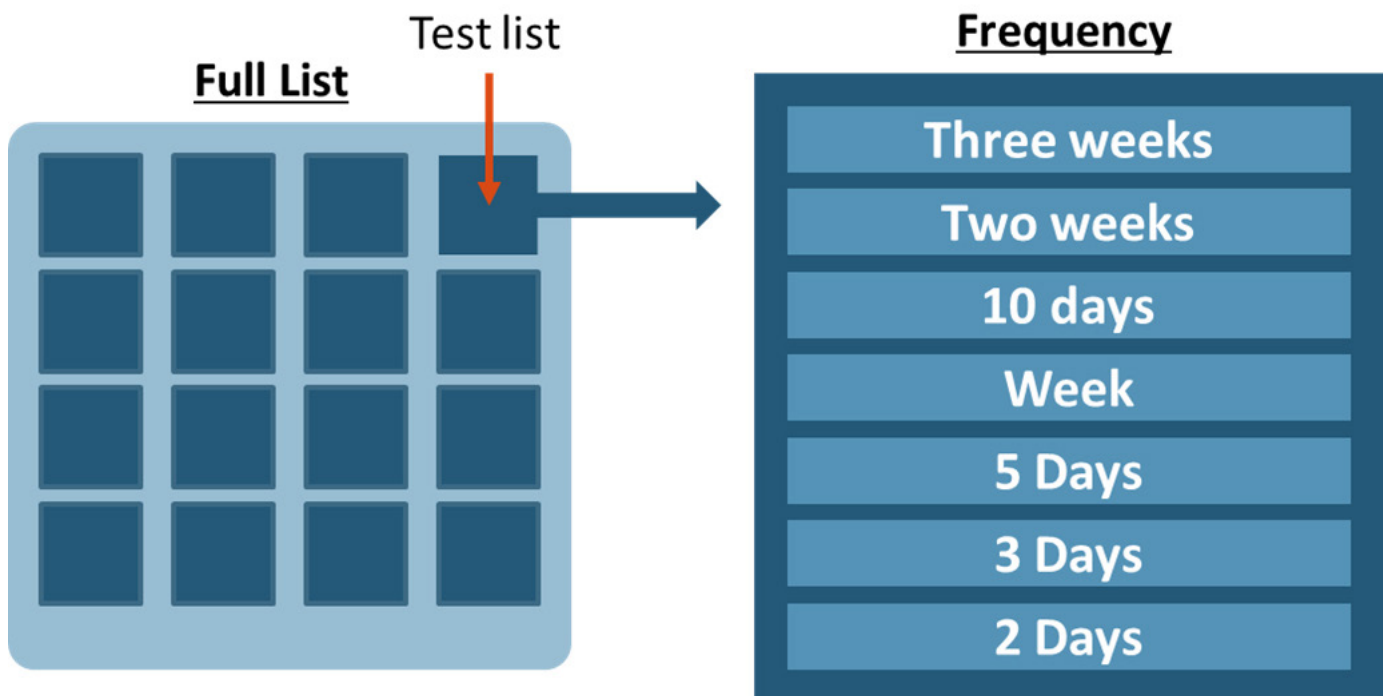
Figure 2.2

What we found was stunning to us and a resounding endorsement for testing our marketing intuitions.[ix] As you can see in the charts in **Figure 2.3** and **Figure 2.4**, as the frequency of emails went up, so did the revenue coming from the emails. More importantly, the rate of unsubscribes remained level with the incoming revenue.
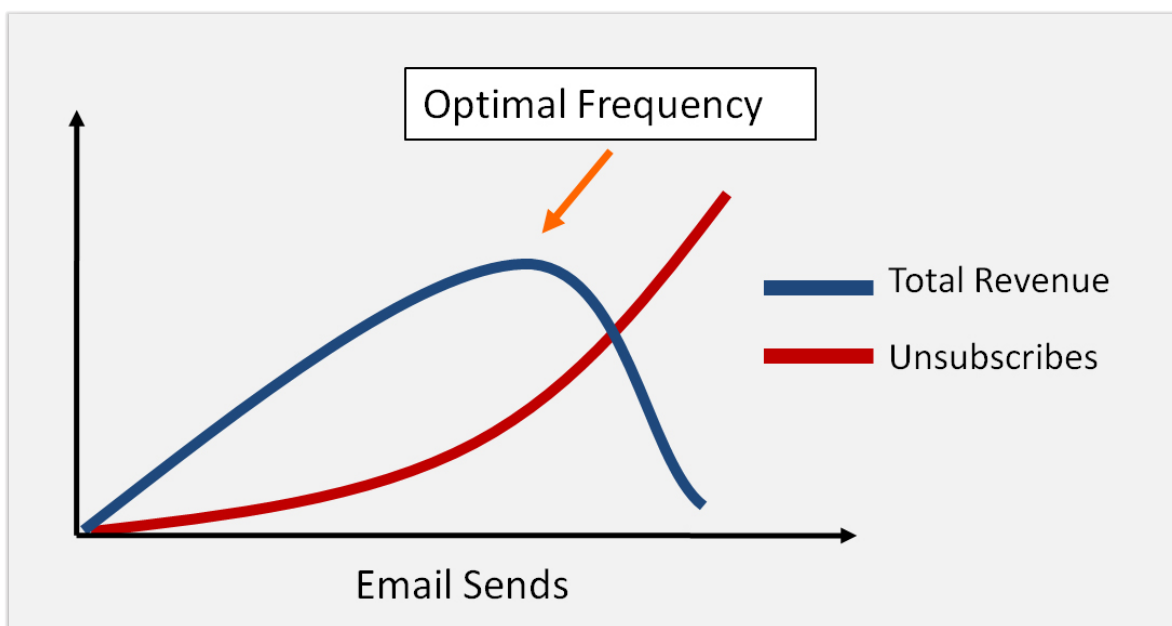
Figure 2.3
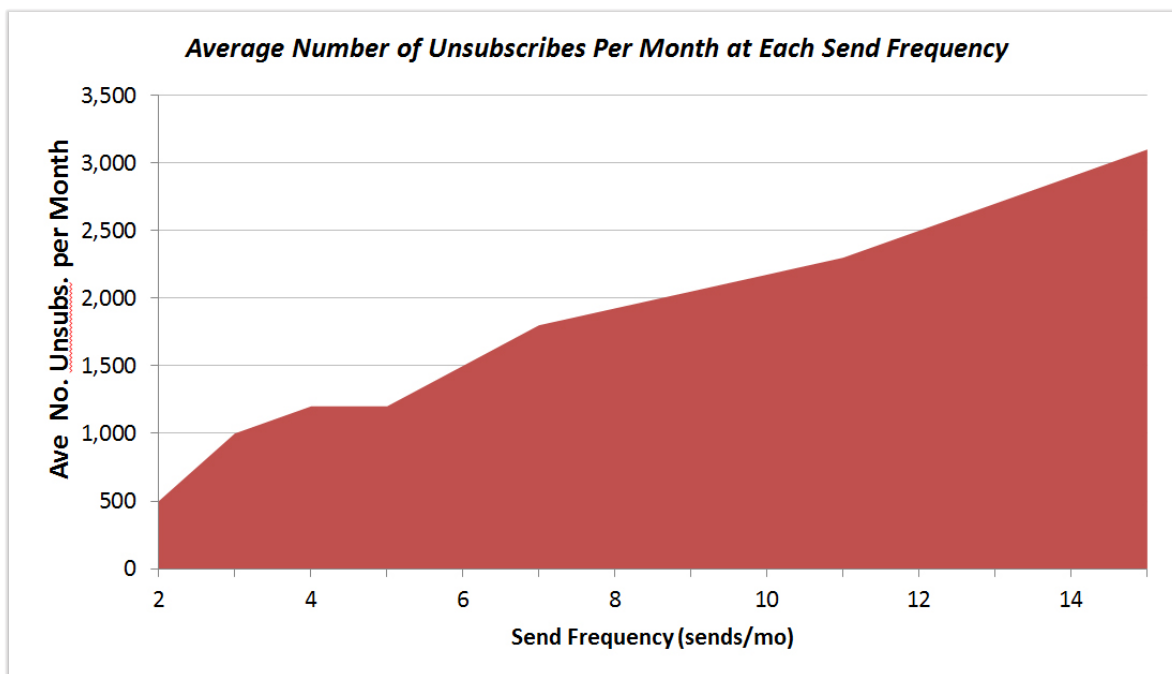
Figure 2.4

In other words: The ratio of unsubscribes remained essentially the same, even as the email frequency increased. In fact, we could not find any compelling scientific evidence that by increasing email frequency we were hurting either open rates or unsubscribe rates.[x]

The bottom line is this: If this company was to send an email every other day, rather than once per week, it would see a potential revenue increase of 300% and its open rates and unsubscribe rate would not suffer. This is an enormously important finding, albeit specific to this company.

What is crucial to comprehend is that these results were possible due to the relatively short decision cycle of the customer. While we can't give away the company, we can tell you that the decision cycle here is about 2-3 months and that when the customer needs the product, it is an urgent need. So those two factors are at play here, and they allow for this high frequency to not affect opens or unsubscribes. If a company with a product with a long decision cycle, like CRM systems for example, were to attempt this kind of frequency, it would burn through its list. Because customers don't need a new CRM system every couple months, they would not stand to be contacted with the kind of frequency from which our test company benefitted.

Factor #2: Utility

If you look at **Figure 3.1**, you will see a very useful illustration that can help you visualize the "utility factor" of your own emails. There is a sliding scale, and at one end there is promotional and at the other end there is useful. A promotional email might be simply an offer to come in and purchase something at 20% discount. Conversely, a useful email contains information that goes beyond the immediate value of the purchase and is useful to the recipient in a particular way. For example, a useful email in the mortgage industry might be content that provides the top three mortgage rates in the country and informs the reader how to make a good decision about term. That would be useful content as opposed to pure promotional content. In fact, that email might not ask for sale, but rather simply serve the prospect and build a warmer relationship for the moment when they are ready to make a purchase decision.

The closer your emails are to the "useful" side of the scale, the higher frequency you will be able to send. People are much more inclined to continue receiving emails if there is a perceived benefit and value to them. Useful content provides that value.
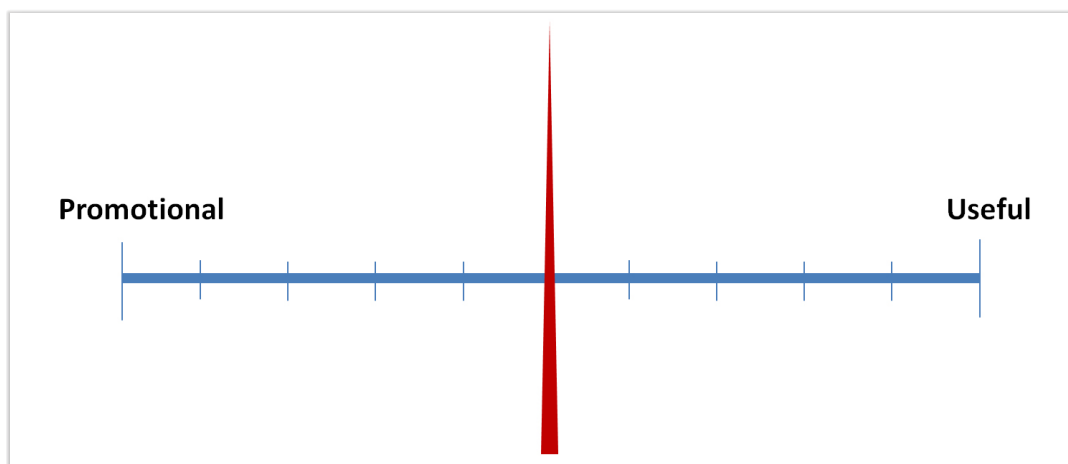
Figure 3.1

Here is another important point: **When the nature of a product requires a larger purchase commitment or has a longer sales cycle, it necessitates a focus on high utility emails**. We often use the word nurturing to describe the process of warming up a relationship with prospects to increase the chances of a sale. However, many of us don't fully understand what nurturing is. It is not a set of six pre-scheduled emails that contain offers related to our core product. **If all you do is send promotional content, you are doing very little nurturing**. To nurture requires high-value content, which on the utility scale needs to lean towards useful.

We can illustrate this with an anecdote from MECLABS own history. When we were first launching, we sent out zero promotional content. An email from MarketingExperiments was always opened because it always had useful content. In fact, many people were printing the emails and building notebooks with them because they were closely following these experiments and findings. As the years passed, we began to use much more multimedia (i.e., online clinics), and so we began to send out emails inviting people to attend the clinics, but these emails were more promotional in nature than the hard information we typically sent with the set of experiments. As a result, we noticed our open rates going down. Even though the emails weren't promotional in the sense that we were selling anything, they were promotional in the sense that they were promoting another avenue of reaching the hard data, rather than having the hard data right in the email, which would boost the utility.

This is an issue we are working on by creating much more useful written content that can be accessible to those who prefer to engage data in that format. However, the story underscores the principle that emails with higher utility will produce higher open rates and allow for higher frequency.

On the other hand, when the nature of the product becomes less complex, or the purchase decision is easy and straightforward, this permits a more promotional email strategy. You can send more frequently even if the emails are promotional and still achieve respectable open rates and efficacy with your email techniques.

Factor #3: Relevance

The third factor that affects the timing of your emails campaigns is relevance. Two principles can guide us in our understanding of this factor.

Key Principle #1: **The relevance of an email can be based on 1) the internal motivations of the recipient or 2) the external events surrounding that recipient. The timing of your email must account for both.**

Internal relevance derives from within the recipient themselves. External relevance has nothing to do with their personal choices but rather elements in the environment around them.[xi] Here are some examples to help you understand the difference.

Internal Relevance:
- Personal interest
- Demographics
- Shopping habits
- Personality
- Communication styles
- Level of engagement

External Relevance:
- Seasonality
- Special discounts
- Limited-time offers
- News events
- Competitive initiatives

For an illustration of these points, look at **Figure 4.1**. In this email, the sender uses both internal and external relevance to motivate the reader. The external relevance is achieved by tying in the Christmas season through the Santa-hat-wearing mascot and mentions to the season in the actual copy of the email. To produce internal relevance, the writer of the email ties in actions previously taken by the reader. For example, it reads, "You've recently given one of your friends ..." which alludes to the fact that this recipient had previously taken the action the sender wants them to take again. Additionally, the writer uses the personality of the reader to create internal relevance with phrases like, "You know how great it is to be a subscriber."
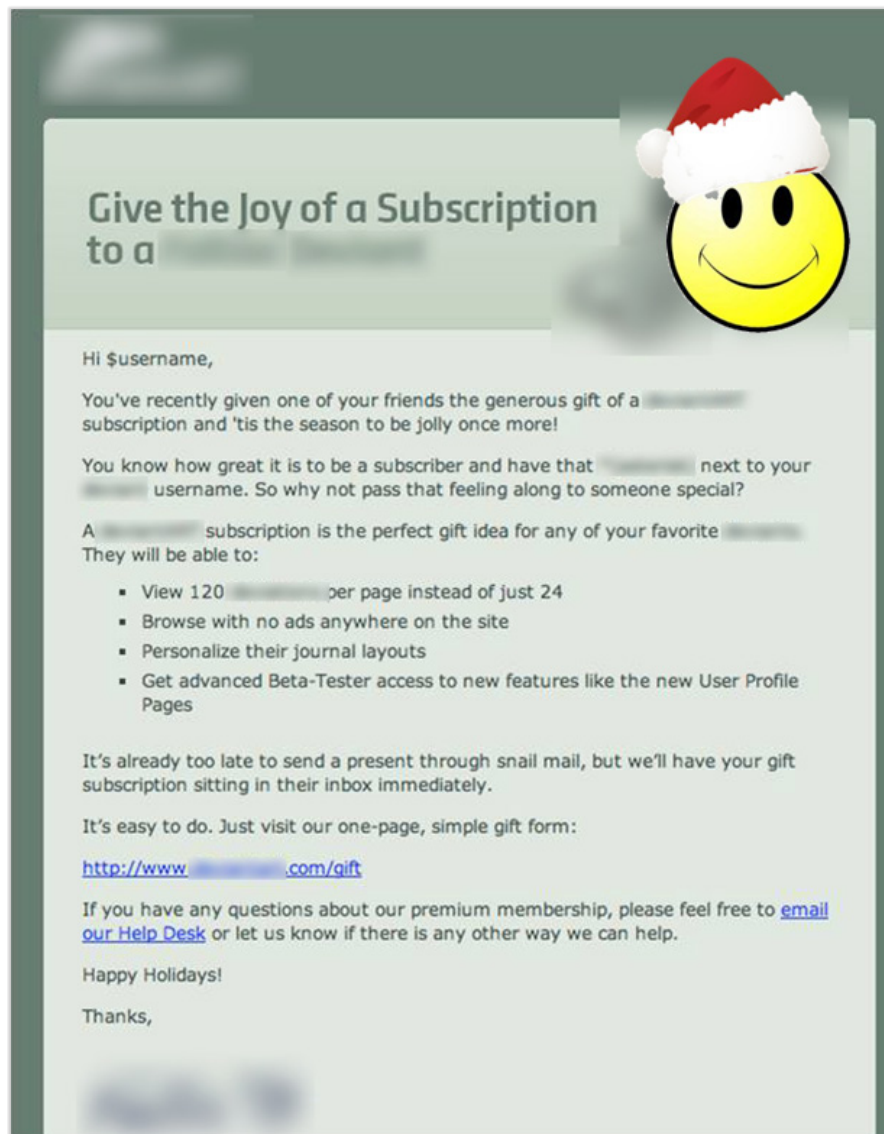
Figure 4.1

In this day and age of mass email communication, nobody goes to their inbox with anticipation, looking forward to going through their emails. Instead, we read our inbox with a predisposition to eliminate emails. We want to delete everything we don't need to focus on and then group the important items into a separate category. **So, in the inbox, you are not competing with other companies; you are competing with other emails**. Any other email that demands their attention has the ability to displace your email and take their attention away from you. You need to be intensely relevant internally or externally to what they are doing because if relevance goes down, you will end up in that deleted pile. You want to be at the top of the mental priority list the reader makes as they clear up their inbox. Relevance is the key factor that impacts that.

In TP2004, we ran a test that gets to the heart of this issue of relevance. The Research Partner was a media company offering a free trial to day traders of instructional content that could help them make the right moves on the stock market. The goal of our email optimization was to increase the amount of free trials. We wanted to discover what impact there would be if we changed the send date from Monday to Thursday, so we ran a test. Email A was sent on Monday; email B went out on Thursday. Nothing else about the email was changed. So, was there a statistical difference?

Yes. Email B outperformed Email A by 30%. Without changing a word of the email, we got a 30% lift simply by picking the right day.

Now why was this the right day? It has to do with relevance. Day traders do much of their research on the weekends when the market is closed. Therefore, there was little external relevance for the trader at the beginning of the week. However, by moving the email to the end of the week, we were able to capitalize on that external relevance created by the markets closing.

Key Principle #2: **Relevance is intensified by the importance and urgency of the solution.**

There are many things that are relevant but not important, so they get pushed to the side. Even if information is relevant and important, it can get pushed to the back of the line if it is not also urgent. Look at **Figure 4.2**.[xii] You want the relevance of your emails to fall in the red box in the top left corner. **When you have urgency and importance, you are in the best position to be intensely relevant to the reader**.[xiii]
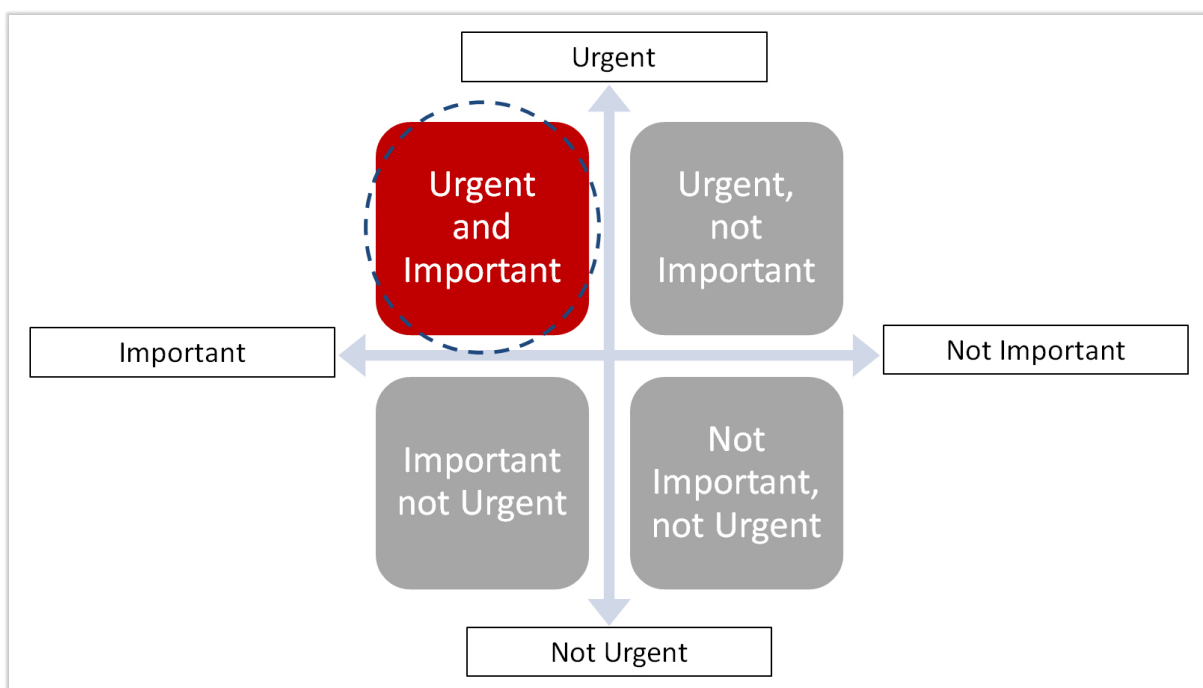
Figure 4.2

The combination of "urgent" and "not important" can still permit higher frequency and still get an adequate response; the combination of "important" and "not urgent" could get a response, but it may be delayed. Emails that are not urgent and not important are not likely to be relevant to the recipient. Your best chance to achieve high relevance and move the reader through a series of micro-yes(s) to an action is in the "urgent and important" quadrant.

Factor #4: Nature of Product

The fourth factor you need to consider when optimizing your email sends is the nature of your product. **Email timing is affected by inherent emotional responses produced in someone as they encounter your product**. Some products have an emotionally negative connotation, while others are essentially positive in terms of the reaction they produce inside of a prospect. When you think of negative emotional reactions, you can relate this to industries that have to do with aging, illness, tax preparation, etc.

On the other hand, products that provoke positive emotional responses would be related to the prospect's hobbies or interests. For fisherman, it might be tackle and boats. A golfer will likely react positively to clubs and polo shirts. The point is that emotionally positive products evoke a different sort of response and prospects are more likely to accept a higher email frequency when the nature of the product itself is provoking a cognitive psychological reaction that is positive in nature. Don't neglect to factor in the nature of your product when you are taking your first steps toward optimal frequency.

Factor #5: Expectation

The final factor you need to control to arrive at an ideal email marketing send time and frequency is the recipient's expectations.[xiv] There are important principles to bear in mind if you want to succeed in the expectations game.

Key Principle: The expectation of email timing is set by two elements:

1. **The implied promise of industry standards**
2. **The implied promise of the email capture form messaging**

The implied promise of industry standards is largely outside your control. If you sign up for Groupon or LivingSocial, you expect an email once a day and usually in the morning. You are ready for that because it is the industry standard for that kind of service. If you were to receive five emails per day or one email every other week, your expectations would not be met and you would likely become disenfranchised with the company, because they are breaking the implied rule set by the industry. On the other hand, if you sign up for email updates from APMEX, a company that tracks the market value of precious metals, you would

not be expecting a daily email at the same time every morning. You expect that the emails will be fewer and will come sporadically, based on what the market is doing. Getting the timing right has a lot to do with understanding what one would expect to be standard in the industry.

The second implied promise you need to satisfy is the implied promise you make with the messaging on your form. To highlight this principle, let us turn to a case study. It is an e-retailer catering primarily to the teen shoppers. It has a house email list with 300,000 addresses, but the team didn't feel it was getting the maximum yield from the list.[xv] The team wanted to increase email revenue by increasing the relevance of its emails. So how could it get its emails more relevant?

The factors they targeted for improvement were timing and expectations. In **Figure 5.1**, you see the original email capture form. It is located on the homepage so it gets noticed, and the team successfully captured thousands of emails for its target market. However, the value proposition (an email newsletter and $10 off) is very low. So the e-retailer captured thousands of email addresses, but the response to its emails was less than optimal.

Figure 5.1

To increase relevancy by coming in line with customer expectations, it changed its email capture process to what you can see in **Figure 5.2**. The team placed the email sign-up option on the product landing page and offered specific email alerts for that type of product only. So in this case, the email would be for t-shirt updates only. This move effectively identified the email capture with something the visitor was absolutely interested in and segmented the company's email lists to include only customers interested in a specific product.[xvi]
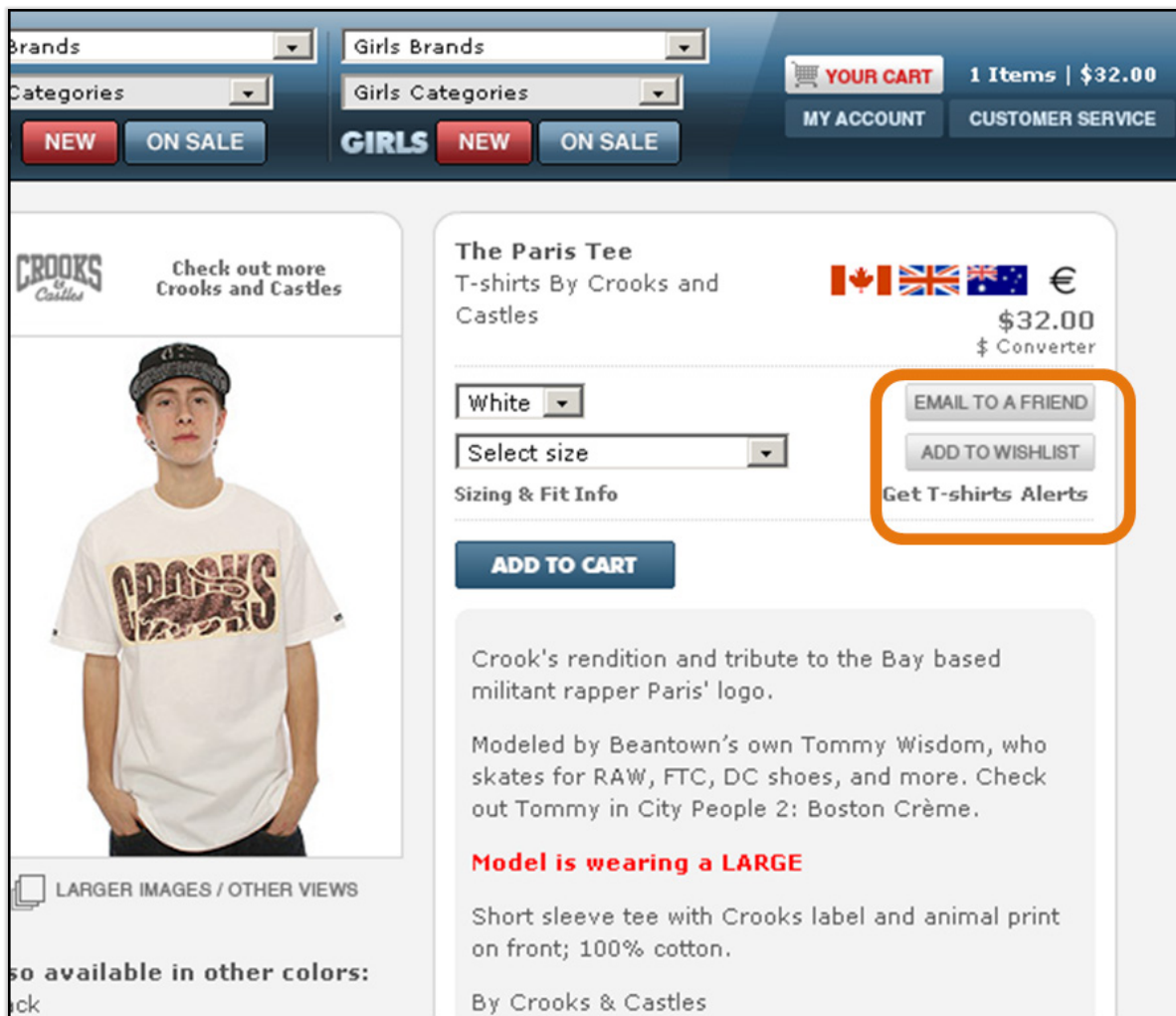
Figure 5.2

As a result of this change, email revenue increased by 318%. Getting the expectations set properly had a dramatic impact on the overall performance.

PUTTING THE 5 FACTORS TOGETHER

All of these factors, as you can see from the individual case studies, can help you increase email response, but what we want as marketers is to get them all optimized. If you can step back and survey your email marketing and your relationship to your customers and prospects through the lens of these five factors, you will begin to see a clearer picture of when you ought to send your emails and what frequency will yield the best results.

The 5 factors are:

1. **Decision Cycle** – How often the customer makes a purchase decision related to the offer

2. **Utility** – How useful is the email itself?

3. **Relevancy** – How relevant is the offer to the internal and external motivations of the recipient?

4. **Nature of Product** – Does the product generate a positive or negative emotional response?

5. **Expectations** – What expectations does your email list/product naturally create?

Once you have used these five components to help you determine your optimal timing and frequency, you can set up a proper test to refine your way to even better and more optimized results.

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[i] MailerMailer. (2012, July). *Email Marketing Metrics Report*. Retrieved from MailerMailer.com:
http://www.mailermailer.com/resources/metrics/2012/how-scheduling-affects-rates.rwp

[ii] MailChimp. (2012, 02 03). *When is the best time to send emails?* Retrieved from MailChimp.com:
http://kb.mailchimp.com/article/when-is-the-best-time-to-send-emails

[iii] HubSpot. (2011, March 29). *The Science of Timing.* Retrieved from SlideShare.net:
http://www.slideshare.net/HubSpot/the-science-of-timing

[iv] For more on getting the most from small changes to your campaigns see "*Quick Win Clinic (Part I): The 5 easiest changes to make to your landing pages right now*".
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/landing-page-optimization/quick-win-clinic-part-i-.html

[v] See the "*MarketingExperiments Methodology*" for more on research questions.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/methodology-marketingexperiments.html

[vi] All tests in this report have been statistically validated at a 95% level of confidence.

[vii] For more on mobile optimization see Adam Sutton's interesting case study "*Mobile Email Marketing: 50% more app downloads from device-targeted ads*".
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/email-mobile-app-downloads

viii For an interesting case study on email strategy see *"Email Marketing: 900% more revenue-per-email from Restaurant.com's automated strategy"*.
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/automated-email-strategy-ecommerce

ix See also *"Marketer's Intuition Tested"*.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/marketers-intuition.html

x For another take on this test see *"Optimize your Email in Three Steps: How one marketer tripled revenue from their house list"*.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-marketing-strategy/optimizing-your-email-in-three-steps.html

xi See also, *"Email Marketing: Two ways to add relevance, and why you must be correct"*.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/email-marketing/email-marketing-two-relevance-factors-why-you-must-be-correct.html

xii The matrix concept of urgent/important has been expressed elsewhere by others. For instance, Stephen R. Covey presents a very similar matrix and expounds on the concept at a greater depth than we had room for in this article. You can find his material here:
http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_91.htm

xiii See also, *"Email Copy Tested: How adding urgency increased clickthrough by 15%"*.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/copywriting-research-topics/urgency-email-marketing-copy.html

xiv For more on balancing the expectations of a prospect, see *"Landing Page Optimization: How Businesses Achieve Breakthrough Conversion by Synchronizing Value Proposition and Page Design"*.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/conversion-value-proposition-page-design.html

xv See also the original case study published on MarketingSherpa.com. *"How Teen Eretailer Tripled Revenue by Allowing Consumers to Select What Email Content They Really Want"*.
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/how-teen-eretailer-tripled-revenue

xvi For more on email segmentation, see the MarketingSherpa case study *"Email Segmentation: Targeted program reduces advertising costs 73%, leads to 3,000% ROI"*.
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/targeted-program-reduces-advertising-costs

EMAIL MARKETING: THE 5 GOALS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

As we built the content for MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013 in Las Vegas, we focused on the five key goals of successful email marketing programs.

We also included the two elements necessary to optimize these goals – measuring and testing.

So in today's MarketingSherpa blog post, we'll provide some suggested reading and resources to help you to prepare for next month's Email Summit and improve your email marketing – no matter on which goal or element you are currently focusing.

CAPTURE

Maximizing Email List Growth: How the New York Public Library drove a 52.8% lift in newsletter subscriptions
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/general/email-newsletter-boost.html

Email List Growth: 230% more readers from six-channel test
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/list-growth-channel-test

New Chart: Integrating Social Media with Other Marketing Tactics
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/chart/integrating-social-media-other-tactics

DELIVER

Email List Hygiene: Remove four kinds of bad addresses to improve deliverability
http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/email-marketing/email-list-hygiene-remove-bad-addresses-improve-deliverability/

OPEN

Case Study: Creativity vs. clarity in email subject lines
http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/email-marketing/aweber-subject-line-test/

Email Personalization: 137% increase in open rate from personal note approach
http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/email-marketing/email-personalization/

CLICK

Email Marketing: Video email doubles clickthrough rate for Ragan Communications
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/video-email-doubles-clickthrough-rate

CLOSE

Email Marketing: 208% higher conversion rate for targeted emails over batch-and-blast
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/208-higher-conversion-rate-targeted

MEASURE

Reader Mail: Understanding differences in clickthrough rates and open rates
http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/email-marketing/clickthrough-open-metrics/

TEST

Email Testing: More specific subject line improves open rate by more than 35%
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/analytics-testing/email-testing-b2b-vs-lead-generation.html

Email Copywriting: How a change in tone increased lead inquiry by 349%

- John Tackett, Editorial Analyst

Writing copy for an email is difficult enough – but what about tone?

Are you talking to your customers or at them? Do the offers in your emails entice or do they alienate?

This MarketingExperiments blog post will share an experiment featured in our recent Email Copywriting Clinic, sponsored by Ongage, in which presenter Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS, revealed the results of an experiment on how tone affects conversion.

Our goal is to show marketers the effectiveness of your messaging is impacted by how customers perceive it.

So, let's take a quick look at the test background ...

Background: Active Network, a large event management software provider.
Goal: To increase total lead inquiries – phone calls and form sign-ups – from visitors who abandoned the free trial sign-up process.
Primary Research Question: Which email tone will result in a higher rate of lead inquiries?
Test Design: A/B Single Factor Split

Treatment #1

In treatment one, visitors who abandoned the free trial sign-up were sent an email that focused on the value of the software.

Here's a closer look at the email copy in Treatment #1:

> **Subject Line:** Your Free RegOnline Access
>
> Dear [Name],
>
> **You're just one step away** from getting FREE access to RegOnline, our award winning Event Registration and Management Software. Quickly man an event website, try our event marketing tools, build a registration form template or even generate custom name badges.

<u>Click here</u> to finish your profile and get started. Your personal profile is kept secure and **we promise NEVER to sell or misuse your information.**

Have questions? Call us direct at 1-800-XXX-XXXX – we can even set up your free access over the phone.

Sincerely,

[Name of Representative]
Customer Service Representative
RegOnline
Direct: 1-800-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX
Email address of Representative

Treatment #1

Subject Line: Your Free RegOnline Access

Dear [Name],

You're just one step away from getting FREE access to RegOnline, our award winning Event Registration and Management Software. Quickly make an event website, try our event marketing tools, build a registration form template or even generate custom name badges.

Click here to finish your profile and get started. Your personal profile is kept secure and **we promise NEVER to sell or misuse your information**.

Have questions? Call us direct at 1-800-XXX-XXXX -- we can even set up your free access over the phone.

Sincerely,

Jon Powell
Customer Service Representative
RegOnline
Direct: 1-800-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX
jon.powell@RegOnline.com

Hypothesis:

Our analysts hypothesized that visitors are not converting because the copy was **not engaging** enough.

Treatment #2

The approach in Treatment #2 is engagement through addressing the elements of anxiety leading visitors to abandon the sign-up process.

Let's look at the email copy in Treatment #2:

Subject Line: Your Free RegOnline Access

Hi [First],

I noticed that you started the process of getting free access to RegOnline but weren't able to finish. Are you concerned about giving out your phone number? Are you worried about high pressure sales tactics or mandatory contracts?

We believe our product sells itself, so we're just here to provide you with whatever assistance you need in getting your event up and running – in whatever way works best for you. We promise NEVER to sell or misuse your information.

Call me direct at 1-800-XXX-XXXX and I can help get you rolling. If you'd rather just try again online, use this link instead.

Thank you in advance for your trust!

Sincerely,

[Name of Representative]
Customer Service Representative
RegOnline
Direct: 1-800-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX
Email address of Representative

Treatment #2

Subject Line: Your Free RegOnline Access

Hi [First],

I noticed that you started the process of getting free access to RegOnline but weren't able to finish. Are you concerned about giving out your phone number? Are you worried about high pressure sales tactics or mandatory contracts?

We believe our product sells itself, so **we're just here to provide you with whatever assistance you need in getting your event up and running** - in whatever way works best for you. We promise NEVER to sell or misuse your information.

Call me direct at 1-800-XXX-XXXX and I can help get you rolling. If you'd rather just try again online, use this link instead.

Thank you in advance for your trust!

Sincerely,

[Name of Representative]
Customer Service Representative
RegOnline
Direct: 1-800-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX
[name]@RegOnline.com

Hypothesis:

Our analysts hypothesized that visitors are not converting because of high **anxiety** due to phone spam and high-pressure salesmen.

SIDE-BY-SIDE

Flint explained the difference in tone is ultimately a difference in hypothesis.

Treatment #1

Subject Line: Your Free RegOnline Access

Dear [Name],

You're just one step away from getting FREE access to RegOnline, our award winning Event Registration and Management Software. Quickly make an event website, try our event marketing tools, build a registration form template or even generate custom name badges.

Direct Response Tone

promise NEVER to sell or misuse your information.

Have questions? Call us direct at 1-800-XXX-XXXX -- we can even set up your free access over the phone.

Sincerely,

Jon Powell
Customer Service Representative
RegOnline
Direct: 1-800-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX
jon.powell@RegOnline.com

Treatment #2

Subject Line: Your Free RegOnline Access

Hi [First],

I noticed that you started the process of getting free access to RegOnline but weren't able to finish. Are you concerned about giving out your phone number? Are you worried about high pressure sales tactics or a lengthy contract?

Customer Service Tone

We believe our product sells itself, so we're just here to provide you with whatever assistance you need in getting your event up and running - in whatever way works best for you. We promise NEVER to sell or misuse your information.

Call me direct at 1-800-XXX-XXXX and I'll help get you enrolling. If you'd rather just try again online, use this link instead.

Thank you in advance for your trust!

Sincerely,

[Name of Representative]
Customer Service Representative
RegOnline
Direct: 1-800-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX
[name]@RegOnline.com

"The direct response tone in Treatment #1 gives you a good reason to start now and the second one is a helpful tone that's focused on reducing your anxiety," Flint said.ResultsThe marketers at Active Network saw a 349% increase in lead inquiry rate by addressing customer anxiety through the tone of the email copy.

349% Increase in lead inquiry rate
The customer service email increased inquiry rate by 349.41%

Design	Inquiry Rate	Relative Difference	Statistical Level of Confidence
Sales Tone	1.58%	-	-
Customer Service Tone	7.08%	349.41%	

What we can learn

The results of this experiment reveal two key principles Flint emphasized every marketer should understand when it comes to the medium of email:

1. The goal of effective email copy is not to convince a customer to buy, but rather to serve a customer in a way that enables them to quickly make the best decision.
2. To make the best decision, a customer must be able to understand and accept a series of logical premises that lead to an ultimate conclusion – to click.

EFFECTIVE EMAIL COPY SUMMARIZED
3 REAL-WORLD CASE STUDIES TO HELP YOU WRITE MORE EFFECTIVE EMAIL COPY

- Content created by Flint McGlaughlin, Paul Cheney, Austin McCraw, Shaun Metzger
- Research conducted by Jon Powell, Adam Lapp, Jon Michaeli, Toby Hemmerling and The Organic Dish team

You are starting to panic. A few weeks ago, you made a change to your landing page that increased the volume of your lead flow, but now Sales is saying that most of those leads are unusable.

Essentially, you have a growing list of completely useless leads. Unless you can find some way to push them through your qualifying process, that change you made to the landing page is going to look like a disaster to your boss.[i]

But while you don't have all the information you need for a sales-qualified lead, you do have their email address. What you need is some email copy that will push these partial leads through your process.

So what do you do? How do you write the most effective email copy possible for these partial leads?

EMAIL COPYWRITING CASE STUDY

Not too long ago, a marketer at Active Network, a large event management software provider, was in a similar situation.[ii] She needed a way to convert a list of partial leads into what the company termed a "lead inquiry."

So we ran a test with her.

The goal of the test was to increase the number of "lead inquiries" from a list of website visitors who had abandoned a free-trial sign-up process for its product.[iii] These lead inquiries could be achieved in two ways:

1. A phone call from the lead where further information could be gathered [iv]
2. A completion of the original form process that was abandoned

We hypothesized that the tone of the email copy would have a significant impact in the minds of these partial leads. That hypothesis led to a research question for an A/B variable cluster experiment:[v]

Which email tone will result in a higher rate of lead inquiries? [vi]

THE CONTROL: TYPICAL SALES TONE

For the control in this test (**Figure 1.1**), we wanted to examine the effect of a typical sales tone on these partial leads. We reasoned that these visitors were not completing the process because they weren't immediately seeing the value of the product on the landing page. Potentially, by communicating that value quickly using a more sales-oriented tone, we could convert more people into lead inquiries. The control copy employed words and phrases like: [vii]

- You're just one step away
- Award-winning event registration and management software
- Quickly make an event website
- Build a registration form
- Generate custom name badges

We highlighted the value of the product and then provided them with the two ways to complete the process.

Subject Line: Your Free RegOnline Access

Dear [Name],

<u>**You're just one step away**</u> from getting FREE access to RegOnline, our award winning Event Registration and Management Software. Quickly make an event website, try our event marketing tools, build a registration form template or even generate custom name badges.

<u>Click here</u> to finish your profile and get started. Your personal profile is kept secure and **we promise NEVER to sell or misuse your information**.

Have questions? Call us direct at 1-800-XXX-XXXX -- we can even set up your free access over the phone.

Sincerely,

Jon Powell
Customer Service Representative
RegOnline
Direct: 1-800-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX
<u>jon.powell@RegOnline.com</u>

Figure 1.1

The Treatment: Typical customer service tone

For the treatment (**Figure 1.2**), we tried a different approach. Our analysts postulated that the form on the page was being abandoned due to a high level of anxiety produced in the free-trial sign-up process. To design this treatment copy, we wanted to directly address that anxiety and correct it with a customer-service tone.

The treatment copy directly addresses the anxiety around giving away information in the first paragraph. It then overcorrects that anxiety by reassuring the customer with the good intentions of the email. [viii]

Subject Line: Your Free RegOnline Access

Hi [First],

I noticed that you started the process of getting free access to RegOnline but weren't able to finish. Are you concerned about giving out your phone number? Are you worried about high pressure sales tactics or mandatory contracts?

We believe our product sells itself, so **we're just here to provide you with whatever assistance you need in getting your event up and running** - in whatever way works best for you. We promise NEVER to sell or misuse your information.

Call me direct at 1-800-XXX-XXXX and I can help get you rolling. If you'd rather just try again online, use this link instead.

Thank you in advance for your trust!

Sincerely,

[Name of Representative]
Customer Service Representative
RegOnline
Direct: 1-800-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX
[name]@RegOnline.com

Figure 1.2

THE RESULTS

After running the test, we found that by shifting the copy from the original sales tone to the customer service tone, we were able to achieve a 349% increase in lead inquiry rate (**Figure 1.3**).

349% increase in lead inquiry rate

The customer service email increased inquiry rate by 349.41%

Design	Inquiry Rate	Relative Difference	Statistical Level of Confidence
Sales Tone	1.58%	-	-
Customer Service Tone	**7.08%**	**349.41%**	

Figure 1.3

Of course, a case study is only useful if we can unpack the underlying principles and export them into our own email copy for a result. To that end, we need to understand a simple principle from this test …

The goal of effective email copy is not to make claims about a product, but rather to foster a conclusion – to click.

When a company makes a claim about a product, true or not, the customer automatically goes on the defensive. There is a kind of critical sensor in the mind that warns the customer that what they are hearing may not be true.

However, when a customer can get the right information in an amount that lets them draw their own conclusion, they can own the truth about a product. By helping the customer draw that conclusion, the marketer can usually expedite the buying process. We can get more people to say "yes" to our offer. [ix]

For this research brief, we are going to walk through three more real-world examples to help you understand how this principle applies in the subject line, body copy and call-to-action of your emails.

SECTION 1: Writing effective subject lines

Imagine you are the marketer writing the subject line for this email (**Figure 2.1**). The company is a home-delivery meal service and it has just refined its ordering process. [x] The subject line for the control notification email is …

- [Company Name]: A New Way to Order

You signed up as **XXXXXXX** at our website (to receive this newsletter.
If you no longer want to receive it, you can <u>unsubscribe here</u>.

Home Cooked Meals in Minutes

An Easier Way To Order
You can now place your order directly from our <u>current monthly menu</u> or <u>next month's menu</u>. Just select your favorite meals, indicate the size for each meal (yes, you can now mix and match different sizes), tell us if you want to get your meals delivered or pick them up, and proceed to the checkout.

As an added bonus we are experimenting with **lowering our minimum order to two (2) meals.**

And if you are used to – and like – <u>the old way to order</u>, don't worry – it's not going anywhere.

If at any time you wish to stop receiving our newsletter or our monthly coupons and special offers, you can <u>unsubscribe here</u>. For questions or comments, please contact us at:

Thank you,

Beckie & Toby Hemmerling

<u>Privacy policy</u> | <u>Unsubscribe</u> | <u>Forward to a friend</u>

Figure 2.1

How would you improve this subject line?

There are probably several ways we could go about it, but in this experiment, our researchers saw this subject line was making a few critical mistakes. "A new way to order" communicates almost nothing to a skeptical recipient. [xi] It is a claim.

Our analysts hypothesized that this subject line was immediately putting customers on the defensive. There is a two-fold objection in the mind of the customer that reads this subject line. It sounds something like this …

1.   No, it's probably not a new way to order
2.   So #$^%#@ what!?

So instead of making a meaningless claim, the analysts focused on fostering a conclusion in the mind of the customer. What they produced was this treatment subject line:

•   [Company Name]: Now only 2-meal minimum order

The result was a 25.3% increase in open rate. (**Figure 2.2**)

25.3% increase in open rate
Resulting in greater subscriptions and revenue

Email Subject line	Open Rate (%)
Control: A New Way to Order	35.2%
Treatment 1: 2-meal minimum order	**44.1%**
Relative Difference	25.3%
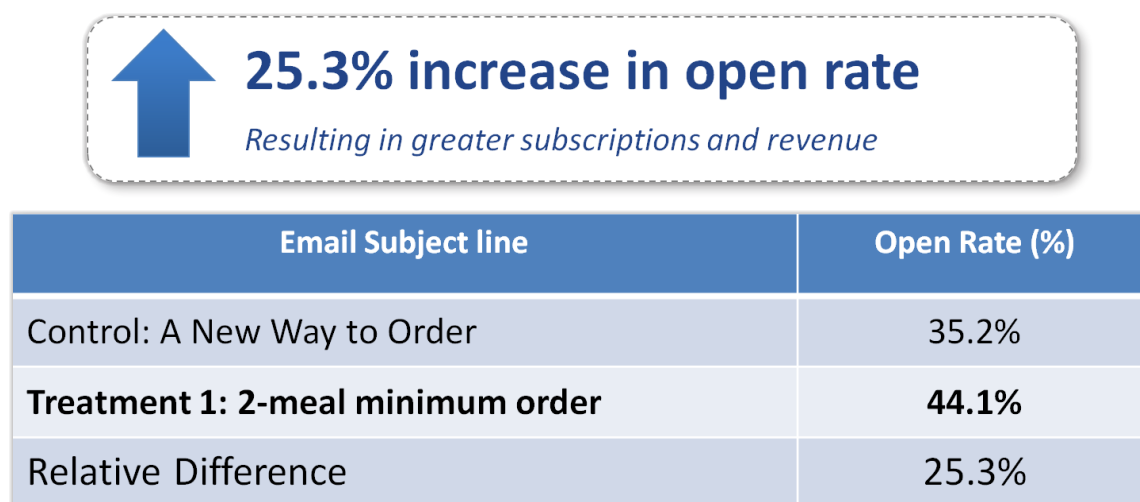
Figure 2.2

What you need to understand: By naming the new way to order, the customer was able to clearly see the meaning behind the email. They were able to draw a conclusion – they could make the decision on their own to open an email.

SECTION 2: Writing effective body copy

Of course, an open is one thing, but actually getting a customer to read an email is quite another. Take the body copy of this email for instance (**Figure 3.1**). [xii]
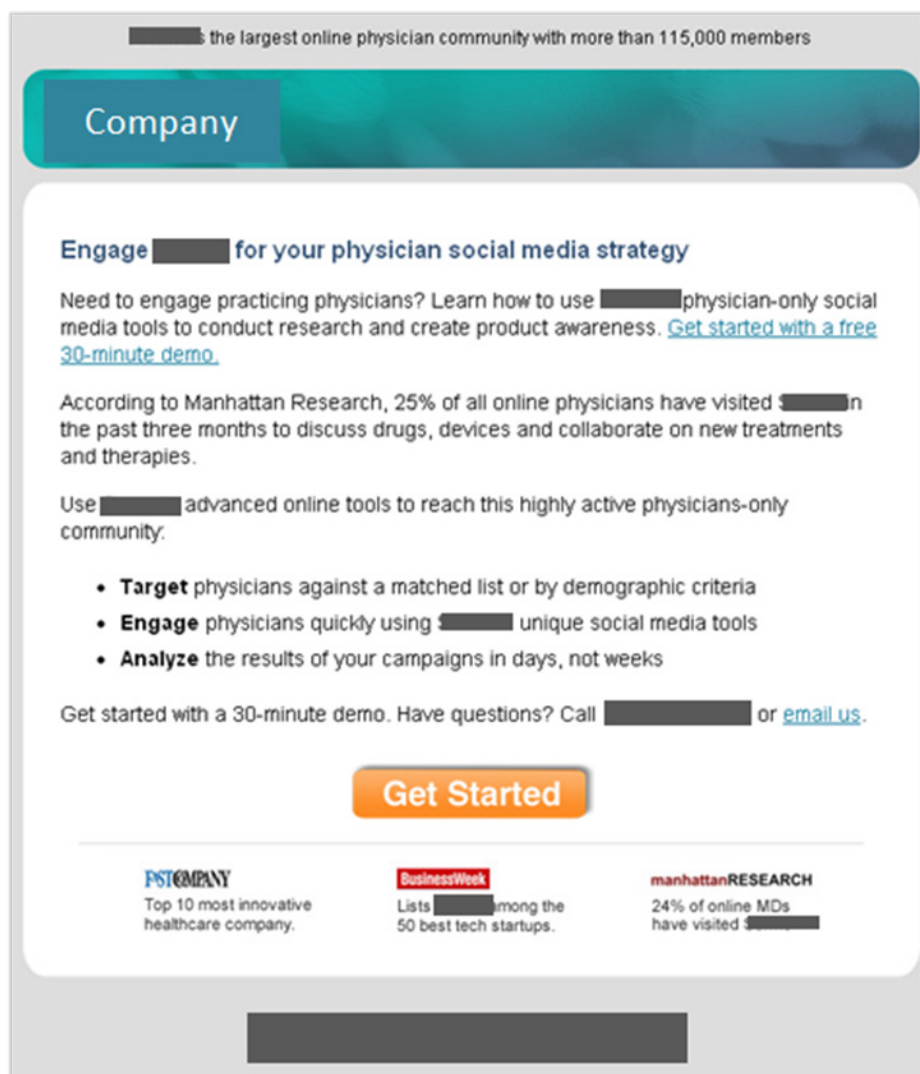
Figure 3.1

A physician's only social network, was using this email to sell pharmaceutical companies access to its group of physicians for research and development. The goal was to send potential customers to its landing page where they could become a qualified lead.

If you truly read the email, you'll notice that the copy isn't particularly bad. It does a lot of things right. There is a clear headline, a linear eye-path, quantitative statistics, and even a clear call-to-action.

But the email was underperforming and our researchers wanted to understand why. What we hypothesized was that while the copy looked OK, there was a fundamental flaw in its design – it wasn't carefully fostering a conclusion in the mind of the customer.

If you examine the email closely, you'll notice that the thought sequence is out of order.
- There is a sales-pitch for a 30-minute demo in the first paragraph.
- Online tools are noted but not explained.
- The call-to-action sends the wrong message to an exploratory audience who may not want to "get started."

To help the reader come to a conclusion, we had to design an email that led them through a logical series of thoughts (**Figure 3.2**). [xiii]
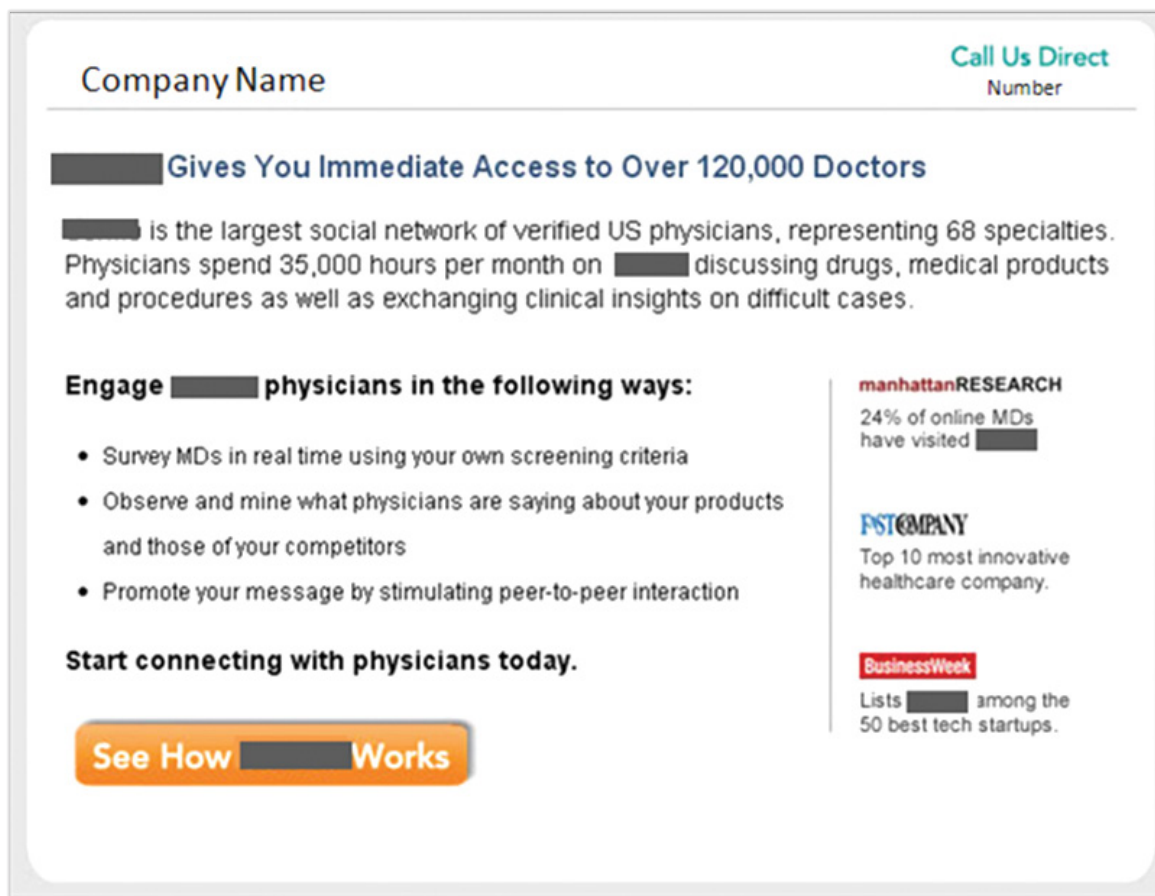
Figure 3.2

- The value of the product is clearly explained and backed up with specific numbers.
- Each phrase in the email is carefully engineered to lead into the next.
- The call-to-action asks for a lower level of commitment from the reader.

The result is a 104% increase in clickthrough rate (**Figure 3.3**).

⬆ 104% increase in clickthrough rate
The treatment generated a 104% higher clickthrough rate

Versions	Clickthrough Rate	Relative Difference
Control	1.55%	-
Treatment	**3.16%**	**104%**

Figure 3.3

What you need to understand: By leading the customer through a logical series of thoughts, they were 104% more likely to conclude that a click would be worth the time investment.

SECTION 3: Writing effective calls-to-action

While we talked a little about calls-to-action in section two of this article, they are worth going into more depth for this last section. The call-to-action is precisely when the conclusion to click occurs in the mind of the customer. Because of this, it is incredibly important to maintain the cognitive momentum of the message in the climax of the email. [xiv]

Set aside your political predisposition for a second and examine the email in **Figure 4.1** from the perspective of an unbiased observer.
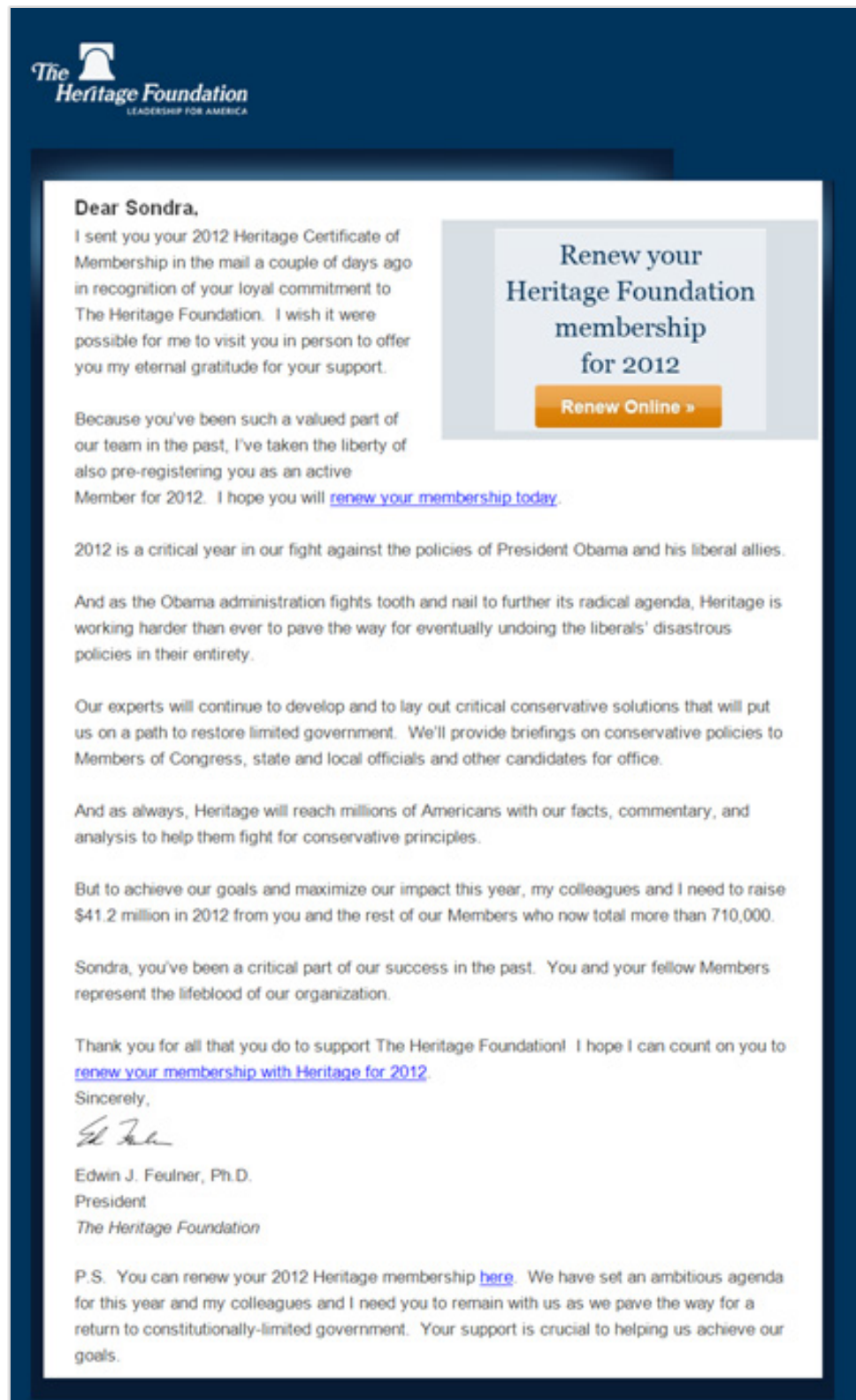
Figure 4.1
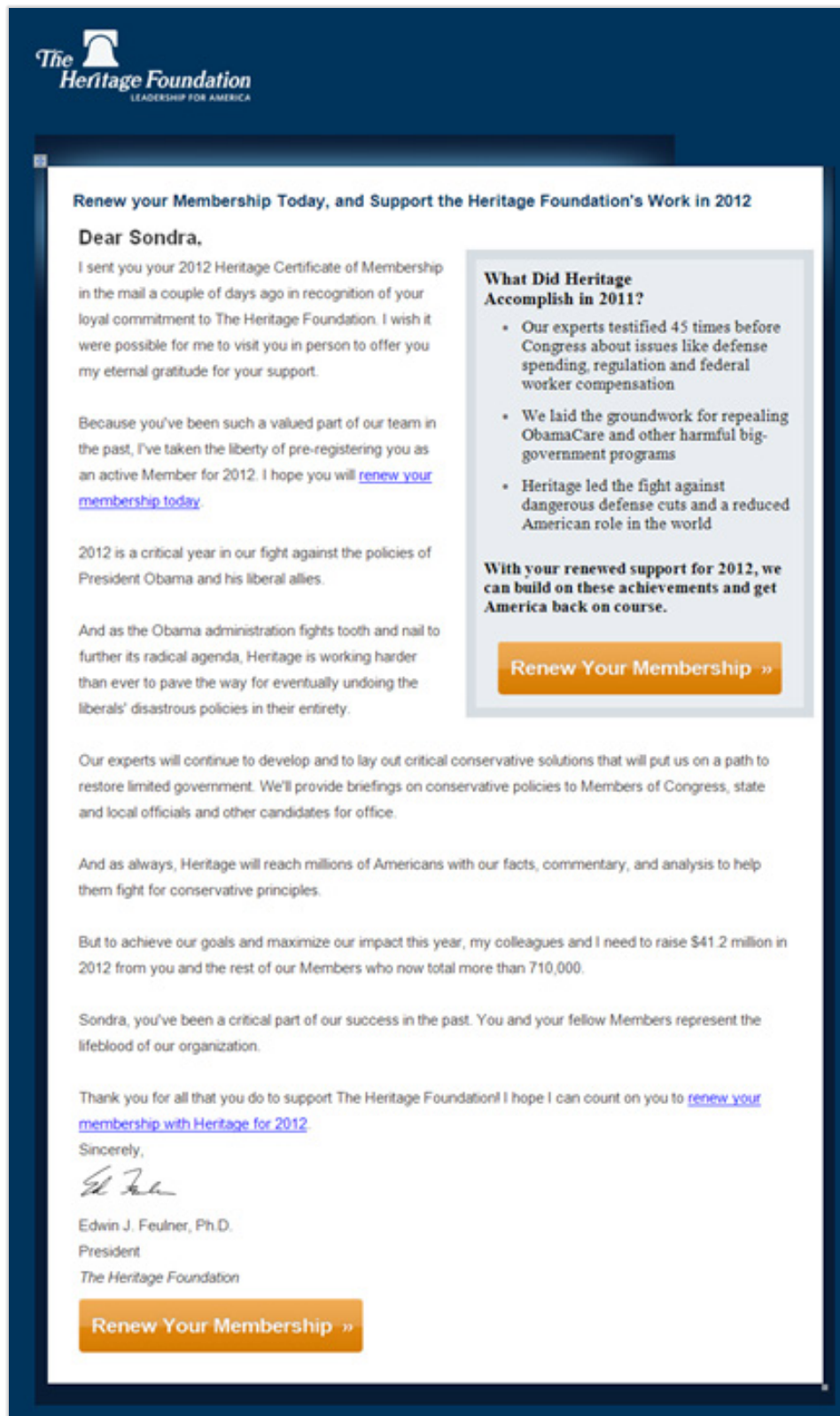
Figure 4.2

The email is to a list of Conservatives who donated to the Heritage Foundation in 2011. [xv] The goal of the email was to get these constituents to renew their membership in 2012.

Focus especially on the call-to-action. You'll notice it is doing very little to foster a conclusion in the mind of the customer. In fact, not only is it demanding, it is completely out of sequence.

If the individual reads the letter and is compelled to act, he or she must then scroll back up to the top to see what to do next. That precious cognitive momentum is mitigated. [xvi]

For the treatment email (**Figure 4.2**), our analysts hypothesized that these former members needed more evidence that their donations in the previous year was well spent.

So they replaced the demanding copy on top of the call-to-action with bullet points highlighting what the Heritage Foundation accomplished in 2011. They also placed an additional call-to-action at the bottom of the page so the reader did not have to scroll back up if they wanted to read the whole letter.

In both instances of the treatment's call-to-action, the copy surrounding it allows the reader to draw a conclusion. It turns out it was a much better approach than giving orders (as in the control). The result was a 20% increase in clickthrough rate, and a 14.66% increase in average donation size (**Figure 4.3**).

14.66% increase in average donation size
The new email's donation rate increased by 14.66%

Design	Average Donation ($)	Relative Difference	Statistical Level of Confidence
Control	$36.48	-	-
Treatment	**$41.82**	**14.66%**	95%

Figure 4.3

What you need to understand: Again, by providing the right information, in the right order, at the right time, the customer was able to conclude that a click was worth the cost of the further time investment.

SUMMARY: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

So how can we write effective email copy that doesn't leave us panic-stricken over the prospect of losing our jobs?

We only need to remember that the job of our copy is not to make claims, it is to create a conclusion in the mind of our customer. And that conclusion must lead to a click. Until we can accomplish that throughout the entire email (subject line, body copy and call-to-action), we will be losing out on much higher open and clickthrough rates.

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[i] See also, "Converting Sales to Leads."
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/converting-leads-to-sales-.html

[ii] For more from Active Network see "The Web as a Living Laboratory."
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-optimization/web-as-a-living-laboratory.html

[iii] While not necessarily related to free trials, studying shopping cart abandonment and recovery has proven useful in uncovering insights into broader form abandonment problems. See "Shopping Cart Recovery" for more.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/shopping-cart-recovery.html

[iv] A deeper dive into lead nurturing may be pertinent here. See Brian Carroll's helpful book Lead Generation for the Complex Sale.
http://www.amazon.com/Lead-Generation-Complex-Sale-Quantity/dp/0071458972

[v] For more on variable cluster testing and radical redesigns see "Rapidly Maximizing Conversion."
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/radical-redesign.html

[vi] A research question is a behavioral question expressed in a factorial split so it must begin with "which." See Daniel Burstein's helpful article "Marketing Optimization: You can't find the true answer without the right question" for more on how to ask a proper research question.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/general/marketing-optimization-testing-question.html

[vii] See "Copywriting on Tight Deadlines" for more on avoiding power-words and phrases.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/copywriting-on-tight-deadlines.html

[viii] Anxiety must be overcorrected. See "263% Increase in Conversion."
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/landing-page-optimization/reduce-customer-anxiety.html

[ix] To learn more about this fundamental theory you can see "15 Years of Marketing Research in 11 Minutes" on the personal website of Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director and Founder, MECLABS.
http://www.flintmcglaughlin.com/index.php/videos/view/15-years-of-marketing-research-in-11-minutes

[x] For more on subject lines, see "Subject Lines Tested."
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-optimization/subject-lines-tested.html

[xi] For more on marketing to skeptical consumers, see the paper "Transparent Marketing."
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/images/multifiles/whitepapers/MEx-Transparent-Marketing.pdf

xii An in-depth study of this same experiment can be found in our "Email Messaging" clinic.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-optimization/email-messaging.html

xiii For more on guiding the thought sequence see the Web clinic "No Unsupervised Thinking."
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/no-unsupervised-thinking.html

xiv Study call-to-action optimization more in-depth in part 2 of "Minor Changes, Major Lifts."
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/landing-page-optimization/minor-changes-major-lifts.html

xv For another Heritage Foundation experiment, see the article "Nonprofit Marketing: How a long, ugly page generated 274% more revenue."
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/landing-page-optimization-research-topics/call-to-action-location.html

xvi Cognitive momentum is especially important in ecommerce shopping carts. See "Shopping Carts Optimized" for more.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/shopping-carts-optimized.html

EMAIL MARKETING: WEEKLY NEWSLETTER SEES 400% LIFT IN REACTIVATION OF INACTIVE SUBSCRIBERS WITH PERSONALIZATION
- Courtney Eckerle, Reporter

CHALLENGE

Eventful has been connecting people with their local events for the last six years. Its site features live events and allows visitors to find tickets, favorite an artist, share they are attending a concert on social media and even campaign for an act come to their town with the "demand it!" feature.

Its initial technology didn't allow the team to make recommendations based off of the events a subscriber had "favorited" or demanded individually — only through the event's or act's general popularity on the website, the amount of tickets sold and social buzz.

The only alert system Eventful had in place was for artists the user had specifically "favorited" or requested on its website, which the Eventful team felt was missing out on the opportunity to anticipate its audience's interest in other related events.

"It was good … but we always knew that we could do better. So, we really resolved to creating a better customer experience that was driven by our own desire to be a better entertainment publisher," said Paul Ramirez, Vice President of Operations, Eventful.

CAMPAIGN

When a subscriber expresses interest in an artist or event through "favoriting" or demanding, a newly built algorithm gathers data from the data Eventful collected over the past six years, and recommends other acts the subscriber might be interested in.

"The recommendation engineered algorithm enables us to suggest instead of just one event based on what your favorite is … it enables us to provide you a list of events," Ramirez said.

These personalized recommendations were not only built into the existing email newsletter, The Weekly Entertainment Guide, but launched a new email product, Recommended Performer Alerts.

In describing this new level of personalization for Eventful's millions of registered email subscribers, Ramirez used the example of a subscriber interested in country singer Carrie Underwood.

"Because of everything we know about you, about Carrie Underwood, about country music and the taste of 20 million subscribers, plus other data that we use from third parties, we can predict with reasonable certainty that there are 20 other performing artists who you also like," he said.

In the launch of the new product combined with integrating this data into the newsletter for increased relevancy and personalization, Ramirez described the two email products as personal "live entertainment city guides that tell people, 'Here is what is going on in San Diego this week.'"

As part of the integration and launch of this recommendation engine, Eventful decided to use it as an opportunity to win-back some of its inactive subscribers. It saw a 400% increase in reactivation rates with the addition of the personalized recommendations.

Step #1. Build algorithm for increased personalization

Ramirez said Eventful has built this algorithm referencing the data store that it has been growing over the past six years.

"That expanded, essentially, the target that we could aim at to better serve our subscribers in making very smart recommendations," he said.

"So in a nutshell, we have three databases," he added, detailing the sources of data that Eventful drew from for this campaign:

- A consumer database capturing PII (Personally Identifiable Information) and information subscribers tell Eventful about a live event they are interested in

- A database of events featuring their times, locations and performers

- A database housing information about performers

In launching the Recommended Performer Alerts, Ramirez said Eventful set out to merge all of this information for the purpose of personalization, and in the constant effort to make Eventful a better entertainment news source for its community of registered subscribers.

Step #2. Test technology

The next step after building the technology to make the recommendations possible was, according to Ramirez, starting to test "it internally with a small community of friends and family that were willing to give us honest user feedback."

Ramirez said profiles were generated for this group, and a live act was "demanded" or favorited for them through Eventful.

From there, Ramirez said, "based on the technology that we have built, [we would show the user] 'here is a list of 17 things going on in San Diego that we think you would be interested in.'"

Ramirez said he knew Eventful was onto something when the reactions to the profiles in testing were "stunning."

"Universally, people said, 'I am interested in most of those, and the ones that I am not interested in … I get why you recommended them to me.'"

He said with the success of the initial test, Eventful expanded the project into two contexts — making a dedicated email product with the Recommended Performer Alert, as well as using the recommendation engine in the context of the Weekly Entertainment Guide.

Step #3. Send out personalized newsletter and alert email

Eventful's Weekly Events Guide (**Figure 1.1**) showcases a main upcoming event, a sponsored event and recommendation.

Among sections for top venues, trending events and local events, the newsletter encourages the subscriber to "tell us who you like" so they can be alerted when they come to town, as well as adding to the subscriber's recommendations.

Subscribers have the chance to further specify their preferences by clicking an "I'm not interested in [artist's name]" button in each recommendation.

Ramirez said the goal for Eventful is not in the volume of emails sent out, but "matching the preferences of the subscriber for how they want to receive notifications from Eventful."

Send out to inactive subscribers

Eventful pushed out this technology first to their active email population, and later to the inactive population as part of a reactivation campaign.

According to Ramirez, the recommendation engine technology, using normative data, was sent out to those subscribers who had not engaged with an Eventful email in the space of five months.

By using the recommendation engine technology, Eventful was able to achieve a 400% increase in its reactivation rates.

Figure 1.1

Subject Line: Feb. 03 – Events this week around San Diego
From: Eventful

Recommended Performer Alerts

The Recommended Performer Alerts (**Figure 1.2**) product suggests upcoming local acts the subscriber might be interested in, with the time, date and location of the event, and the ability to find tickets and share the event via social media.

Figure 1.2
Subject Line: Toby Keith - coming to your area
From: Eventful

A section below in the alert encourages the subscriber to "Add more performers to get better recommendations," and displays five related acts. The subscriber can press "add" immediately and it will be factored into their next suggestions.

Be aware of alert send frequency

"On the recommended alert product, which is a solo email, here is the challenge," Ramirez said.

One, he said, is even if a user has only "favorited" or demanded one artist with Eventful, if that act is someone like Justin Bieber, Carrie Underwood or Dave Matthews, "that recommendation can spawn scores of alerts so suddenly, you start receiving a lot of emails from Eventful."

Ramirez didn't want to have issues of services like Spotify and Sound Kick, which ingest the entire content of your iTunes library, and, "suddenly … there is now going to be 432 artists that are associated with my profile."

They have recognized this issue, and proceeded with caution when it comes to managing the amount of alerts sent to consumers' inboxes, and have also recently developed a mobile app to alert people as well, if receiving information that way is preferable for them.

"We are having to think fundamentally about how we message subscribers, so we tell them what they have asked us to tell them but in a way that works best for them," he said.

The initial iteration of the triggered alerts product produced a high volume of alerts that was deemed too frequent, according to Ramirez.

To solve this problem, Ramirez said they added criteria to the recommendation emails. Eventful looks at a range of information including subscriber actions towards events and performers across all of Eventful's properties, from the Alerts email, newsletter and website.

Consistently hone service to be more effective

Ramirez said after pushing out the dedicated recommendation alert product, while the team saw good encouragement rates, the clickthrough behavior wasn't what they had hoped for.

After coming to the conclusion "the recommendations were just too broad," Eventful consistently tweaked the algorithm over the past year to provide a better, and optimally personalized service.

Ramirez said his team spent time tweaking "the distribution cycles, rethinking whether or not we send that publication … rethinking the frequency with which we send it, do we gain performers if you have so many favorite alerts coming within a horizon of time."

He admitted they were "pretty significant technical challenges," but Eventful was, and still is, dedicated to consistently adjusting and re-addressing issues in an effort to make personalization more effective in its email products.

RESULTS

Ramirez said testing and using this technology in the sends has opened up possibilities for Eventful, saying the team "learned really interesting things … and those tests suggested new challenges that we hadn't thought of."

Currently, Ramirez said, the team has even "upped the ante" on the data it is collecting for the recommendations in order to continuously tailor recommendations to be more precise, and will be enacting those updates in the beginning of this year.

He added, "What you tell us when you subscribe is only half of the story, you also tell us who you like based on what you click on Eventful.com and what you click on within an email."

Currently, the alerts are only focused on performers, but Ramirez said the team has realized it is missing the opportunity to reach people on other events, such as movies or local events without specific "performers."

"Performer alerts … don't give insight into me as a dog lover, and me as a [George] Clooney fan. So, we are creating technologies that add to the data store … of my consumer record on Eventful," he said.

Ramirez added this will ensure not only concerts will be recommended to subscribers through the alerts, but other events subscribers have expressed interest in on Eventful's website, such as when the new George Clooney movie is released, or about a local Dog Surfing competition.

"We have upped the ante on the data that we collect and store so that we can provide a robust and much more comprehensive set of recommendations and I am really excited about that," he concluded.

By introducing the recommendation engine technology, Eventful saw a 400% increase in its reactivation of inactive subscribers.

Weekly Events Guide

- 26% open rate increase
- 97% clickthrough increase
- 56% increase in click-to-open rate

Recommended Performer Alert

- 15% median open rate
- 3% median click rate

EMAIL MARKETING: 58% OF MARKETERS SEE MOBILE SMARTPHONES AND TABLETS MOST IMPACTING EMAIL

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

In our recently released MarketingSherpa *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*, we asked marketers about new email marketing developments for 2013 …

Q: What new developments will affect your email marketing program in the next 12 months? Please select all that apply.

Development	Percentage
Pervasiveness of mobile smartphones and tablets	58%
Social media	57%
Use of engagement metrics by webmail clients to deliver and place messages in users' inboxes	40%
Location-based marketing	29%
Modifications to privacy policy regulations	20%
Gamification of marketing programs	10%
Cyber attacks on corporate and ESP subscriber databases	5%
Other	6%
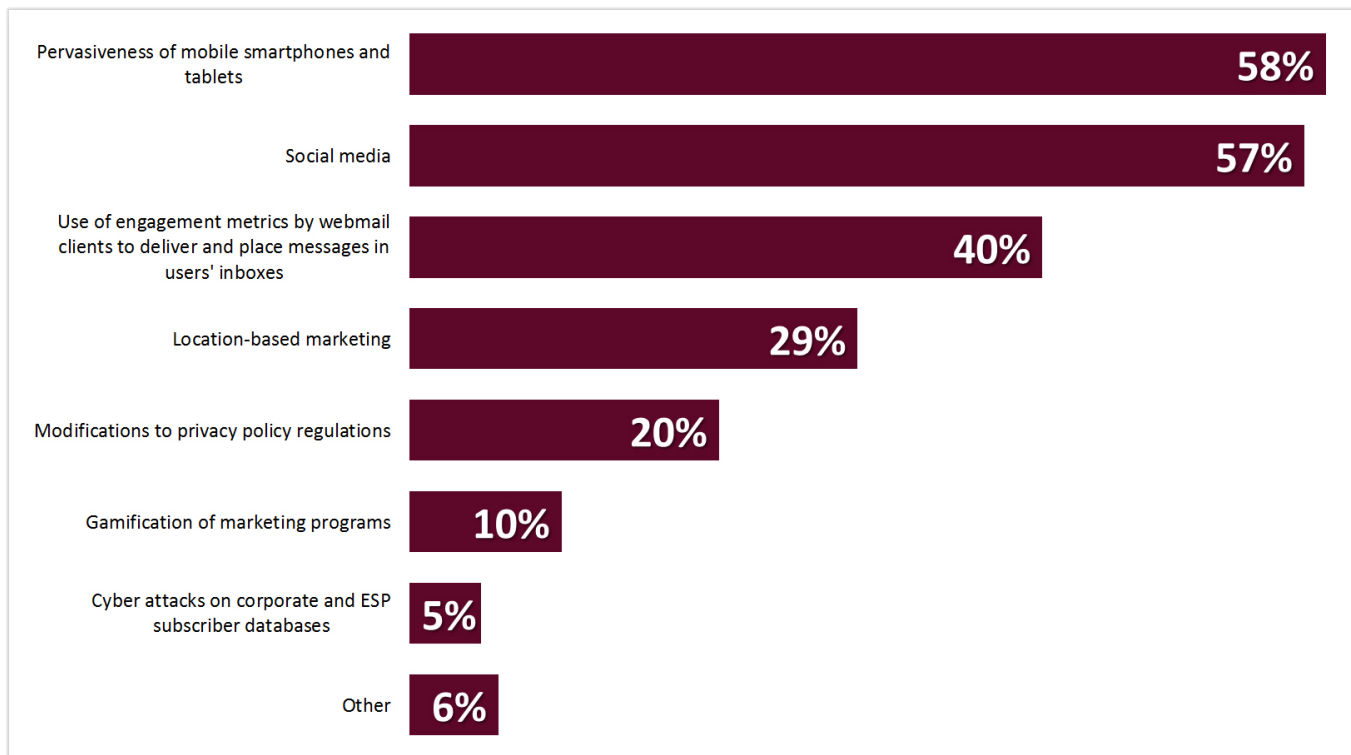
As always, we asked your peers what they thought of this data. Here are three takeaways from their feedback …

TAKEAWAY #1: USE MOBILE MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA TO ENGAGE A YOUNGER DEMOGRAPHIC

"In our market, loyal customers are getting older so we are focused on mobile and social as a way to communicate with younger customers to increase their loyalty. Spot on!!" said Randy Kobat, Vice President and General Manager, Strategic Initiatives.

TAKEAWAY #2: CONSIDER MOBILE DESIGN, NOT JUST CONTENT

"Mobile is dead on with our strategy and focus. We are developing programs with mobile in mind not only through content, but design. How have you faired with responsive design in email? Have you seen engagement go up?" asked Ivan Printis, Email Product Manager, Gannett.

At MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013, I moderated the Mobile Email Panel, in which Laura Velasquez, Marketing Program Manager, REI, shared the retailer's experience with responsive email design.

Below you can see how the emails display differently on an iPhone thanks to responsive design.

Default on iPhone   Responsive on iPhone

RESULTS
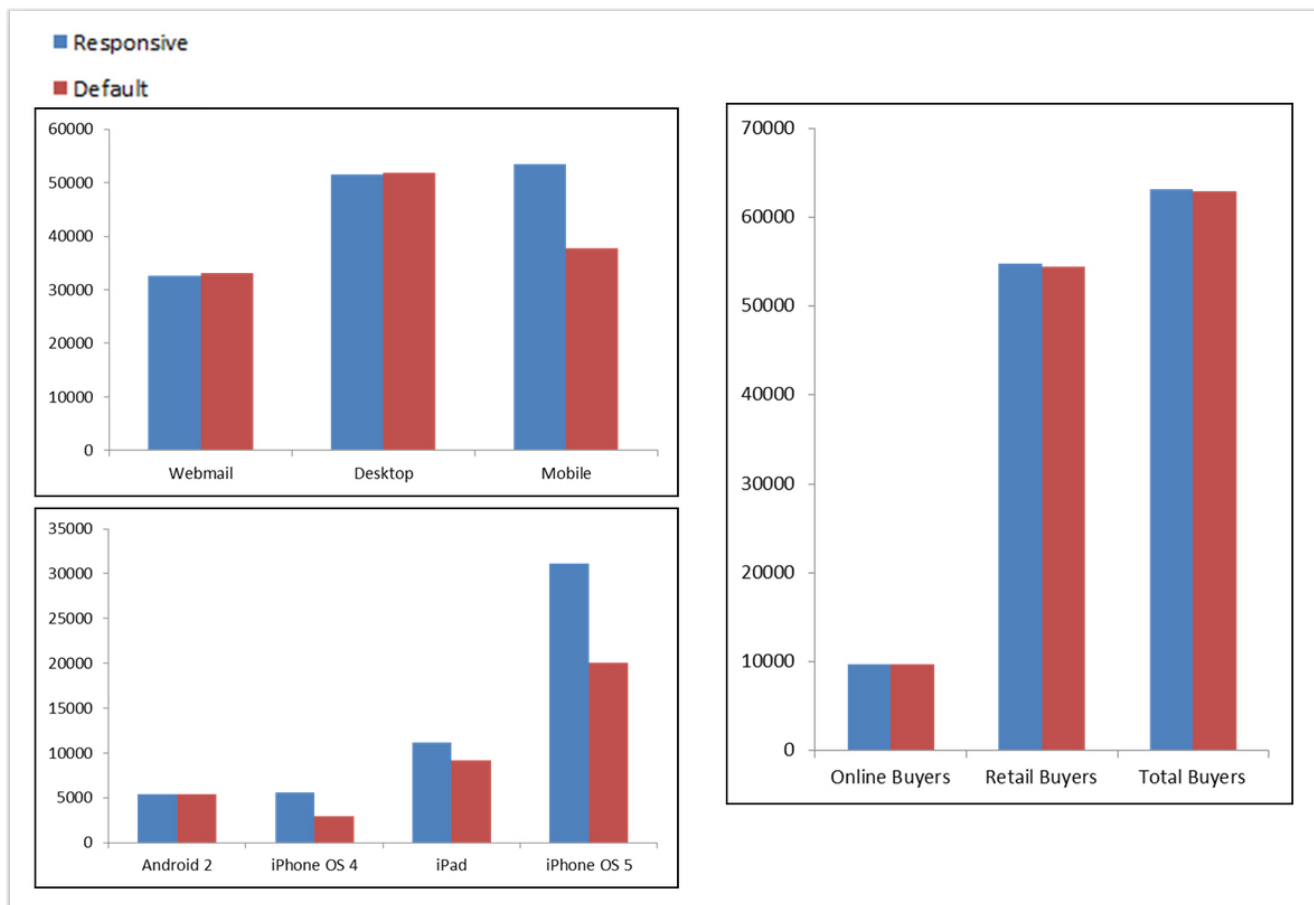
The above charts show the results of A/B testing the responsive design email versus a traditional email, and you can see how Laura's team was able to improve open rates with responsive design.

Laura also noted while mobile was slowly increasing as a percent of all opens of REI emails, the largest increase came after the change to a responsive layout.

For those looking to move to a responsive email design, Laura suggested marketers shouldn't only focus on making mobile-friendly changes and creating a template, but they should also look at change within their organization. She advised marketers to have discussions with key stakeholders so they understand how their email messages will be affected.

TAKEAWAY #3: INTEGRATE MOBILE AND SOCIAL

"Also, I'm curious to hear from the group about how you are integrating social with email. That has not really been on the radar, so I'd love feedback on using these two channels to communicate with readers," Ivan asked.

For some tips on this integration, feel free to read the MarketingSherpa blog post "Mobile Social Media Marketing: 3 tips to take advantage of this growing convergence" (http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/mobile/mobile-social-media-growing-convergence/).

MARKETING RESEARCH CHART: MARKETERS' LIST GROWTH TACTICS
- Brad Bortone, Senior Research Editor

In the *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*, an overwhelming 50% of our surveyed marketers indicated their lists were on a "somewhat positive" trend, with slowly growing lists. We also wanted to know how they were maintaining this positive trend, so we asked …

Q: Which of the following tactics is your organization using to drive email list growth? Please select all that apply.

When asked about the types of tactics their organizations used to drive email list growth, 77% of respondents indicated "website registration page" — nearly 30% more than the second-most selected option.

Tactic	Percent
Website registration page	77%
Social media sharing buttons in email	48%
Offline events	47%
Registration during purchase	41%
Online events	39%
Facebook registration page	34%
Email to a friend	31%
Paid search	29%
Blog registration page	28%
Co-registration programs	12%
Other	6%
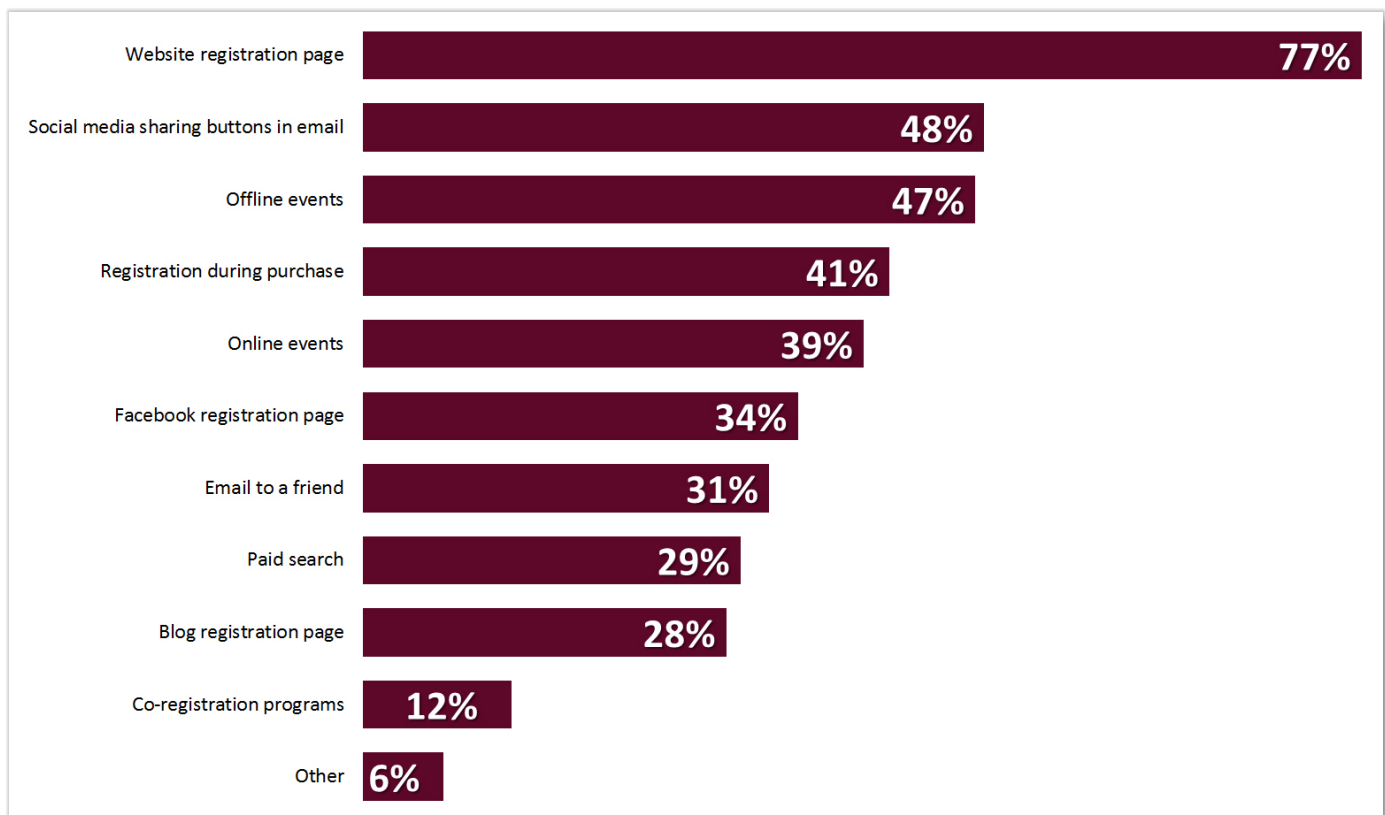
Interestingly, nearly half of respondents still seemingly found value in paper, pencil and organic word-of-mouth, as 47% utilized offline events as a list growth tactic — 10% more than those who selected "online events."

However, "email to a friend" — a tactic found to be "very easy" to implement in a subsequent survey question — was used by just 31% of respondents.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

Do you feel your list growth tactics have exhausted their usefulness for list quality and quantity? Is your organization employing the same types of tactics year-over-year? Are they continuing to perform well, or is your organization shifting to a more inbound approach?

EMAIL OPTIMIZATION: A SINGLE WORD CHANGE RESULTS IN A 90% LIFT IN SIGN-UPS

- David Kirkpatrick, Senior Reporter

One of the most testing-oriented sessions at MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013, recently held in Las Vegas, was a presentation by Michael Aagaard, Copywriter and self-described test junkie, ContentVerve. Michael offered the audience 12 test case studies in 30 minutes in a talk titled, "How to Optimize and Test: Calls-to-Action for Maximum Conversions."

For this presentation, Michael focused on call-to-action (CTA) buttons located on landing pages looking for a clickthrough, and this blog post will focus on three tests covering three aspects of call-to-action buttons: placement, copy and design.

CTA PLACEMENT TEST

This test pitted a CTA above the fold in the control against below the fold in the treatment:

Control:

Treatment:

304% Increase in Conversions
Statistical Confidence 98%

The results were somewhat counterintuitive with the below-the-fold treatment converting 304% higher than the control at a 98% confidence level.

"There are several other things going on in the treatment. So the whole lift can't be ascribed entirely to moving the CTA below the fold," Michael said.

He added, "However, the fact remains that the treatment with the CTA at the bottom of the page, way below the fold, outperformed the control variant with the CTA at the very top of the page – something that simply shouldn't be possible if you subscribe to the best practice rule that the CTA should always be above the fold in order to convert."

CTA COPY TEST

This test is a little cleaner than the previous example from an A/B testing perspective, as it involves only changing one word in the CTA copy. "Start your free trial" in the control becomes "Start my free trial" in the treatment.
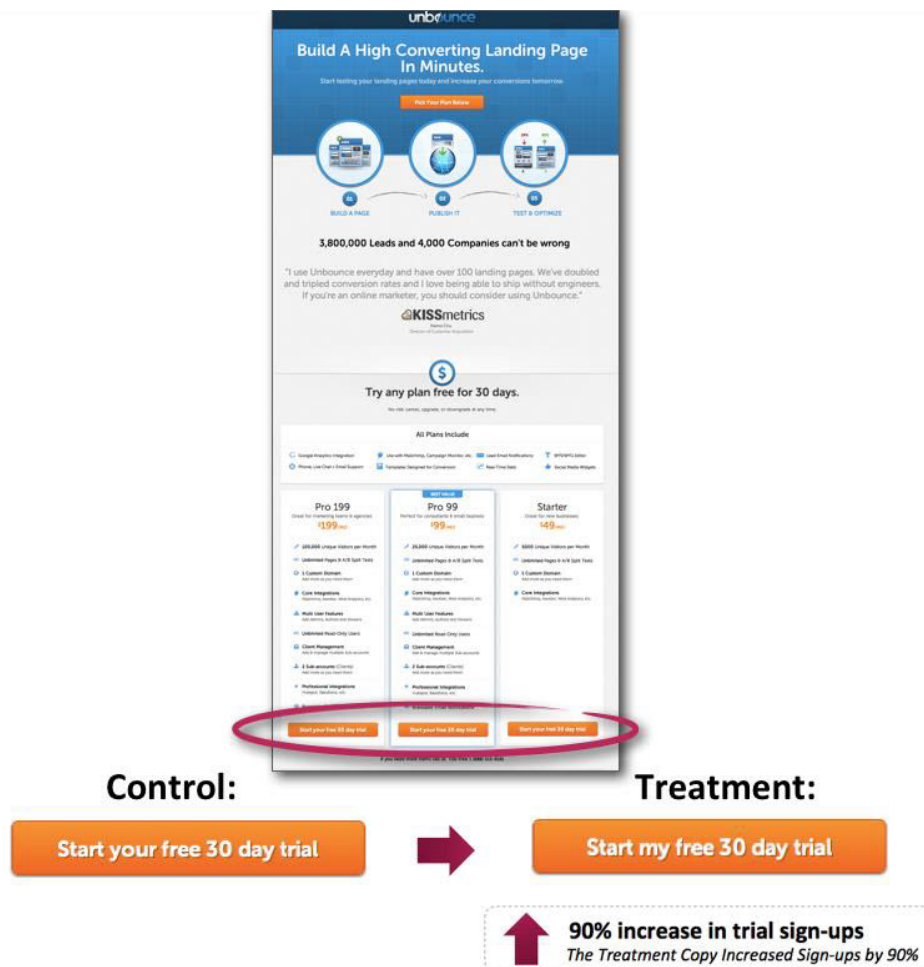
As you can see, the treatment changing "your" to "my" resulted in a 90% lift in sign-ups.

"One might be inclined to label this test as a fluke, because it seems so out of proportion that one word could have such a dramatic effect. But I've performed the same test on multiple sites, and I've consistently seen lifts of 30% to 90% by simply changing the possessive determiner 'your' to 'my' in the CTA copy," Michael explained.

He cautioned against applying this technique across the linguistic globe, however.

Michael said, "The funny thing is that I've performed similar tests in Danish, and it doesn't seem to work."

CTA DESIGN TEST

This final example offers a call-to-action button test that didn't produce a lift, but did produce a lesson.

For this test, Michael took another very simple A/B split test approach. The only change between the control and treatment was a design element – the color of the copy in the CTA button. The control was black copy on a green button, and the treatment was yellow copy on a green button.

As you can see, the control outperformed the treatment, with the treatment producing an 18% decrease in clickthrough rate.

"Here, I hypothesized that I could make the button stand out more and increase CTR by changing the font color in a green button from black to yellow," Michael explained.

He continued, "What a backfire! Changing the font color actually decreased clickthrough by 18%. This simple case study illustrates that even minor tweaks to your button design can have major impact on conversions. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of testing whether your optimization efforts are in fact optimizing the performance of your website."

WHAT TO TEST? HOW TO TEST?

Beyond the tests, Michael explained CTA buttons consist of two overall elements:

- **Design** – the color, shape and size of the CTA button
- **Copy** – the text in the button

He said, "In order to optimize for maximum conversions, you need to also understand the interrelationship between these two elements and the roles they play in the conversion sequence."

Michael added the shape and color of CTA buttons provide a visual cue to emphasize the placement of the button and button design should make the button stand out from the rest of the webpage or email copy.

The button copy comes into play at that "last critical moment" when the prospects have to make up their mind on whether to click, or not. Copy that conveys value and relevance receives more clicks, and copy should focus on what the prospect *gets* rather than what they *have to part with*.

Michael concluded his presentation by offering the audience five steps for testing calls-to-action:

1. "Diagnose your call-to-action – create a hypothesis about what is wrong."
2. "Use the optimization principles to come up with possible treatments."
3. "Assess whether copy changes, design changes or both will have the greatest impact."
4. "I recommend a simple A/B split test."
5. "The click itself is an important conversion goal – but remember to track the final conversion goal. Sometimes CTR goes up, but sign-ups go down, and vice versa."

EMAIL MARKETING: 3 OVERLOOKED ASPECTS OF AUTOMATED MESSAGES

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

In the MarketingSherpa *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*, we asked email marketers how they use automation capabilities …

Q: What type of automated, event-triggered, lifecycle email messages does your organization deploy? Please check all that apply.

Category	Percentage
Welcome	50%
Thanks	48%
Transactional (e.g., bills, receipts, order confirmations)	40%
Activation (e.g., how to use a product or service)	26%
Post purchase (e.g., customer survey, product review)	25%
Upsell/ Cross promotional (e.g., product recommendations)	25%
Date triggered (e.g., renewals, reorder, birthday)	24%
Triggered based on website behavior (e.g., visits, browser history)	18%
Event countdown	18%
Win-back/re-engagement	15%
Shopping cart abandonment	9%
Other	7%
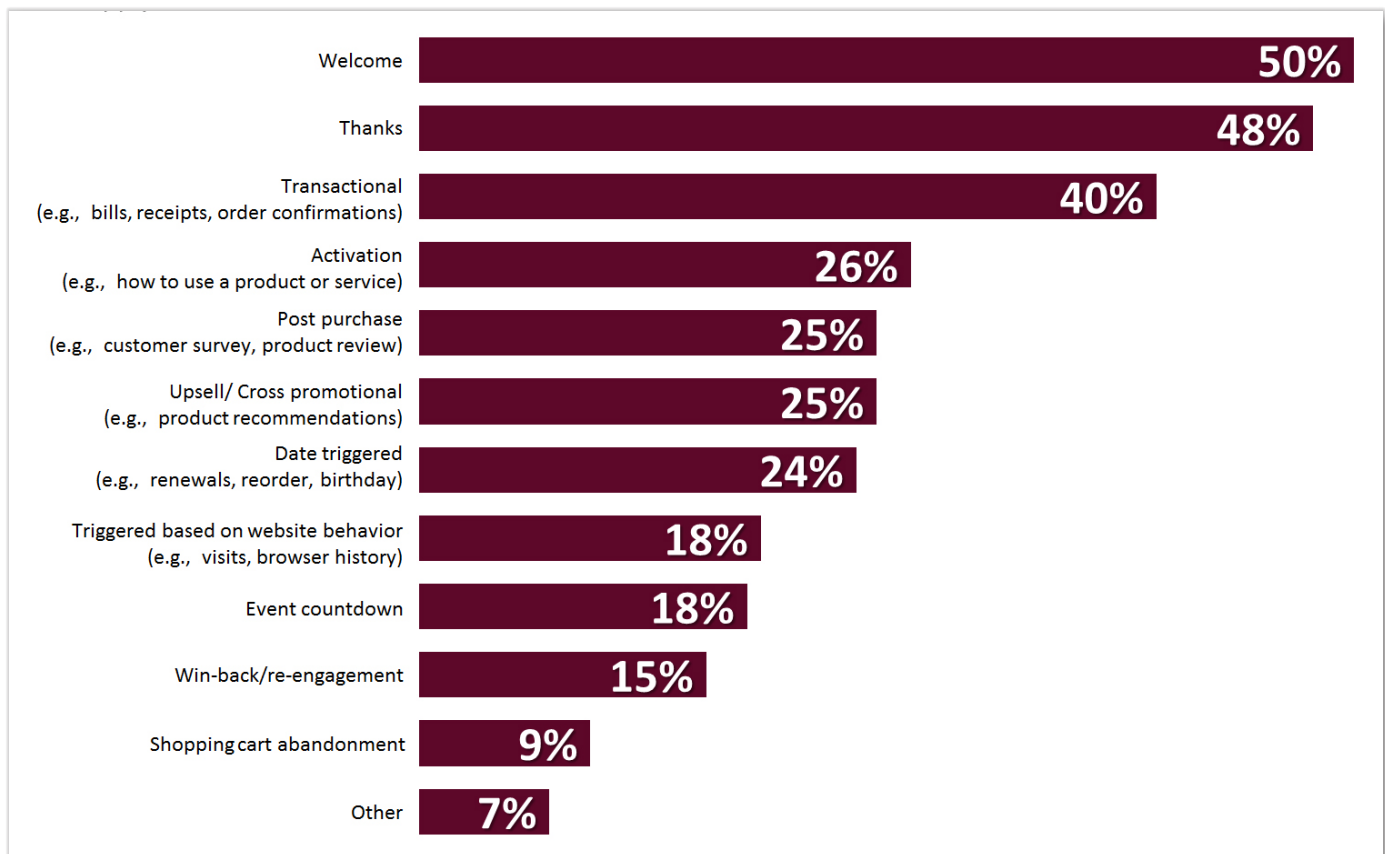
As always, we asked the MarketingSherpa audience for their actionable advice based on this data. We received two interesting tips from Richard Hill and one from Chris Hexton …

NURTURE CURRENT CUSTOMERS

Most marketers use automated triggered emails to strengthen relationships with early-stage buyers (i.e., for 'lead nurturing').

However, one of the most underappreciated opportunities is to use triggered emails to strengthen relationships with current (and recently lost) customers:

- Advocate social referral
- Contract renewal reminder
- Product education/training
- Customer service issue management
- Low product usage alert
- Upsell/cross sell
- Win/loss
- Net promoter score segment migration
- Win-back campaigns

All of these "customer nurturing" programs represent great ways for modern marketers to re-balance their approach, and use trigger emails (and marketing automation tools) to more consistently support the whole buying journey.

THE GAP BETWEEN WHAT MARKETERS SHOULD DO, AND WHAT THEY ACTUALLY DO

When it comes to triggered emails, there's way too large a gap between what marketers should be doing and what we are doing. Despite a growing awareness that behaviorally triggered emails are more effective – anywhere between 75%-200%, according to sources like Epsilon and Eloqua – only 2.6% of all emails are sent this way. I suspect it's because too many marketers are stuck in an "It won't cost us any more to send this email to everyone, so why wouldn't we?" mentality. That needs to change.

While the hard costs of a mass-blast approach may be negligible, there are other taxes to consider, including less-robust email engagement rates, rising opt-outs and ultimately, the risk of eroding the brand equity you've worked so hard to build because you sent too many irrelevant emails to too many people.

– Richard Hill, Vice President and Practice Lead, Marketing Automation, Quarry Integrated Communications

FOCUS ON CUSTOMER LIFETIME VALUE

In my experience, automated / triggered emails need to be thought of in the context of the FULL customer lifecycle with a focus on customer lifetime value.

As the data shows, most companies have nailed up-front automated emails (e.g., Welcome, Thanks, Receipts, etc.) as these are now essentially "must haves." They're not that exciting nor do they offer the best opportunities to get customers buying again.

Just like long-tail keywords can lead to massive gains on the SEO front, thinking long-term when it comes to email re-marketing is important. Targeting previous buyers that haven't returned in a few months, customers that have viewed a specific product category multiple times without a purchase, specifically emailing customers who display interest in a limited time offer, etc., are all great examples of relatively easy wins that online businesses should harness.

– Chris Hexton, Co-Founder, Vero

Marketing Optimization

············· **Major Experiment Briefing**

THE WEB AS A LIVING LABORATORY
THE WEB AS A LIVING LABORATORY: THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES FROM OVER A DECADE OF EXPERIMENTATION

- Content created by Flint McGlaughlin, Paul Cheney, Austin McCraw, Shaun Metzger
- Research conducted by Adam Lapp, Gaby Paez, Jon Powell, Jon Michaeli

"The next CMO is going to come NOT from a television or radio background, but rather from a digital media background."

The man speaking was a senior leader from one of the largest companies in the world. Its marketing budget was more than four billion dollars. And his statement, though simple enough, had profound implications. **The world was changing.**

Indeed, his world was about to change radically. Over the next 24 months, he would transform the digital division of his business, shifting the Web from its role as an "important channel" to a central dynamic of the entire business ecosystem. **The Web would become a living laboratory** through which the company would experiment its way into a more profound understanding of the customer. [i]

In the process, revenue from e-commerce would **more than double**, with vital product groups growing by more than **300%**. All the while, this leader would gain in stature, not just from the remarkable financial results he would produce, but from the remarkable customer insights he would garner.

Moreover, the executive team would acknowledge this remarkable achievement with two tangible actions: First, they would **promote him**, publicly recognizing his success at a major meeting in London. [ii] Second (and perhaps more meaningful), they would **triple his division's head-count**, empowering him with the personnel needed to sustain his success.

Now an anecdote does not make an argument. Business books are replete with stories and one more is hardly persuasive. **But there is something revolutionary happening in the heart of enterprise everywhere**, and this simple account is an important (and quite personal) example. The man described is my friend. I cannot reveal his name because this story unfolded just seven days ago, and because I suspect that my friend may soon be promoted again. His words, uttered two years before this remarkable transformation, were prophetic.

WHY DO PEOPLE SAY "YES"?

The world is changing. In the research lab where I work, MECLABS, we have witnessed this transformation first-hand. Over the last **20 years**, we have conducted more than **10,000 path experiments**, recorded and analyzed more the **five million phone calls**, interviewed more than **500,000 decision-makers**, and we have benchmarked within **36,000 companies** – all in an effort to understand the answer to a single, essential question: Why do people say "yes"?

The question is particularly fascinating when we consider that for the first time in the history of the world, scientists and marketers can **peer deeply into the thought-sequence of consumers**, observing their decision process across millions of transactions. The data is staggering, and it becomes especially meaningful when one views it not with a "how much" mentality, **but rather a "why so" mentality**. Why do people say "yes"? What can we learn from these cognitive buying patterns?

The question transcends the medium; it informs our thinking regarding social, mobile, search, and even the future technology breakthroughs that will redefine the digital landscape. It is the very same question that drove the transformation in the company described above. This leader was one of my students, and he was quick to grasp **three essential findings** from the many years of research inside MECLABS, and he was just as quick to implement those findings in a way that has had measurable impact. [iii] A brief discussion of each of these points could help you.

....

"The sales and marketing funnel is not constructed with ads and pages; it is comprised of thoughts and conclusions."

....

PEOPLE DON'T BUY FROM WEBSITES; PEOPLE BUY FROM PEOPLE

First, the sales and marketing funnel is not constructed with ads and pages; it is comprised of thoughts and conclusions. People don't buy from websites; people buy from people. [iv] **The task of marketing is not to craft collateral, but rather to guide thinking**. [v] All marketing should influence a decision. [vi] Thus, the marketer begins their work not with a sequence of ads, but with a sequence of thoughts. [vii]

In practical terms, this means that we must see through the page into the mind. And what we are attempting to see is only this: **the series of micro-yes(s) that are necessary to achieve a macro-yes**. A macro-yes represents an ultimate objective, most likely a sale. A micro-yes represents each (even tiny) decision necessary to the ultimate macro-yes. It may be easier to understand this point with an illustration.

What if your team was tasked to improve the performance of the email in **Figure 1.1**? How would you frame your analysis? Most marketers would recall various maxims they have learned in conferences or read in blogs or books. They would bring those maxims to the table for discussion. Others would weigh in with their own opinions and preferences eventually yielding a **"design-by-committee"** – with the most influential person at the table having a disproportionate impact on the process. **This is the product of a social dynamic rather than a science dynamic**. [viii]
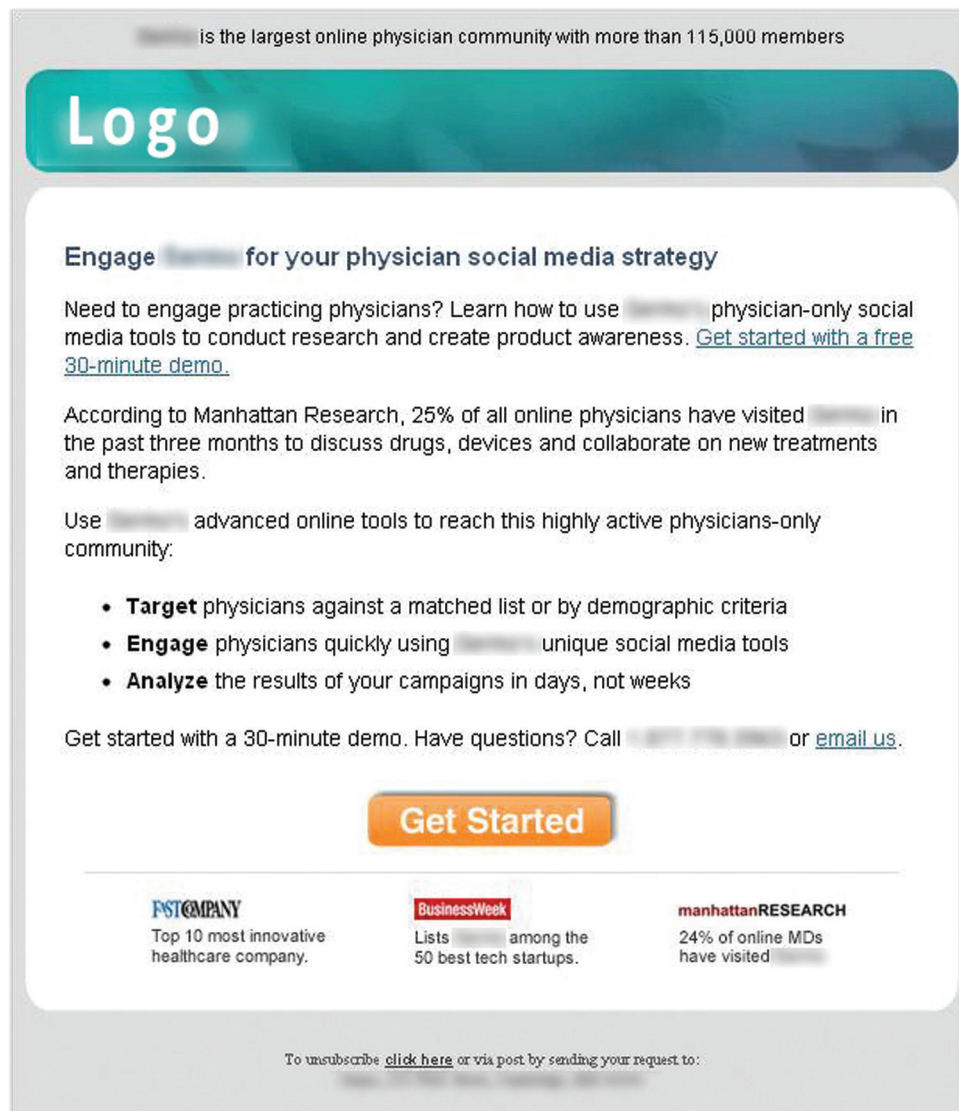
Figure 1.1 - Email Control

This page, though above average in many respects, still has conflated the objective of the email with the objective of the landing page. This email is selling and asking for too much at this stage in the conversion process.

There is another way. This email may be analyzed through a different prism. It can be seen as a series of micro-yes(s). We are asking people to move from the headline to the first paragraph, from the first paragraph to the bullet points, from the bullet points to the offer paragraph and so on. Eventually, we are asking people to click on the call-to-action button. And **for every "ask," implied or not, there is a necessary "yes," conscious or not**. When the email is considered within this framework it becomes easier to detect a problem with its chain of "asks." Indeed, it seems to be conflating its objective (to get a click) with the objective of the landing page (to get a lead). [ix] It is asking for too much, too soon in the process (see **Figure 1.2**).
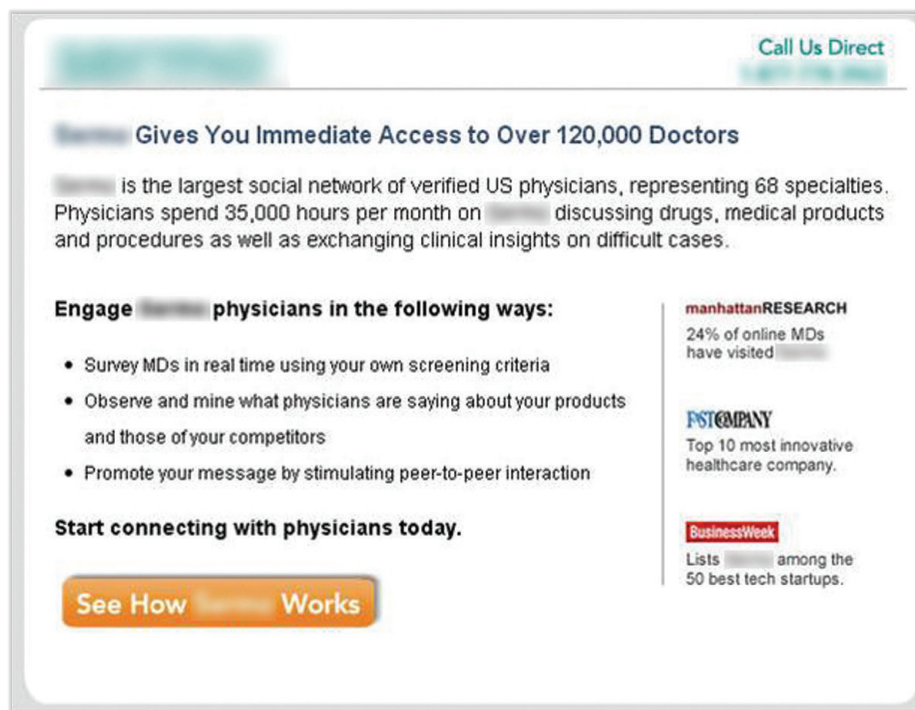
Figure 1.2 - Email Treatment

The treatment email has been crafted to guide the reader through a logical series of micro-conversions. Notice how the call-to-action asks for just the right amount of commitment at this stage of the conversion process.

Viewed through this thought-sequence prism, it becomes easier to move from diagnosis to treatment. A new email is designed to step very intentionally through each micro-yes, careful not to ask for **too much**, not to ask **too soon**, and not to ask **out of order** (see **Figure 1.3**). Does this methodical approach yield a favorable result? Yes, it does: a carefully validated 104% increase in conversion (see **Figure 1.4**). It is important to note this is a **microcosm of the entire series of micro-yes(s)**, beginning from the channel and flowing all the way through the landing pages and into the call center. It is also important to note that this simple case study is truly representative; its findings may be demonstrated in hundreds of other experiments.
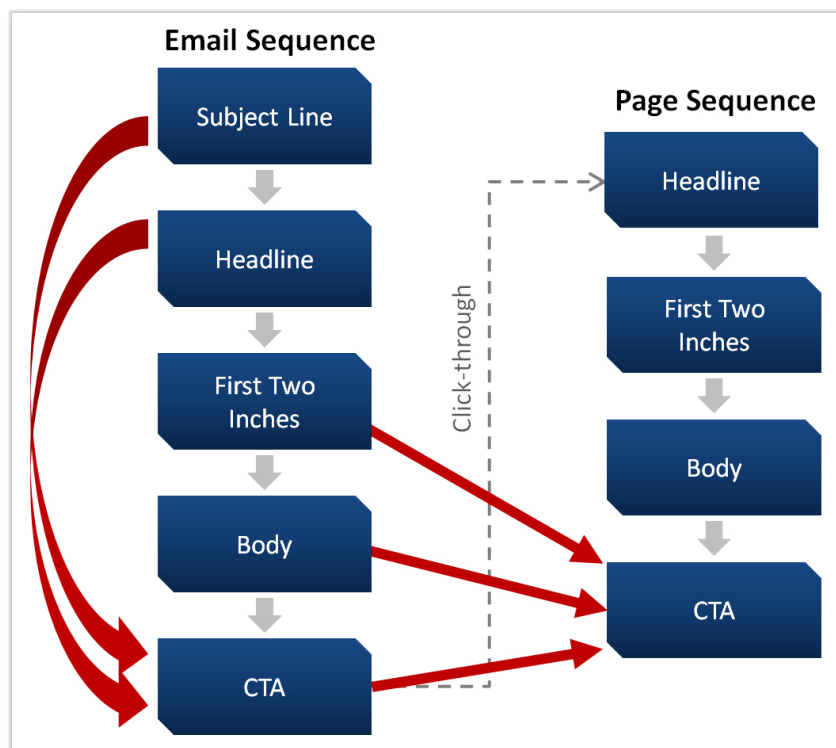
Figure 1.3 - Conflated Objectives
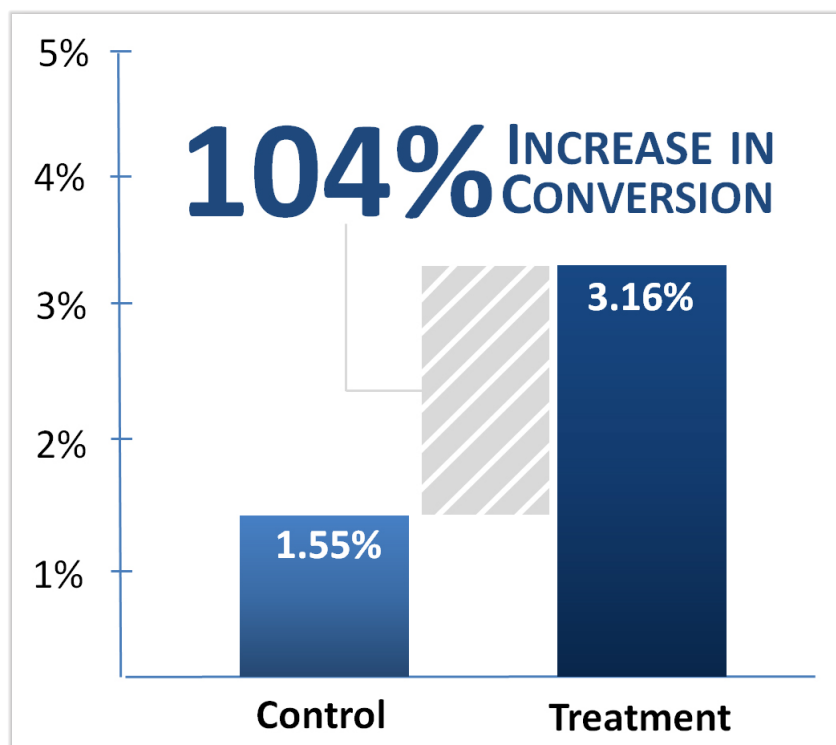
Figure 1.4 - Results

By changing the email messaging to better guide the reader, we were able to generate a 104% lift in clickthrough rate.

The point is simple: We need to transcend our conversation about emails, ads, pages, even about "online versus offline" with a conversation focused on the prospect's sequence of thoughts. **We need to beware of company-centric logic, and we need to embrace customer-centric logic**. [x]

GRAVITY IS NOT THE MARKETER'S FRIEND

Second, **people aren't falling into our funnel, they are falling out**. Gravity is not the marketer's friend. More people are falling out than are flowing in. The way the funnel is currently presented distorts reality. The image of the funnel must be inverted. Thomas Kuhn said "… the scientist who embraces a new paradigm is like the man wearing inverting lenses" (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, pp.122).

Marketers need a new, more accurate paradigm. They need to see with Kuhn's "inverting lenses." More to the point, **we need to see the funnel in a new way – the funnel itself must be inverted** (see **Figure 2.1**). With this new perspective, we can better fathom the nature of our work. Let gravity represent the organic resistance in the marketplace: white noise, competing offers, distractions and so on. **The marketer's task is to overcome this force, to counter it, and thus to win the macro-yes**. Yet, when one hundred people flow into our funnel, we are often satisfied if just two complete the journey (excited that our conversion rate has moved from 1.5% to 2.0%). Why? Why do we expect so little?
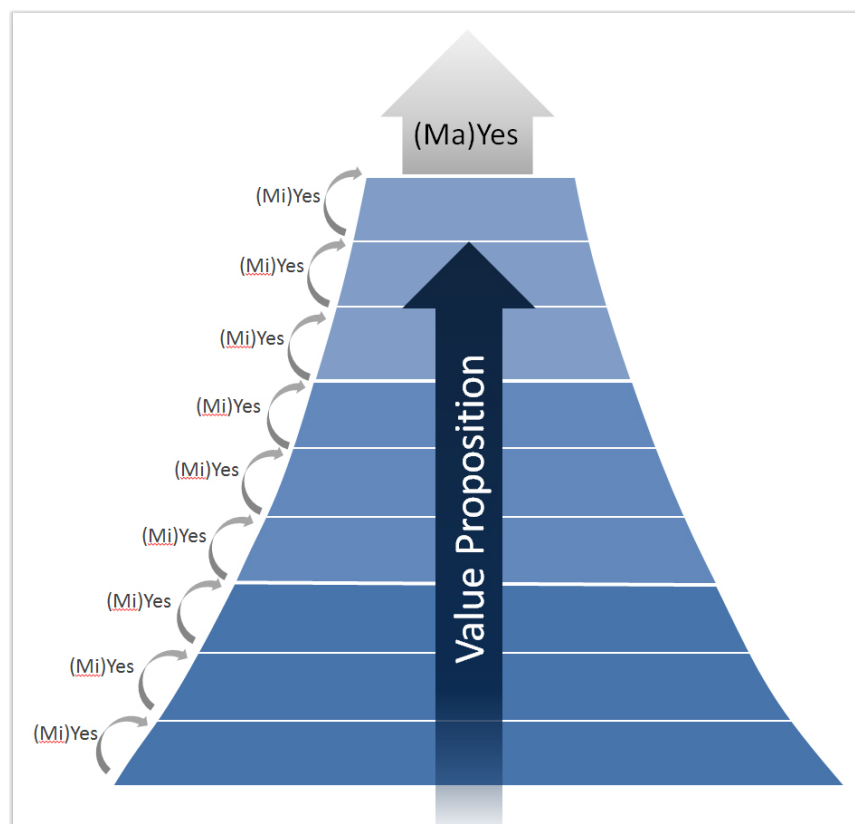
Figure 2.1 - Inverted Funnel

There are billions of dollars leaking in our flawed processes. We must not think of the Internet as just a new opportunity. Responsible leaders need to acknowledge that **we are losing unacceptable amounts of money** in our legacy sales and marketing processes. The Internet is a laboratory; it is a way to discern each micro-yes, and thus, to tune our approach until we achieve the maximum number of macro-yes(s) – online and offline. [xi] **The inverted funnel is not a physical construct, it is a mental construct**. Indeed, it is a message stretched like a cognitive fabric around the frame of the medium. And we can use it to solve the essential business challenge: How can we get more people to say "yes"?

. . . .

"The business that cannot articulate a rational value proposition is just surviving on pockets of ignorance.."

. . . .

THE ESSENCE OF OUR MESSAGE IS THE VALUE PROPOSITION

Third, marketers don't drive traffic; we attract it. And the value proposition is the force that draws people up the inverted funnel. [xii] **Your value proposition is the primary justification for the existence of your enterprise** (see **Figure 2.1** on the previous page). [xiii] Indeed, the business that cannot articulate a rational value proposition is just surviving on pockets of ignorance. **The essence of our message is the value proposition**.

The marketer communicates with a particular type of message – an offer. It comes in the form of a three-part dialogue: *The offer-from-agent asks (Q1) "Will you choose …?" The offer-to-agent counters, (Q2) "Why should I …?" And the offer-from-agent promises, (P1) "Because I will …" (P1) is the ultimate determinant of an offer's success*. The marketer must present an argument that takes the form of an ultimate reason supported by "evidentials." This is the value proposition. [xiv]

Researchers at MECLABS have been striving for the last 15 years to develop a framework for the concept of value proposition. Indeed, there is no generally accepted definition in academic or commercial literature. We have reviewed **1,100+ academic articles**, we have constructed a **100-year timeline of related terms**, and we have conducted more than **10,000 path tests** to measure the efficacy of our framework. The most efficient way to communicate our findings in this short article is with one vital question: *If I am your ideal customer, why should I purchase from you rather than any of your competitors?* The question appears simple. But it is easy to miss the import of its construct. It may be best to unpack this interrogative.

- **"If I"** denotes that we are answering a first-person question. The marketer must learn not to see in a better way, but to see with new eyes – the eyes of the customer.
- **"your ideal prospect"** denotes that we are focused on a specific customer segment. The marketer must face trade-offs. We must choose whom we will not serve to discover whom we can best serve.
- **"why should I"** denotes that the epicenter of the value proposition is an ultimate reason. It is the culmination of a careful argument.

- **"rather than your competitors"** denotes that your value proposition must have an only-factor. The marketer justifies the company's existence by demonstrating that the company uniquely serves a unique set of customers.

The strength of the marketer's message is grounded in a single word – "because." **Every time you ask a prospect to take an action, you must justify the ask**. And for every ask, there is a cognitive calculation. Essentially the prospect, even if at a sub-conscious level, engages in elementary math: **VfAc-CfAc** which is to say, they subtract the perceived cost-force from the perceived value-force. [xv] If the sum is negative, a micro-yes is unlikely. Think of the challenge as a fulcrum. [xvi] **Marketers must tip that fulcrum** so that the perceived value outweighs the perceived cost (see **Figure 3.1**).
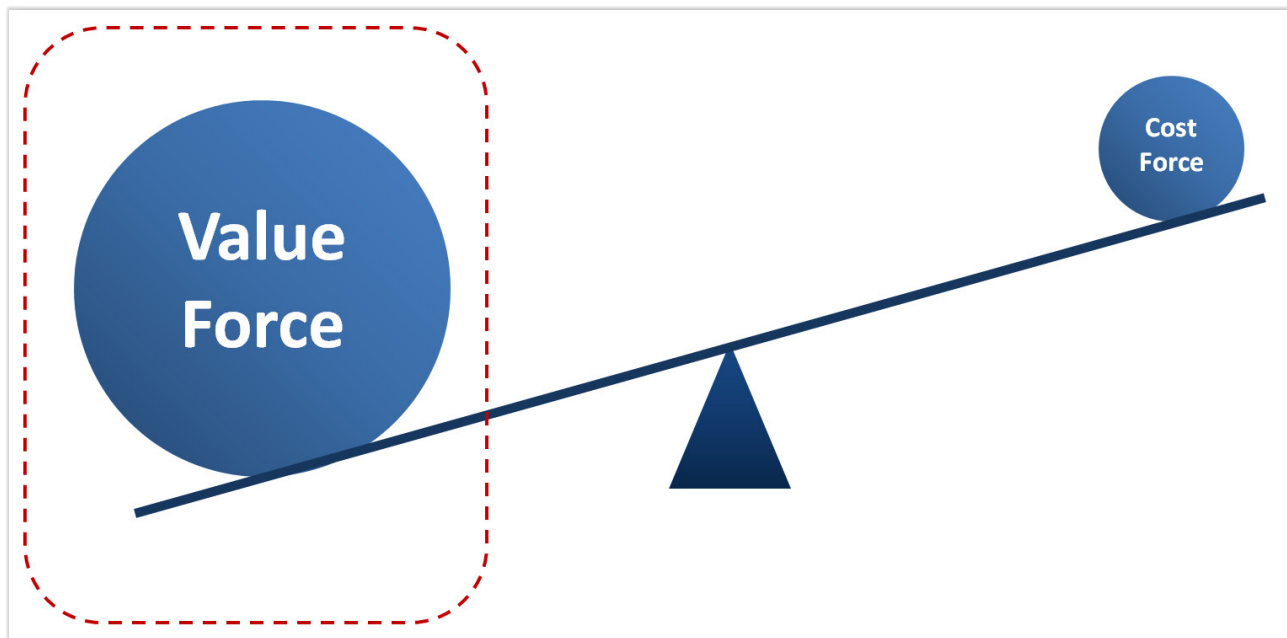
Figure 3.1 - Exchange Fulcrum

Consider the following page (**Figure 4.1**). It was submitted by a student – a marketing leader from a Fortune 500 company. Her words belied her frustration, "Flint, I know we have a value proposition, but for the life of me, I can't figure out how to say it." She had made a noble effort and this page represents that effort. It was the company's best performing offer. Still, **adequacy is the enemy of excellence**, and this page was barely adequate. The researchers at MECLABS decided to help her. And their first step was to challenge this page with a simple question: "If I am the ideal customer, why would I purchase my list from you rather than your competitors?"

Figure 4.1 - Page Control

The page is relying on vague statements of quality rather than specific statements of quantity.

Much of the real quantified value statements are hidden in the right-hand column and in the video.

One may discern the answer "Because we have the most accurate mailing lists." But the claim lacked force. Again, **people don't buy from websites; people buy from people**. How effective is this headline within the true context of relationship? Imagine a single man approaching a girl at a party, "Searching for the most eligible bachelor? Your hunt is over." It's not hard to envision the response. ... And the "envisioning" is important, for a headline is really just a "pick-up" line. Its job is to draw some-one into a (mental) conversation. **If our headlines do not work re-envisioned in the context of relationship, they are likely not going to work in the context of a product offer**. xvii

And the problem continues: The "500 free lead incentive," with its red italicized text, only fosters anxiety. [xviii] The "aw shucks" tone of the best data guaranteed seems impotent. [xix] The promise on the form field feels more like a threat. [xx] The two-column layout interferes with the linear thought-sequence, and so on. [xxi] **The page is failing to communicate an effective value proposition**. Thus, a new page must be designed, transcending the diagnosis with a (testing) treatment (**Figure 4.2**). What is the result?

Figure 4.2 - Page Treatment

Key specifics (e.g., "26 Million Phone Calls," "Trusted since 1972," "210 million U.S. consumers") are utilized to credibly express the value of this offer in the headline.

Key statements are highlighted throughout the copy to draw attention to the value.

Images are utilized to draw attention to the value.

The new page **outperforms the old by 201.3%** (**Figure 4.3**). Quality leads double, and the impact goes straight to the P&L. What is the reason for this dramatic difference? The value proposition is communicated with more force by fine -tuning the four elements that underlie its strength: **appeal, exclusivity, clarity,** and **credibility**. Essentially, the "because factor" is intensified and so the velocity through the sequence of micro-yes(s) is also intensified. This translates into more people saying "yes."
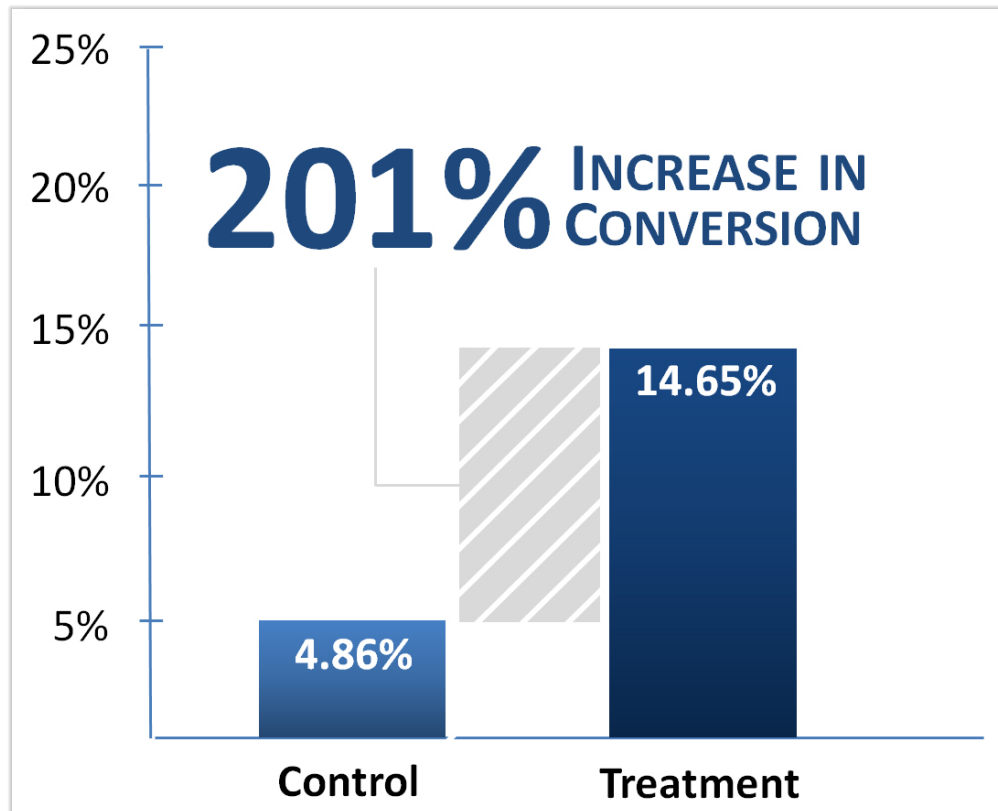
Figure 4.3 - Results

By changing the landing page to better express the value proposition, we were able to generate a 201% lift in conversion.

THE INTERNET IS MORE THAN A CHANNEL; IT'S A LABORATORY

This last case study brings together the simple construct of this article. The Internet is more than a channel; **it is a laboratory through which we can experiment our way into optimal messaging**. To do that we must recognize three points: **First**, the sales and marketing funnel is not constructed with ads and pages; it is comprised of thoughts and conclusions. **Second**, people aren't falling into our funnel, they are falling out. The image of the funnel must be inverted. **Third**, marketers don't drive traffic; we attract it. And the value proposition is the force that draws people up the inverted funnel.

Indeed—Henry James, the Pulitzer prize-winning author said, "Ideas are in truth, forces. Infinite, too, is the power of personality. A union of the two always makes history." To reprise James, we may relate "the idea" to the value proposition and the "personality" to the brand. When the idea and the personality come together, the marketer makes history (read Apple).

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SMB MARKETING IN 2013: 68% OF SMALL BUSINESSES TO INCREASE MARKETING BUDGET

- David Kirkpatrick, Senior Reporter

I recently came across research from AWeber that found 68% of small businesses plan on increasing their marketing budget in 2013, and a full 97% plan on at least maintaining their current level of marketing spending.

That's a very solid majority of small businesses that are putting more money into their marketing efforts.

"We believe that's linked to a more positive economic outlook," says Hunter Boyle, Senior Business Development Manager, AWeber. "There was plenty of uncertainty in 2012, but SMBs are resilient, and 58% said they were optimistic about revenue growth for the 2012 holiday season."

He adds, "Plus, 47% said they felt the economy had changed positively last year. Looking ahead, when marketers are more upbeat, and seeing the value and returns from channels like email, they're more confident and, in turn, more willing to invest in effective channels." (Hunter Boyle will be speaking in an industry perspective session – "Breathing Life (and ROI) Back Into Your Email Marketing" – at MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013 in Las Vegas).

The AWeber research got me thinking. At MarketingSherpa, our usual goal is to provide examples and ideas marketers of any size company might be able to find "transferable principles" that can help ease their marketing pain points, or shed light on potential marketing opportunities.

Since small businesses are reporting an increase in the marketing budget, this MarketingSherpa blog post focuses squarely on small- and mid-sized company marketers and feature tips and tactics geared for the SMB marketer.

To gain some insight into where SMB marketers should focus in 2013, I reached out to industry experts in the SMB sector.

For today's post, here is Rick Jensen, Senior Vice President, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, Constant Contact, on SMB marketing in 2013.

MarketingSherpa: What marketing channels should be the focus of SMB marketers in 2013? Why should they focus on these channels?

Rick Jensen: Money is always a critical issue for SMBs, but time is also a key resource issue.

Email marketing has long served as a valuable tool because it's both a cost-effective and efficient way to

engage with customers and prospects, and that won't change any time soon. Email is projected to continue to grow in 2013, and will remain the preferred consumer marketing channel because people have control over it. It's nonintrusive.

But it's more important than ever to be smart about email marketing, because consumers have become extremely discerning about what they allow in their inbox. If email looks amateurish, regularly contains content that isn't of interest to the recipient, or is sent on a haphazard schedule, consumers will opt out and never return.

And, while email marketing should be a core component to any marketing strategy in 2013, the key to maximizing its success will be integrating with other channels—like social media, events, mobile—to achieve real engagement with customers.

MS: Are there channels that might be more valuable for SMB marketers than enterprise marketers?

RJ: I wouldn't say that any one channel is more valuable to one group over the other, but I do think that there are some areas in which small businesses have a distinct advantage over their enterprise counterparts—social media in particular.

Most small business owners have an almost innate sense of what it takes to engage effectively with their customers. In 2013, I expect small businesses will approach social media marketing as a business-critical daily activity. And with the proliferation of social media tools, they'll really master how to measure it.

MS: What are some maybe surprising, interesting or cutting-edge marketing channels, strategies and specific tactics that SMB marketers should be aware of in 2013?

RJ: It's not surprising, really, but with millions of Americans now shopping by browsing hundreds of directories, websites and mobile apps that provide local business info, even the smallest small business will have to mobile-optimize and enrich their online presence because a key for success in 2013 will be getting found. That means small businesses need a plan of attack for leveraging mobile search, distributing their information across the most popular apps, and mobile-optimizing their websites.

MS: Do you have any examples of what SMB marketers are planning in 2013, and where their marketing dollars and focus are going?

RJ: Eighty-two percent of small business owners have said their main source of new business comes from referrals, so it's no surprise they're taking a hard look at technologies that boost social visibility and feed the referral engine.

We recently asked our customers which tools they find effective at both attracting new, and engaging existing, customers. Sixty percent said social media, 52% said an event management tool, and 50% said email

marketing, so we expect these channels to be a focus.

(Note: All cited data points are from Constant Contact's upcoming Technology Pulse Survey.)

MS: What is your single best piece of advice for the SMB marketer planning the rest of 2013?

RJ: To succeed, small business owners have the difficult task of keeping pace with a rapidly evolving technology landscape. They're definitely up to the challenge, but a good piece of advice would be to look at all of these tools through an engagement marketing lens to ensure that they're making the best choice for their business.

A sobering data point ...

Answering the question on cutting-edge marketing channels for SMB marketers, Rick mentioned mobile. The *MarketingSherpa 2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report* includes our latest research, and businesses ranging in size from one to 99 employees report not understanding their customer's mobile adoption rate:

Chart 1.18 Understanding of customer mobile device adoption

How well does your organization know the level of mobile device adoption of its customers?

Category	Percentage
Not at all - We don't know our customers' adoption rate	29%
Not well - We presume our customers WILL adopt mobile devices early in the conversion path	24%
Somewhat well - We use outside research to guide our mobile strategy	19%
Not applicable or don't know	11%
Not well - We presume our customers WILL NOT use mobile devices in the conversion path	11%
Very well - We collect data on our customers' mobile preferences and behavior	6%

10-99 Employees

©2012 MarketingSherpa Mobile Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded August 2012, N=140

marketing**sherpa**

As you can see, companies with 10-99 employees report just not knowing how active their customers are in the mobile channel with only 6% actually tracking customer's behavior and preferences. For companies with 10 or fewer employees, the number of marketers reporting "not at all" to the question jumps to 39%.

So, even though a majority of SMB marketers are increasing the budget in 2013, there is still work to be done to fully take advantage of marketing channels that can be very effective for SMB marketing.

Look at part two of this blog post, "SMB Marketing in 2013: 85% of SMBs to increase use of email" for more insight from industry experts.

MARKETING ANALYTICS: 3 STEPS TO HELP SALES AND MARKETING
IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY

- Andrea Johnson, Senior Editorial Analyst

According to MarketingSherpa's *2013 Analytics Benchmark Report*, only 37% of respondents said they routinely used analytics for their marketing planning. It's no wonder the highest priority for 66% is to do a better job of acting on data to improve marketing performance.

Chart 1.14 Leveraging analytics to gain marketing insights

Are you able to leverage your organization's analytics data to gauge marketing effectiveness? Please choose the most applicable statement.
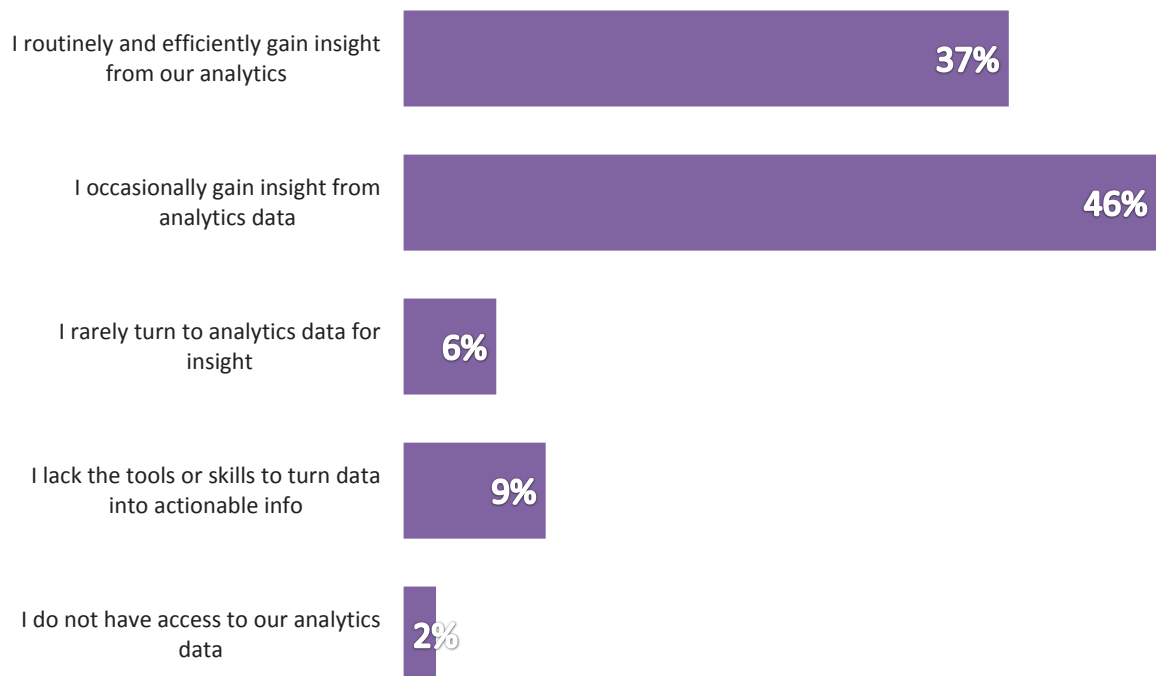
Response	Percentage
I routinely and efficiently gain insight from our analytics	37%
I occasionally gain insight from analytics data	46%
I rarely turn to analytics data for insight	6%
I lack the tools or skills to turn data into actionable info	9%
I do not have access to our analytics data	2%

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Marketing Analytics Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded November 2012, N= 1053

marketingsherpa

They would be wise to follow the lead of Aimee Miller, Vice President of Marketing, AppFolio, a property management software company. She is able to:

- Track every penny of her marketing investment and its business impact
- Help her sales team identify the hottest prospects faster in the company's database
- Help her marketing team do more in less time

"We are able to do 30% more marketing activities. When you increase your workload by 30%, that means not hiring more people, so the efficiency is a huge gain for us," she explained.

She achieved this by maximizing all of the functionalities of her marketing automation program, and brought in a marketing automation consultant to help. Aimee had been an early adopter of marketing automation, and she witnessed its value in her previous position. However, she knew the system could do more than what she was using it for, especially with recent product upgrades.

The consultant helped by using marketing automation to enhance AppFolio's lead-lifecycle performance reporting. AppFolio was collecting many names for its database, but the consultant wanted to make the following distinctions crystal clear:

- Which were qualified leads
- Which ones were accepted by Sales
- Which ones resulted in revenue

THE STEPS APPFOLIO TOOK TO ACHIEVE ITS LEAD-MANAGEMENT GOALS

1. The team collected 90 days of lead data to develop a baseline to understand where there was the most room for improvement. This included:

- The number of new leads created during that period
- The number that were qualified and added to the pipeline
- The number that closed

2. Marketing and Sales clarified their lead definition and what it looked like at each stage of the marketing/sales funnel. This wasn't too much of an issue for AppFolio, because its definition of a qualified lead was simply anyone who asked for a demo or trial of the software.

"Obviously, we get fewer leads, but they are higher quality because people are raising their hands for the solution," Aimee explained. "But we also wanted to give visibility to those who weren't raising their hands, but showing signs of interest."

AppFolio achieved this by developing a lead scoring system that attached points to prospect behavior, such as:

- Clicking to the "Features and Benefits" page
- Registering for an educational meet-up (AppFolio hosts 17 every quarter)

- Downloading content
- Reviewing the pricing page

Once prospects reach a certain point threshold, the system alerts sales professionals to move forward.

3. They make it simple for Sales to participate in the process. All they need to do is update one or two fields in the automation system to report lead progress.

Aimee said whether a lead is rejected or advanced in the automation system should give marketers plenty of information on its quality.

"Sales shouldn't have to check all these different boxes to rate and respond to a lead. Whether they accepted a lead or not should tell us whether the lead is moving forward," she said. "Furthermore, Sales should be focused on closing business and generating revenues, not updating forms."

Aimee said she is in good company when it comes to the challenges of understanding the marketing funnel, but points out data alone isn't the answer.

"A lot of companies are investing in marketing automation to collect data, but if you're not making sure you can look at the data and understand how what you're seeing and how your marketing is performing in a concrete way, then it's not a good use of time or energy," she said.

CUSTOMER MANAGEMENT

SALES AND MARKETING: THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND CRM

- David Kirkpatrick, Senior Reporter

Customer relationship management (CRM) is defined a number of different ways. However, the most expansive definition takes a total end-to-end look at every interaction a person has with a company from simply becoming aware of the company at the very top of the sales funnel, all the way through customer service contact after the final conversion to a closed deal.

With a complex sale, many personal touch points in customer relationship management are present – such as directly answering a question posted on social media or an online forum. At the same time, the real engine driving CRM and keeping prospects moving through the sales funnel is technology.

The first technology that comes to mind is CRM software, such as Salesforce.com or Microsoft Dynamics. However, CRM technology potentially includes multiple pieces including email software and marketing automation (MA) solutions.

Paul Greenberg, Managing Principle, The 56 Group, LLC, and author of CRM at the Speed of Light, said although there are some technology suites that attempt to provide these solutions through the entire sales cycle, it is much more common for companies to integrate CRM technology from more than one vendor.

A common example is utilizing marketing automation software on the Marketing side of the funnel from one vendor and integrating that piece with CRM software from another vendor for the Sales side of the funnel, with a common database providing records on each prospect or customer for both pieces of software.

Paul said this creates something of a challenge because a number of different areas in the company are involved in implementing, and utilizing, CRM technology.

MARKETING, SALES (AND IT) ALIGNMENT

Marketing and Sales alignment should be a goal for any company to improve the efficiency of the entire complex sale process Bringing multiple pieces of technology into the sales funnel adds another element within the company – the information technology department.

"Who owns [CRM technology] is a matter of the internal culture of a company," Paul explained. "Could it be joint ownership between two departments? It could be, as we're seeing increasingly."

He added, "But, we're seeing the CMOs are starting to own a lot of IT budgets, so it could be the CMO that owns that [technology]."

At the same time, the IT department traditionally has controlled technology pieces, so the CIO could possibly own the CRM technology, allocate usage, and make functional decisions based on the business outcomes Marketing and Sales are looking for in using CRM tech.

THE ROLE OF MARKETING AUTOMATION

Linda Athans, Marketing Manager, Tribridge, stated the size of the company might dictate how many pieces of CRM technology are deployed.

"Ideally, your CRM can 'do it all,'" she said, "but depending on your organization's size and how it uses its CRM application, additional MA integration may be necessary to handle specific tasks."

She mentioned a few areas where MA software can help Marketing:

- Automatically sending large quantities of emails
- Performing split testing on campaigns, such as email subject lines or copy
- Providing performance tracking and analytics on campaigns

Heidi Melin, CMO, Eloqua, obviously has a certain amount of vested interest as a MA software vendor, and she pointed out the value of MA for marketers.

"By integrating marketing automation with CRM [software], companies are able to get a better picture of their buyers and a better picture of how their marketing investments impact their revenue," Heidi said. "That's an area where companies are understanding that they can get a competitive advantage in tying a marketing automation solution into their existing CRM implementation to get more out of their investments."

Brian Vellmure, Principal and Founder, Initium LLC/Innovantage International, added another advantage of bringing more than just CRM software into the customer relationship management technology picture: The nature of B2B sales has changed in recent years. Before, the sales team had a great deal of control over the information flow and education of prospects.

Now, according to Forrester analyst Lori Wizdo, two-thirds to 90% of the buying cycle is completed before a B2B buyer ever speaks with a sales rep.

Marketing automation helps the marketing team track prospects' behavior, such as website visits and social media interaction, and then respond to that behavior with what the prospect is looking for, at the time they are looking for it and on the channel where they are looking.

"Then, [Marketing] offers an invitation to the next place on the prospect's journey. I think that's where marketing automation comes into play," Brian explained.

How does your company handle CRM technology? What department "owns" each technology piece?

INTRO TO LEAD GENERATION: HOW TO DETERMINE IF A LEAD IS QUALIFIED

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

Dear Daniel,

First of all, happy new year!

I thank you so much for your complete and interesting feedback. It has been very useful for me.

Just one thing: may you give me some objective parameters to define a lead as qualified? I found so many definitions, and I'd like to ask for your support to point my attention to the best definition you've in mind.

I thank you again for your kind cooperation and, if you don't mind, I'll keep you updated to this project we're carrying on in these first months of 2013.

With my best regards

Felix Mathew, marketing director, Rome, Italy

. . . .

Felix had earlier asked me some questions about cost per lead, which I won't share here, since the information is private to his company. However, I thought it would be helpful to publicly answer his follow-up question, about lead qualification, on the B2B Lead Roundtable Blog. I thought it might assist many readers, especially those newer to the complex sales and marketing process (and thank you to Felix for allowing me to share this publicly).

LEAD QUALIFICATION IS ...

First, let's start with a basic definition. Defining a lead as qualified basically means they are qualified to talk to a sales representative. Essentially, this is a prospect who has a high likelihood to buy and is ready for sales engagement. Simple enough, right?

Well, that's where simplicity breaks down. There is no one single way to determine what makes a lead qualified or not. Just as, to wax philosophic for a second, there is no single definition of beauty or love or good art or what good music is (or else my daughter would listen to much more Pearl Jam).

The best place to start is with a universal lead definition. This involves a sales-marketing huddle since, much like good art, it is not only the artist but also the art viewer and buyer that must agree on a definition. To put it more bluntly – if Sales doesn't think the lead is qualified, it ain't qualified.

Some of that involves actually listening to Sales and understanding what works for them, and some of it involves a little soft marketing power to sell the sellers, if you will, on why you define a qualified lead a

certain way.

Now that we've defined a qualified lead, let's focus on the question itself ... objective parameters. Here are a few parameters you might want to consider, from least to most complex. This is by no means a comprehensive list, but rather a starting point to help get your juices flowing in conversations with Sales.

CONTACT INFORMATION

This is the weakest qualification criteria I can think of, and would not constitute a truly qualified lead for many organizations, except in the rare case when ...

I worked with a tech company in a market niche that hadn't yet had any real competition, yet was extremely fast growing. If you're lucky enough to find yourself in a similar situation – a low competition, very high-growth market – it might not take much to qualify a lead. This is as close as you'll ever get to "the product that sells itself."

In this case, the biggest challenge is throughput, closing as many leads as possible before the competition enters the market (and, they will inevitably enter the market if things are really this good). The sales conversation tends to focus on areas such as contract terms or service availability, and Sales might simply want you to give them names and get out of the way.

Again, this is a very rare case, but if this is your situation, you might find by talking to Sales that all they want is contact information, and they can close the deal at that point.

FIRMOGRAPHICS

This won't be helpful to every sales department, but simple firmographics is also information that is on the easier end of the spectrum.

For example, if your organization is far and away the leading service provider in a certain geographic area, for a certain organization size, or in a certain industry, this might be enough information for Sales to consider the lead qualified.

However, if you are, say, the leading systems integrator for a certain technology in Jacksonville, you are only wasting Sales time by giving them a lead from Seattle. That would not be a qualified lead.

BANT

BANT stands for Budget Authority Need Timeline (or Timeframe). This is a lead qualification and scoring methodology originally developed by IBM, but now commonly used.

You can instantly see how this would be helpful for a sales force, and where it takes place in the sales-marketing continuum can vary by organization.

Based on your organizational needs, you might decide that one or all of these factors are necessary for a lead to be considered qualified.

Also, by understanding some of these aspects, even if you're not identifying a qualified lead, you are identifying excellent candidates for a nurturing track that eventually results in qualified leads (for example, Timeframe or Authority).

BEHAVIORAL ANALYTICS AND LEAD SCORING

Lead scoring (most effective when combined with behavioral analytics) is a more thorough, and therefore more complex, way of determining a qualified lead.

Much like with a blind date, with lead scoring you are essentially giving points to different characteristics or actions that signal a (sales) engagement is a likely outcome of this relationship (she's physically attractive, +2; she keeps talking favorably about that political candidate that I think wants to ruin our country, -114).

The benefit of including behavioral analytics is that you can use the prospect's actions to help qualify them. For example, if they download a whitepaper on your company's specific wireless display architecture, that might warrant more points than simply checking a box on a lead form indicating a general interest in display standards.

To help with your own lead scoring efforts, here is a look at the top factors your peers use in lead score calculations, from the MarketingSherpa *B2B Marketing Handbook* …

Q. What actions or traits are currently considered in your lead scoring calculation?

Factor	Percentage
Lead has responded to a marketing campaign by providing basic contact information	80%
Lead has indicated a valid business need	42%
Lead has identified themselves as a decision maker	26%
Lead has reached a certain lead score through expressing interest in a number of categories	25%
Lead has indicated an acceptable time frame to purchase	23%
Lead has indicated an acceptable purchasing budget	23%
Lead has potential for large deal size	16%

Predictive analytics

This is on the harder end of the lead qualification spectrum because it involves math. It is also a non-traditional way to qualify a lead (and is used more often for lead generation).

But if you have a big old messy database, terms like predictive analytics, partition analysis, and regression analysis might be good to discuss with your data analysts … and might help you find some hidden treasure.

At a very basic level, you want to ask your data analyst to look for any commonalities between those already in your database of leads and your current customers. What attributes of your current customers might you have perhaps overlooked in leads that have gone cold?

This whole process might help your entire lead qualification effort, as well, by uncovering attributes that neither Marketing nor Sales has identified as predictors of the likelihood that sales engagement will lead to a closed deal, information that you can then use in your lead scoring or other lead qualification efforts.

Hand raiser

This is, by far, the hardest way to qualify a lead. These are also, in my opinion, the most valuable qualified leads.

By "hand raiser," I mean someone that is actively in search of sales engagement from your company and is volunteering information and urging you to get in contact with them.

From my experience, this usually only happens with a really good lead nurturing or inbound marketing program.

Inbound Marketing

Converting PPC Traffic
How strategic keyword placement increased conversion by 144%

- Content created by Flint McGlaughlin, Paul Cheney, Austin McCraw, Shaun Metzger
- Research conducted by Gaby Paez, Adam Lapp, Boris Grinkot, Paul Clowe, Adam Lapp, and Jon Powell

Paid search remains a vital marketing channel within many businesses. However, the competition within the search engines has only grown, making it **one of the most difficult channels online to get consistent results**. Further, the heightened cost of placement has only driven down ROI for this once promising channel.

Marketers often wonder if they are maximizing their search spend, or if they are they wasting their budgets. … Have they chosen the **right keywords**? Will their ads standout from all the others? How can they ensure to get the searcher's attention and drive them to their product pages? All of these are challenging questions the search strategist faces every day.

In this article, we strive to tackle some of these pressing questions related to paid search. We will **distill more than a decade of PPC testing into a few, yet powerful, principles** that can significantly improve the performance of the average search campaign. But first, we begin by studying a recent experiment in which the addition of a single, strategically-placed keyword produced a dramatic 144% increase in conversion.

An Experiment: How Strategic Keyword Placement Increased Conversion by 144%

This experiment, Test Protocol TP1306(a), pitted two landing pages against each other. These pages received traffic from the exact same PPC ad, so the test measured which of the two was best able to capitalize on a very specific kind of traffic. The business we were testing for was a market solutions provider for small- to medium-sized businesses, and the goal of our test was to increase the email capture rate of its online form.

In **Figure 1.1**, you see the PPC ad and the control landing page. The ad promotes "Bankruptcy Mailing Lists," and the headline on the landing page touts a "Database of 12 Million Recent Bankruptcy Filers." However, the page as a whole is poorly designed, and we opted for a radical redesign of the page that addressed many of the page's issues in one redesign. You can see the control and the treatment landing page designs in **Figure 1.2**.

Figure 1.1

Figure 1.2

By applying our methodological optimization approach and changing several aspects of the page at once, **we were able to achieve a 188% lift in conversion** from the landing page. This is striking because we actually eliminated the keyword (bankruptcy) from the headline (see **Figure 1.3**).

188% Increase in Total Leads
The new form page increased lead rate by 188%

Design	Conversion Rate
Control	1.71%
Treatment	4.93%
Relative Difference	**188%**

Figure 1.3

Our method of radical redesigns is part of a complete testing method we call an "Iterative Testing Cycle." Look at the graphic in **Figure 1.4** for an illustration. First, we take a page and radically redesign it, sometimes many times over. The goal is to see if we can get a significant lift in conversion. Once we achieve that lift, we create a number of focused variable clusters that are designed to tell us which of the variables are doing the most work in terms of generating a lift. After we have discovered the most valuable variables, we can test them individually to fully optimize the page.

Radical Redesigns: The objective is to challenge the control enough to generate a significant difference

Focused variable clusters: The objective is to test the highest performing variables and increase channel specificity

Single variable testing: The objective is to determine relative impact by isolating variables
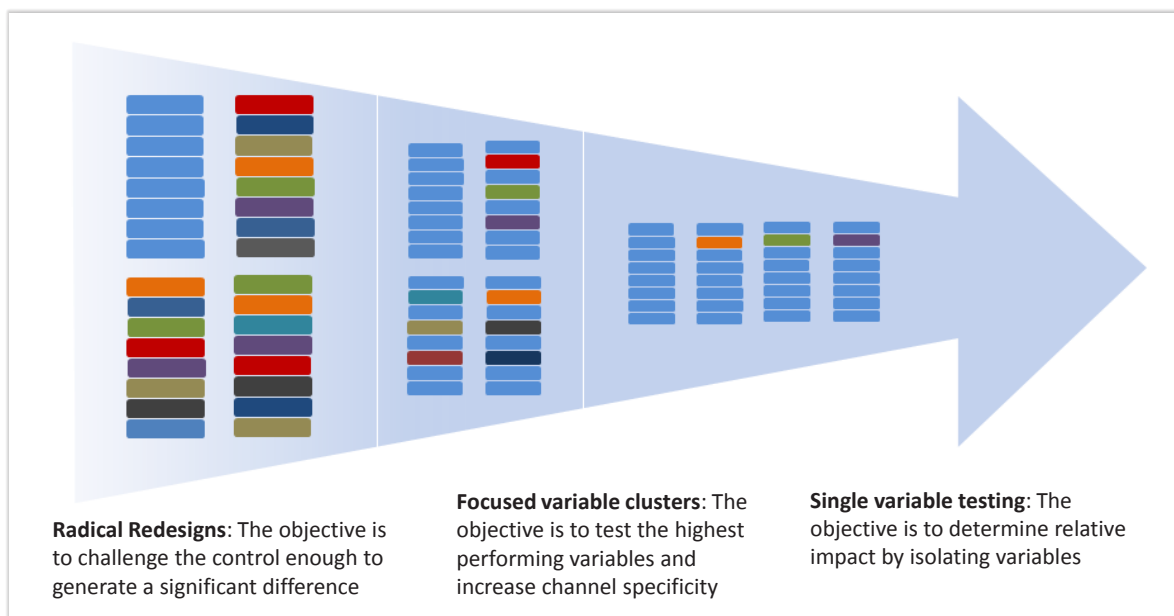
Figure 1.4

In TP1306(a), we discovered redesigning the page could get a large lift. The next step was to see what effect the individual variables were having on that outcome. So we ran a follow-up experiment. This tested the winning treatment page from previous experiment against a new treatment that simply inserted the keyword back into the headline of the landing page. See **Figure 1.5** for a side-by-side of the two pages. What was the result?
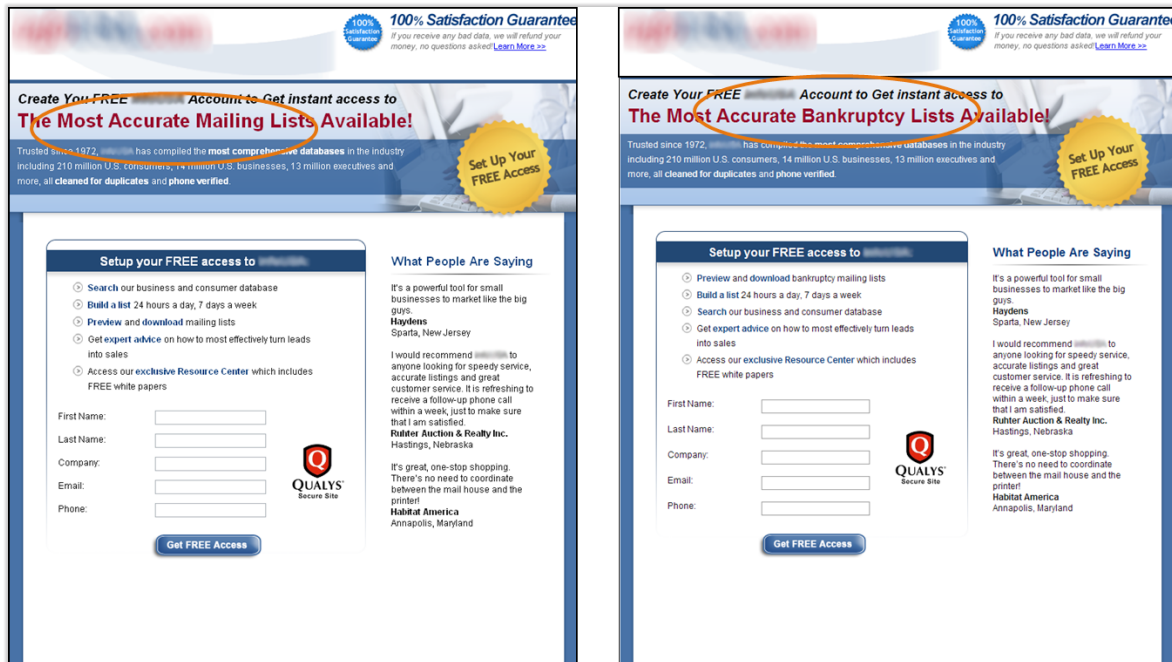
Figure 1.5

A **144% lift in conversion** (see **Figure 1.6**). Keep in mind that this gain is on top of the 188% lift we achieved with the radical redesign. **The composite gain from the two experiments was 603%, a massive increase, regardless of industry**.

144% Increase in Total Leads
The new form page increased lead rate by 144%

Design	Conversion Rate
Control	4.93%
Treatment	12.05%
Relative Difference	**144%**

Figure 1.6

In addition to the results, this test reveals two even more valuable principles for optimizing the performance of our search campaigns.

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR OPTIMIZING PPC CAMPAIGNS

KEY PRINCIPLE #1: **We do not optimize PPC campaigns; we optimize thought sequences.**

If you are familiar with MECLABS and MarketingExperiments, you have likely heard a variation of this principle, but it simply cannot be overstated. When designing a PPC campaign, it is in fact not beneficial to think in terms of ad copy, design elements and forms. These are all important tools you will use, but you must think in terms of the prospect's thought sequence while engaging with your content. **A small change (like inserting the word "bankruptcy" into the headline on a landing page) can have a disproportionally large impact on conversion if the change optimizes the prospect's thought sequence and explains more clearly the value of your offer**. With every copy choice and design strategy, you must consider how it will affect the thought sequence of the prospect.

KEY PRINCIPLE #2: **In order to understand the thought sequence of a prospect arriving from a PPC ad, marketers must be able to see both the PATH TAKEN (route) and the PATTERN FOLLOWED (behavior) by the prospect.**

This is a straightforward and simple point: If you want to optimize the thought sequence of your prospects, understanding their paths and behavioral patterns are essential. If you can see how a prospect arrives at your page, and you can see the actions they take when they arrive, you can figure out how to best optimize the page so that more and more prospects move through to completion of the form. At MECLABS, we have run more than **15,000 path tests**, and our analysis of the paths and patterns of prospects has yielded to us the **three most important factors** that impact a prospect's likelihood of conversion. And we will go over each in detail.

THREE FACTORS THAT DETERMINE A SEARCH CAMPAIGN'S SUCCESS

FACTOR #1: *Channel Momentum*

Momentum, as we will refer to it in this article, can be understood as the expectation of the prospect, and the first thing you must understand is that **the possibility of conversion on a landing page is directly related to the degree of momentum (customer expectation) generated from the PPC ad**.

In other words, when a prospect clicks on a paid search ad, their interest has been piqued by the copy in the ad. There is now momentum. However, if momentum is halted or even momentarily slowed, the effect

can be a missed opportunity for conversion. **The goal of the PPC ad is not to sell the product, but rather to initiate momentum by converting attention into interest into action (click)**.

If you don't start by grabbing attention, and if you don't move past attention into interest, you won't get to action. If you skip attention and begin with interest, you still won't get to action – in this case, a conversion. You need all three of these components working in the appropriate order if you want a fully optimized PPC sequence.

We successfully convert attention to interest to action by answering the derivative value proposition question, **"If am your ideal prospect, why should I click on this PPC ad rather than any other PPC ad?"** There are four kinds of value propositions. If you are unfamiliar with this research, you can read about it here: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/marketing-insights/levels-of-value-propositions. html. But the main issue at hand for this article is that you must ask this question about every single ad you prepare. Your ad has its own special value proposition. This is not the value proposition of your company. Nor is it the value proposition of the product you are trying to sell on the landing page. The value proposition of a PPC ad is about what the prospect gets for clicking your ad.

The differentiating factor about page search engine is that you are not necessarily competing with your main rival company. You are competing with the other ads on the page that might win the click, no matter how much of a threat the company itself is to your business. The ad might be from a company that isn't remotely close to your nearest competitor's market share, but if it is on the page with you, it is the single most important threat to your paid search campaign.

An Experiment: How one Company Generated a 21% Increase in PPC Conversions

To highlight these principles, we are going to look at a case study: TP1214. The Research Partner was a leading software provider, and the goal was to increase the total leads captured by its PPC landing page. This test ran for 18 weeks, and we observed more than 950,000 unique impressions.

Over the duration of the experiment, we tested 16 different PPC ads. You can see six of those ads in **Figure 2.1**. This was a lengthy and deep experiment, and this allowed us to really drill down and discover which ad was generating the most momentum with prospects (i.e., piquing their interest enough to produce a click).

You can see the winning ad in **Figure 2.2**. **This ad produced a 21% lift over the control ad**. However, as you can see, the ad now provides more information and makes more promises than the original. It claims to be "#1 on demand" and to have "6459+ World Clients." This must be backed up on the landing page if we want to carry over the momentum, which leads into the second important factor when optimizing PPC campaigns.

{KeyWord} Business Solutions
Run Your Entire Business with One
System. Accounting + CRM. Free Trial.
www.[Company].com/Business-Solutions

Business Software Suite
#1 On-Demand. 6459+ World Clients
Award-Winning Solution. Free Trial
www.[Company].com/BusinessSoftware

#1 Business Software
6459+ Clients. On-Demand Access.
One System for the Entire Company.
www.[Company].com/BusinessSoftware

Small Business Software
6459+ Clients Worldwide Free Trial
Software You Won't Outgrow.
www.[Company].com/BusinessSoftware

Small Business Software
Worlds #1 On-Demand Suite.
6459+ Clients. Free Trial Today.
www.[Company}.com/BusinessSoftware

Figure 2.1

21% Increase in Clickthrough
The new ad generated 20.9% more clicks than the original

Original Ad

Best Performing Ad

{Keyword} Business Software
Award-Winning Business Software.
Fully Integrated. Free Trial
www.[Company].com/Business

→

Business Software Suite
#1 On-Demand. 6459+ World Clients
Award-Winning Solution. Free Trial
www.[Company].com/BusinessSoftware

Figure 2.2

FACTOR #2: *Transition Orientation*

When people move from one geographic domain to another, there is a moment of orientation. Am I in the right place? What am I supposed to do here? There are questions that come with that movement, and you need to have an answer for those questions. **You have seven seconds to orient a Web visitor, or they will retreat to the safety of their browser's "back" button**.

In **Figure 3.1**, you see an illustration of this orientation process. Within the first few seconds of the interaction, you need to answer the questions:

1. **Where am I?**
2. **What can I do here?**
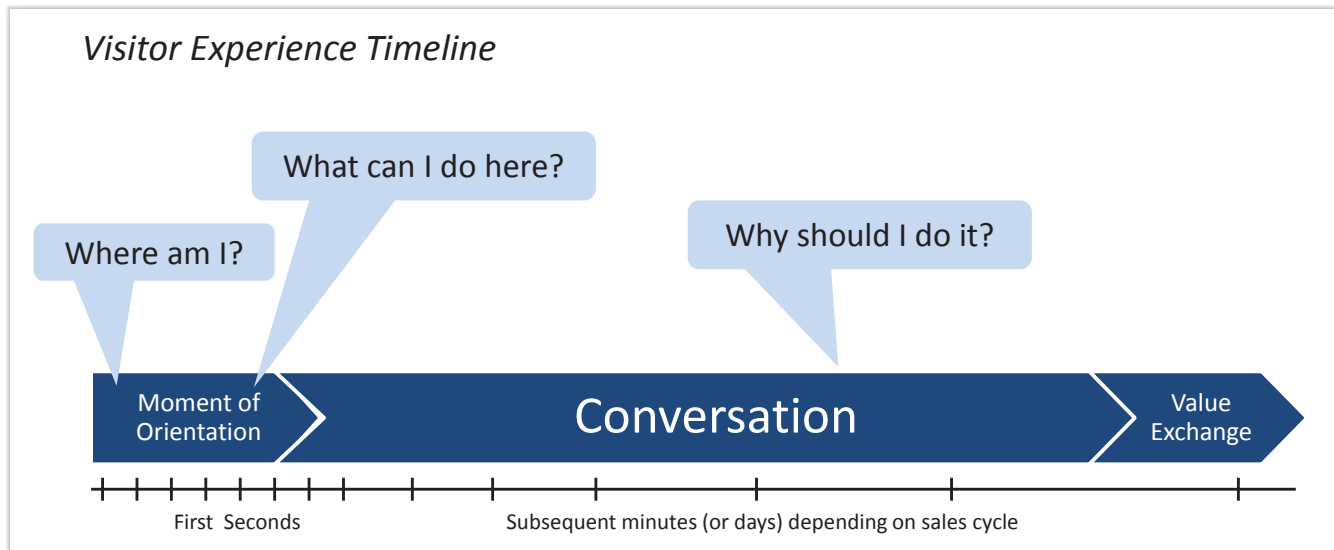
Figure 3.1

Once you have adequately addressed these questions, your next step is to answer the big question, the one that truly drives conversion: **Why?** If you succeed in orientating the visitor to where they are and what they can do there, but fail to convince them WHY they should do it, the whole process is for naught. You must clearly and quickly provide them with the value they will receive by doing whatever it is you want them to do. Then, give them an easy way to do it.

Look at the example of a PPC path in **Figure 3.2**. This is an example of a sequence that fails to orient the prospect immediately upon arrival. The ad says, "Consolidate Credit Cards," but they page you are directed to is a homepage with many, many action options and no specific directive to follow.

Contrast that with the path in **Figure 3.3**. Now, the ad leads the prospect to a specific landing page that immediately provides context to orient them, and highlights one specific call-to-action that will deliver on the value expressed in the ad. By orientating the prospect, you set yourself up to enter into the conversation going on in their head. Once you are in this conversation, you can lay out the reasons why they should take the action you want them to take.

Figure 3.2

Figure 3.3

IMPORTANT FACTOR #3: *Value Transfer*

How do we answer this question of why the prospect should take action? The answer is that we need to transfer value throughout the process. Here is the key principle:

Key Principle: **In order to effectively transfer the value of the PPC ad to the landing page, one must ensure the holistic expression of the value proposition. This involves two key elements:**

1. **Congruence** – Ensuring that every element of a page either expresses of supports the value proposition.
2. **Continuity** – Ensuring that every step of the conversion process either expresses of supports the value proposition.

We are going to look at two experiments that illustrate this principle. First, let's return to TP1214 to see how congruence and continuity are at work in this experiment.

Experiment #1: How Transferring Value throughout an Entire Conversion Process Increase Projected Revenue by 301%

The test we looked at earlier culminated with a new PPC ad that produced a 21% lift over the original ad. But that was only one aspect of the path. There are still the landing and form pages to optimize, and for those, we ran more tests.

In **Figure 4.1**, you see the control landing page. The value that is expressed in the PPC ad is not transferred to the landing page. There is a disconnect in the expressed value.

Business Software Suite
#1 On-Demand. 6459+ World Clients
Award-Winning Solution. Free Trial
www.XXXXXXXXX.com/Business

Figure 4.1

On the other hand, the treatment landing page in **Figure 4.2** continues to build on the value of the ad, incorporating the value specifically into all aspects of the page. **This produced a 54% lift on the landing page**. Then, by continuing to build the value into the form page, **we increased form completions by 97%** (**Figure 4.3**).

Figure 4.2

Figure 4.3

The total result of the optimization was a **272% increase in overall conversion**, which led to a **268% increase in projected revenue** (see **Figure 4.4**).

272% Increase in Overall Conversion
The optimized path's conversion rate increased by 272.2%

Metric	Control	Treatment	Relative Difference
PPC Advertisement	0.89%	1.08	20.9%
Landing Page Clickthrough	7.17%	11.06%	54.26%
Form Completion	15.84%	31.25%	97.27%
Impression-to-lead Conversion	**.009%**	**.033%**	**272.2%**

Figure 4.4

Experiment #2: How Transferring Value Throughout an Entire Conversion Process Increased Total Conversion by 548%

In another optimization experiment – TP1519 – we were tasked with helping a technology and media company increase the number of leads that completed its online form. In **Figure 5.1**, you can see the control path from landing page to form page. The landing page is incongruent. The headline carries little to no meaning, the copy buries the value, and the call-to-action fails to convey value. The form page is simply a utility. It brings no value to the table, and relies on the value previously established on the landing page.

Figure 5.1

Our treatment in **Figure 5.2** addresses these issues. We built value into every part of the landing page with a radical redesign. We also transferred that value to the form page with a little copy and a call-to-action button that conveys the pages value proposition.
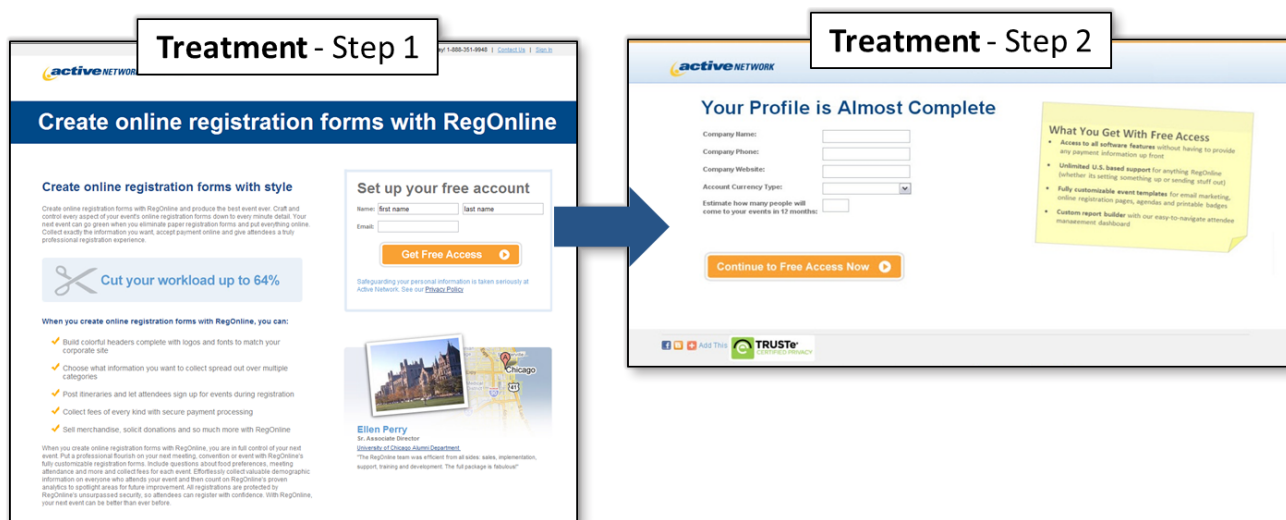
Figure 5.2

What was the result of these efforts? **A 548% increase in conversion** (see **Figure 5.3**).

548% Increase in Total Leads
The new page's conversion rate increased by 548.46%

Design	Conversion Rate (%)	Relative Difference	Statistical Level of Confidence
Original Page	0.7%	-	-
Treatment	**4.8%**	**548%**	99%

Figure 5.3

A FORM-OPTIMIZING CHECKLIST

To make these three principles even more concreter, we have boiled them down to a checklist you can use to weigh and analyze your PPC campaigns. You can use the following list as a quick guide for building a successful PPC campaign:

- Are the claims in your PPC ad specific? Do they use qualitative of hype-filled language? How can you quantify your claims?
- Is your PPC ad focused on generating a click? Have you provided a compelling reason to click your ad over the other options?
- Are you utilizing the headline of your page to immediately inform the prospect where they have arrived?
- Is your landing page objective clear? Is your eye-path a simple, single-column flow? D you have an easy-to-see call to action?
- Is every element of your page (headline, images, copy, CTAs) expressing the value proposition?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

With checklist in hand, you are prepared to implement the three most important factors that contribute to a fully-optimized paid search campaign:

Factor #1: Channel Momentum
Factor #2: Transition Orientation
Factor #3: Value Transfer

If you can take these principles and begin peering into the psychological path of your customers, then you can begin optimizing the effectiveness your PPC campaigns. The science behind is reliable, it has been successful test after test. Now, it is simply a matter of implementation. So take a close look at your campaigns, analyze them with this new framework in mind, and go get the results you need from your search campaigns.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: HOW NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY INCREASED CARD SIGN-UPS BY 35%

- Courtney Eckerle, Reporter

Celebrated every September, National Library Card Sign-up Month marks an opportunity for the New York Public Library to bring in scores of new library users.

"It is organized by the American Library Association and it is really designed to remind parents and children that a library card is the most important school supply as they head back to school," said Johannes Neuer, Associate Director of Marketing, New York Public Library.

However, without the available marketing budget to promote it, Angela Montefinise, Director of PR and Marketing, New York Public Library, said it wasn't "the easiest thing to get out there."

She said it was very important for the library to "get the word out for people to sign up for library cards and open a whole new world of information and free programs."

The solution to take part in this nationwide effort was to generate a creative social media marketing campaign. Using its flagship channels of Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Google+ and Pinterest, the library could reach its social media network of more than 550,000 fans and followers.

FIND THE RIGHT SOCIAL MEDIA HOOK

Joseph Roux said, "A fine quotation is a diamond in the hand of a man of wit and a pebble in the hand of a fool."

Proving the wit of the NYPL, quotes have become a social media jewel that was instrumental in the success of growing library cardholders.

In the last few years, Neuer said the library has been analyzing its social media engagement in a monthly marketing dashboard. The marketing team noticed a recurring theme: "If there's one thing that always gets attention, it is quotes from celebrities."

"We do a good job on social media and in the branches, and to try to get people to do this, we did want to go a little bit further this year with the social media campaign to reach maybe new audiences that aren't in the building," he said.

Since so many writers and celebrities had previously spoken out in interviews about their support of libraries and the role libraries had in their own childhood, Montefinise said it seemed like a perfect way to get the message out.

"It has worked for us in the past with other things, and so many celebrities love libraries and love reading," said Montefinise.

Have a meeting of the minds

In a brainstorm meeting with the library's PR and marketing teams, Montefinise said they began looking at people who had worked with the library in the past and then moved out to spitball people who would catch the attention of the NYPL's audience. "So, we were building this campaign around inspirational quotes about reading, about libraries. … The PR team really took it upon themselves to branch out and really aim to get quotes from high-profile authors, other celebrities, New York-based and others," Neuer added.

Giving author Neil Gaiman as an example, Montefinise said, "We did do some research for people who have talked about libraries before."

Gaiman is frequently in New York, she said, "but he has repeatedly discussed how much he loves libraries and how much he used them, and so he was an obvious choice."

Acquire new material

Montefinise added the team started with a list of authors to contact, but then kept expanding – soon, they were looking to New York City celebrities, and then to film and other big names.

"We cast our nets very widely on this one, and we were continuously surprised," she said, saying the team attempted to contact "pipe dream names like Woody Allen" who actually contributed quotes about the importance of libraries.

She added, "It was a fun couple of weeks in PR as people kept running around and saying, 'Guess who just got back to me!'"

According to Montefinise, while the team did research on people who had been outspoken supporters of the library, most of the material they used was unique to this campaign, such as the quote from Woody Allen.

Others were repurposed from previous efforts, such as a contribution from Maya Angelou that became the third most popular post from the campaign. Montefinise pulled the quote — an excerpt of which is, "I always felt, in any town, if I can get to a library I'll be OK" — from an interview she had conducted a year earlier.

"It was a unique quote, but it was not new and it was a thing that I got a year ago when she gave [the New York Public Library] her papers," she said.

DESIGN WITH SOCIAL MEDIA IN MIND

Neuer said the marketing team decided to use a postcard-like graphic to showcase the acquired quotes that would appeal to the visual aesthetics of social media.

It had certain elements — such as the enlarged quote toward the top, the logo of the New York Public Library, as well as a call-to-action urging users to acquire a library card — that connect with the National Library Card Sign-up Month. There was also a simple vanity URL at the bottom — nypl.org/getcard — making it easy and quick to apply for one.

"We created three different versions and three different color schemes based on our library colors," said Neuer.

 Among Facebook, Pinterest and Tumblr, which are predominantly thought of as the best ways to visually display something, Neuer said, "Google+ has grown tremendously this year and also offers great ways to display visuals."At that point, he said, the design proved it would work well on all of its social media outlets. The only necessary change was shortening some quotes in tweets to accommodate the URL.

The PR and marketing teams obtained 30 quotes to cover one per day during the whole month of September, the length of the campaign.

Establish a goal, enlist the troops

In addition to sending these posts out to its flagship social networks, the NYPL decided to enlist its staff in the library card crusade.

"We also now have an internal email that we send out from the marketing team to all social media practitioners in the library, and we give them two or three pieces of suggested content to make it easier for them to fill their streams with content," said Neuer.

The library card sign-up quotes were always a part of those social suggestions sent through an internal Google group, he said. In total, those practitioners have about 80 Facebook profiles and more than 60 Twitter accounts that reach a greater scope of people, even if they didn't follow any of the library's flagship accounts.

Results

Neuer said the campaign was successful in two ways, including that it generated "an unprecedented amount of interactions, like comments and shares, across all of the networks."

He added that each post averaged 238 total interactions. An interesting facet was although Facebook only represents 12.3% of the New York Public Library's fans and followers, it actually accounted for 70% of all interactions.

"It was crazy how much this little network generated, so Facebook averaged 722 interactions per post. That is about 500 more than the average," he said about this campaign.

Neuer was also invested in the performance of NYPL's Tumblr, which he has seen to be "growing very fast and is a highly engaging and interactive network."

Most important to this campaign is the "real outcome, and we are also successful in that regard," Neuer said about the number of new library cardholders:

- Unique page views to the library card registration page increased by 34%
- Library card sign-ups were 21% higher than September 2011
- The NYPL's sign-ups were 35% higher than the average number of monthly online library card applications

Neil Gaimon's quote was the most popular and created the most engagement: "Google can bring you back 100,000 answers, a librarian can bring you back the right one."
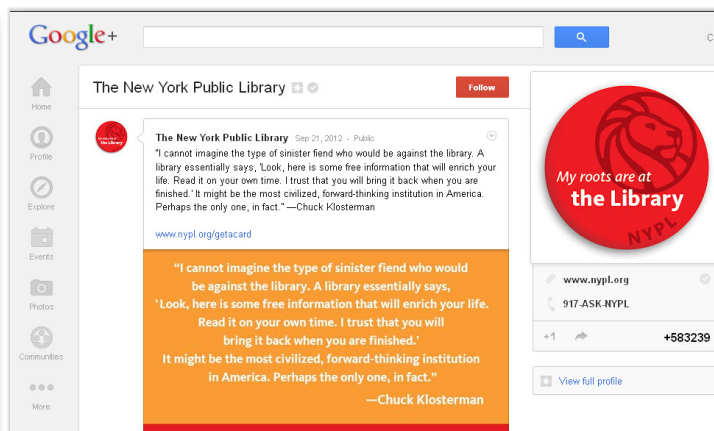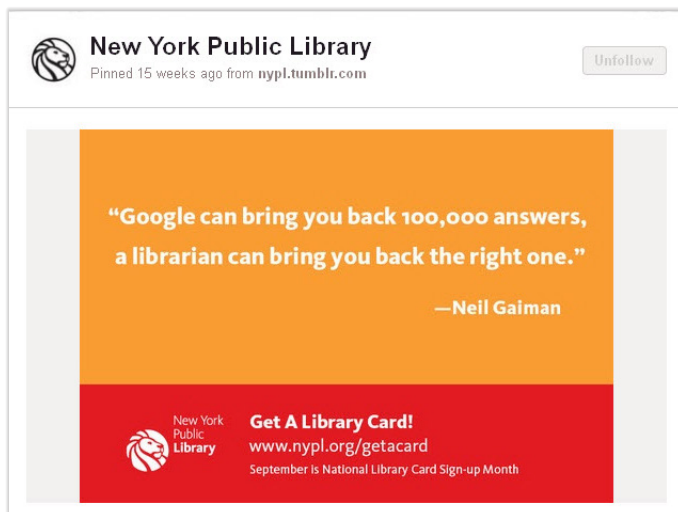
The second most popular was from Chuck Klosterman: "I cannot imagine the type of sinister fiend who would be against the library. A library essentially says, 'Look, here is some free information that will enrich your life. Read it on your own time. I trust that you will bring it back when you are finished.' It might be the most civilized, forward-thinking institution in America. Perhaps the only one, in fact."

The lesson from this campaign, Neuer said, was it confirmed the team's previous successes using quotes to garner social media engagement.

"But more importantly, we have seen that social media can have a real impact on key performance indicators for the library, such as cardholder-ship, and we hope that we can translate similar successes with fundraising and advocacy objectives in the future," he concluded.

MOBILE MARKETING: 6 MOBILE MARKETING CHALLENGES EVERY MARKETER FACES

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

In the MarketingSherpa *Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report*, we asked marketers about their challenges ...

Q: Which barriers exist to overcoming your organization's top challenges?

The MarketingSherpa community members shared their insights based on this data, which I hope you find helpful ...

Challenge	Percentage
Lack an effective mobile marketing strategy	55%
Inadequate staffing resources and expertise	55%
Insufficient budget for mobile initiatives	45%
Inadequate understanding of mobile user conversion path	35%
Inability to track/measure mobile user behavior to segment mobile audience	30%
Failure to develop a customer profile and/or theory for the mobile user	28%
Lack of compelling content to engage mobile user	25%
Difficulty merging mobile data with other systems (e.g. CRM)	24%
Unclear ownership of mobile initiatives	24%
Lack of executive support	21%

©2012 MarketingSherpa Mobile Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded August 2012, N=422

CHALLENGE #1: MOBILE SITE OR MOBILE APP?

"Strategy and staffing are (not surprising) linked. The resources required to fund a well-researched and well-structured mobile marketing strategy – or even a mobile strategy at large to address the primary question: mobile site or mobile app – are the very same resources necessary to staff such an initiative," said Aaron Orendorff, Copywriter, Content Strategist & Project Manager, CREO Agency.

"Ambiguity over the unique opportunities and behaviors of mobile consumers and a lack of 'playing the long game' (i.e., looking to the future) are the primary offenders. The 'giants' are waking up – some more slowly than others– and devoting internal resources much more readily. Just look at Google's HowToGoMo.com."

"Answering the mobile site vs. mobile app question is simple," claimed Curt Prins, Mobile Strategist, PoliMobile.

"Start by creating a mobile site or optimizing your existing site for mobile users. Incorporate other tools like SMS and mobile ads gradually. And then you can graduate to a mobile app if your users, and not management, ask for one," Curt concluded.

As with any business decision, don't try to keep up with the Joneses ("But, Moooooooom ... Billy's CMO let him create a super cool app, why can't we?"). Take a step back, and make sure you have a strategic approach to your mobile marketing efforts.

CHALLENGE #2: MOBILE CONTENT DELIVERY

"Optimizing the way content is delivered and consumed via mobile involves more than just making it fit a smaller screen (i.e., responsive design). eMarketer ran an article earlier in 2012 regarding mobile 'snacking,' which seems to be a common term now," Aaron said.

"The article focused on both the increasing brevity and frequency of mobile 'consumption' as opposed to the PC. The point they make is similar to the point most content creators make when talking about Web-based communication: keep it short, scannable and simple. Mobile just makes it more so."

CHALLENGE #3: UNDERSTANDING HOW YOUR AUDIENCE CONSUMES CONTENT

"If we look at mobile like we look at every other marketing tactic or campaign, we miss the big opportunity. Mobile is an integrated part of every person's daily life and business," said Jeff Wilson, CEO, The Art of Acquisition.

He continues, "It is the critical conduit through which all communication flows, and it's with them everywhere and at all times. It requires a new perspective and far more respect by marketers and C-suite alike in order to realize its potential for driving business and connecting to customers."

"Take the state of mobile content as an example," Jeff says. "We push the same content through mobile that we do through other channels without the vaguest understanding of how people consume content via mobile. Do they read, do they listen or do they watch? Has anyone asked that question when it comes to content?"

Indeed, when it comes to any content you produce, you need a process for evaluating content channels. Mobile is no exception.

CHALLENGE #4: RESPONSIVE EMAIL DESIGN

Aaron raised a few excellent points about mobile — something every marketer should think about. If you're keeping score at home, feel free to add your own experiences in the comment section of this MarketingSherpa blog post, as well.

"First, I'd love to know if there's a good resource for optimizing mobile email or if mobile promotion should just focus on social, SMS and Push Notifications. Is there such a thing as responsive email design?" Aaron asked.

"I think optimization lies in a better understanding of customer needs and preferences," Jeff said. "Use of social, SMS, Push and email are all based on preferences which changes according to the different work and life situations a person is involved in each day. At anytime, those all might work or might not. Relevant timing is everything. 'Simpler is always better' is another quality rule to follow."

Regarding responsive email design, or emails designed to be optimized for a variety of operating systems, we found from an, admittedly very limited, poll of MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2012 attendees that only 13% were engaged in responsive email design.

CHALLENGE #5: FREQUENCY OF MOBILE CONTACT

"Given how transitory mobile content is, does that mean mobile users are willing to put up with being contacted more regularly?" Aaron asked.

"The answer is yes and no in my experience. This goes more to value, relevance and quality of content. What I also found interesting was the format of content which many times made for higher consumption," Jeff shared.

"For example, I helped several clients turn their more lengthy articles and whitepapers into cheap and cheerful podcasts that customers could listen to on their daily commute. The customer would either use it on the train via mobile devices or sync it with in-car audio systems while driving. More interesting was the number of senior executives that responded to this medium over reading. The secret was we made it so much easier for customers to consume through any medium, anywhere, anytime," Jeff said.

Aaron asks an excellent question, but I want to back it up a bit to consider another factor. Before you can learn what works in terms of frequency, you have to make sure you have the ability to measure. You have to crawl before you can walk.

Many marketers aren't there yet. For example, 33% of marketers don't know the mobile clickthrough rate of an email offer.

CHALLENGE #6: MOBILE APPS AND CONTENT MARKETING

"How [are] free apps meant to raise brand awareness or add real-life value fit into a 'content marketing' campaign?" Aaron wondered.

"I would put myself in the customer's shoes and ask, 'Is using this app going to make my life/work better, easier, faster or more enjoyable?' As brands, we often think we are adding value, but many times it is so skewed in our favor the result is the opposite of what we had envisioned," Jeff said.

"For its role, content needs to be highly adaptive so it can work in any medium, from events, to print, to mobile, social and Web. That's simply becoming a best practice for the enterprise and will help immensely in supporting 'content standards' across silos."

To build on what Jeff is saying, free apps in and of themselves are not a content marketing strategy. With so much competition out there for eyeballs, you have to make sure you're not only creating an app that truly has value, but also has a marketing plan for your apps. You must also promote them as you would a paid product, if you really want them to be successful.

For the questions Aaron raises, there is no one right answer. But these, dear marketers, are the challenges you face as we move, or are thrust into, an era where mobile computing increasingly changes the way our prospects interact with our marketing, our products and each other.

Video Marketing How-to: 4 tactics from a small business that generated 1 million YouTube views

- Courtney Eckerle, Reporter

Jeremy Vest, Senior SEM and Online Manager, Wasp Barcode, has one million views right now on the Wasp Barcode YouTube page. This is a point of pride for him as a marketer for a "super non-sexy product."

Although a barcode scanner doesn't seem like it would light up the screen, one million views proves it is more than possible, perhaps even preferable, for products that don't pop off the page to do better in this highly visual format.

Small businesses, even on a tight marketing budget, can take advantage of the tremendous opportunity video allows to display or demonstrate their product or service, according to Mark Zamora, Producer, Manchu Media.

The opportunity is growing all of the time with an August 2012 comScore U.S. Online Video Rankings report showing an all-time high of 188 million U.S. Internet users watching 37.7 billion online content videos in August alone.

According to Zamora, it can be a very inexpensive way for a small business to get their name out, and when it comes to developing and shooting video content, his advice is to "just do it, even if you're not getting results right away."

Zamora suggested when beginning to remember "in the end, it is all about the customer, and you want to make your customer happy, you want them to feel like you care about their needs and that is your number one priority."

Tactic #1. Answer questions for your audience

One of the biggest mistakes people do when starting to create videos, according to Vest, is to say, "Oh hey, we have a new product. We have a new service. So, let's go tell the world about it."

Approaching video creation with this mindset is a mistake, he said, because, "unless you are funny, attractive or famous, no one cares about you and what you have to say, and that is just the harsh reality."

Instead of focusing the video on selling your product, or using it as a vehicle to pitch, Vest advised discovering what consumers are searching for in your sphere and trying to be the answer or solution to what they are trying to achieve.

"The first place we started in creating a good video is truly understanding what someone is going to be looking for," Vest said.

Once you understand what people are looking for, Vest continued, you can create video content. Fulfilling a need, he added, is "the fundamental difference between people … that make super-great videos and people that just talk about themselves."

Building ideas comes from knowing who your audience is, stemming out from the main idea of, "Who is this product for?" and growing into questions such as, "What do you like, what are you into, what would make you buy this product," Zamora said.

"There are a lot of safe bets for small business and video," Vest said.

One of those safe bets is to produce how-to videos, he added. Not only will how-to videos answer questions, but they cultivate a feeling of authority towards the company.

"If you truly helped someone to learn what they are seeking to learn, they may subscribe to your channel. They may watch and engage more in what you are doing. They may … go on to your website," Vest said, adding, "It has to either entertain … or educate. People don't want to waste their time."

Tactic #2. Don't fear low production value

Thinking of the the term video production, the image that tends to be conjured up is of heavy, expensive camera equipment and those highly trained in the craft. However, YouTube has lowered audience's video quality expectations, making effective videos in reach of those with smaller budgets.

Once a good concept is taken care of, according to Zamora and Vest, several ways exist to make a relatively cheap video work just as well as one with higher production value.

"If you can truly answer the question 'What are they are looking for?' I think you are going to feel better than spending $10,000 on a video production," Vest said.

Zamora added the idea that any video campaign or program requires expensive equipment is a "stigma that you just have to get rid of first and foremost."

Suitable equipment is becoming more affordable, he added, saying it is feasible to get a $100 to $200 camera, and microphones are available for $15. Add in a few lamps and "a front light, a sidelight to give you a little bit of fill and then a light for the back of you ... that's all you need."

On this cheap budget, he said, "You can produce as many videos as you want, and they will eventually pay for themselves ... when you can build up and start moving your way up the video food chain."

Be concise

Video is not a medium for the long-winded, according to Vest. Your video should convey sincerity, and a ten-minute video won't accomplish that any better than a three-minute video.

"Get straight to the point, and if you don't have high-value production, just be very sincere. Don't worry about taking out the 'ums' and 'gees' and 'ahs.' People connect to you better the more sincere you are," he said.

Vest also advised immediately getting to the point when producing a video, and "capture someone's attention within the first two to four seconds. Make people feel like they should be watching this video by showing what the video will be all about quickly so ... they know they're in the right place."

Video quality tips

Even with a low production video venture, Vest and Zamora said no company should skip on certain aspects. In this area, the small things that should always be paid careful attention to are:

- Making sure there are no shadows on the presenter's face
- There is a clear view of the presenter's eyes
- Quality audio for clear communication

"If the audio sounds bad ... you are going to lose engagement," Vest said.

A clear view of the presenter's eyes is also extremely important for engagement, he added, because it allows them to connect with the viewer, and adds a feeling of transparency to the video.

Tactic #3. Create and manage a YouTube channel

"I think that if you are making a YouTube channel, you have one first impression," Zamora said.

Proper organization of videos, from thumbnails to the description, are what keep viewers engaged, he added, "I want to look at that video and I know exactly what it is about, before I even start playing it."

The overall design of a YouTube channel should be appealing and fit with your company's theme, Zamora said. This includes choosing a channel name that is as close to your company's as possible — customers should never be confused or think they have ended up in the wrong place.

"I have seen YouTube channels where they just have a cluster of logos and words everywhere, it is not a clean interface, it is confusing and it's a little daunting. You want it to be clean, concise, straight to the point," Zamora concluded.

Tagging videos

When uploading a video to YouTube, "tagging" videos is a highly valuable asset, Zamora said. Relevant tags to your video will help bridge the gap between people who have a question and your video that answers it.

It is vital, he said, to be extremely clear in your tags, and it is best to already have a good idea of the keywords your customers are using when searching, and incorporate those. Relevancy is what will make your videos a success.

Using the tag "Super Bowl" when your video really has nothing to do with it will "leave people with a bad impression, and they are going to turn away and never come back," Zamora said.

However, trend or culture jacking can be a great way to make your videos spontaneous and engaging for viewers. Because videos have a fairly quick turnaround, it can be one of the best mediums for incorporating a cultural event your customers are talking about with your product.

Organize with playlists

"So, how do you keep all that organized?" Vest asked. "Today, the answer with YouTube is playlists."

YouTube playlists enable companies to organize videos in a specific grouping, such as "Small business tips,"

"Videos from our blogs" or by individual products.

"Different videos serve very different purposes, but our playlists allow us to let people watch based on their interest even though they are on one channel," Vest said.

Achieve SEO payback from videos

"Google is the number one search engine by metrics alone," Zamora said, adding YouTube videos receive a high ranking in Google's algorithm, usually above the fold on the search engine results page as video links get indexed instantly.

In this regard, it's paramount to be thorough and to input keywords and descriptions, as YouTube focuses on bringing up videos to engage audiences, according to the official YouTube creator's blog. Essentially, videos people watch for longer receive preference, not simply videos that achieve the most clicks.

The popularity and strength of your channel will also be important to SEO. For the best possible results, create regular content that will build your following, and nurture YouTube features such as comments, channel subscribers and the "thumbs up."

TACTIC #4. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TOOLS AVAILABLE

AdWords, according to Vest, is a highly valuable tool to invest in for video, and "not many people are doing it correctly. So there is a lot of opportunity."

For video, AdWords has four different "TrueView" video ad options, all of which Vest estimated were "unbelievably inexpensive advertising ... between seven and eight cents," compared to common keywords in Google Analytics that can run much higher.

- In-slate ads: Show before YouTube partner videos that are 10 minutes or longer.

- In-stream ads: Viewers see five seconds of your promoted video before they can keep watching or skip it.

- In-search ads: Video appears in a promoted section of the search results page.

- In-display ads: Your ad appears alongside other YouTube videos that match your target audience.

Four Ways to TrueView:

TrueView in-stream	TrueView in-slate	TrueView in-search	TrueView in-display

In-stream ads play like a TV-style ad before or during another video from a YouTube partner. Viewers see 5 seconds of your video and then can keep watching or skip it.

You pay if they watch for at least 30 seconds or to the end of the video (whichever is less).

In-slate ads show before YouTube partner videos that are 10 minutes or longer. Viewers choose to watch one of three ads or see regular commercial breaks during their video instead.

You pay only when viewers choose to watch your video.

In-search ads appear above or to the right of regular result on the search results page.

You pay only when a viewer chooses to watch your video.

In-display ads appear alongside other YouTube videos, or on websites on the Google Display Network that match your target audience.

You pay only when a viewer chooses to watch your video.

Vest also encouraged using the AdWords keyword tool to gain comprehension of what people are typing in relation to your product. He cautioned, "Related to video, the search intent on Google versus YouTube is extremely different."

He advised marketers use Youtube.com/analytics to understand at what point people stop watching your videos, to understand how to gain and keep their attention and nix any video strategies that might garner negative results.

"There is just a lot of demystifying that happens once you get deep into YouTube," Vest said. "You can see what is happening on your site, and how people are engaging with your videos. This really helps with business decisions to understand what people are doing."

Vest said Wasp Barcode was able to understand through analytics the average person coming from YouTube

visited its website for more than four minutes. "It is a very engaged user," Vest said, because not only do they spend the time to watch the video, but they are interested enough to move on and explore the website as well.

Beginning a video campaign or library may seem complicated at first, but Zamora maintained it is a relatively simple process with high reward. When making a video, he concluded, "Do it often, tag it right, make it pretty. It sounds daunting … but it is important and you should be doing video — that's where we are all headed."

GAMIFICATION: 3 TIPS FOR GAMIFICATION APPS AS PART OF YOUR CONTENT MARKETING

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

Game on! There are 120 million people enrolled in travel rewards programs and more than 200 million play reward-based online games, according to Bunchball.

To help you get started with your own gamification app, here are three tips. Since gamification apps are such a new and emerging tactic, we would love to hear your thoughts in the comments section of this MarketingSherpa blog post, as well.

TIP #1: PROVIDE VALUE IN GAME FORM

For a gamification app to help your content marketing, it should tie into the value your paid products or services offer. All paid products or services do one of two things:

- Help a customer alleviate a pain point
- Help a customer achieve a goal

In content marketing, you translate the value your products have in these two areas into some form of content, like a video or blog post.

With a gamification app, you take that value one step further by making pain point removal or customer goal achievement fun, and add a reward.

There may be many obvious ways to do this if you have a consumer brand. However, B2B marketers often tell me they find it challenging to produce engaging, or dare I say, fun, content.

Let's take an example. Imagine if you sold manufacturing solutions. To engineers and plant managers. Sounds boring, right?

Well, Siemens turned that combination into an engaging game called Plantville. To learn more about it, and get ideas for your own games, read "Gamification: How Siemens got 23,000 engineers to learn about its brand."

TIP #2: FIND A REWARD YOUR AUDIENCE VALUES

What do your users find valuable?

Virtual rewards, like moving to the next level? Getting points? To gamify its community, SAP rewarded users by making them an "expert" in different areas, giving them status within the community.

How about physical rewards like discounts, free products and cash money? In this way, gamification can be similar to a more traditional marketing practice – the contest.

To get your creative juices flowing, here is a short list of possible rewards, from the article "Gamification: 6 tactics for B2B marketers" …

- Cash
- Products
- Community status in the form of a badge, such as identifying the winner as an "expert"
- Early access to content
- VIP status at events
- One-on-one time with executives

TIP #3: GET RATED TO GET DOWNLOADED

Before anyone can play your app, they have to download it. However, as of September 2012, there were more than 700,000 apps in the iTunes store. So, you have a lot of competition for your app.

To get downloaded, you need to work your gamification app into your overall marketing mix. You can use some tactics that you would use to promote any other app, or product really.

However, one element should be unique for your gamification app … where you ask your users to rate it. According to Andrew Martin, Vice President, Metia, this point in a gamification app is usually right after completing a challenge.

It makes sense – people usually like a game when they are winning.

But, don't require a rating every time they use the app. That could just get annoying.

For more information on getting your gamification app downloaded, read "Mobile Marketing How-To: 9 tactics for improving ranking in Apple's App Store and the Google Android Market."

Content Marketing

CONTENT MARKETING: A PROCESS FOR EVALUATING CONTENT CHANNELS

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

"Should we have a blog? What about YouTube videos? Pinterest? Instagram?"

When engaging in content marketing, the question of "where?" always comes up. If you're just getting started, you want to know on which channels you should focus your content.

If you're already deeply engaged in content marketing, you likely want to reevaluate the channels you've been using at regular intervals as shiny new channels emerge and old channels diminish. (Social networks, like old soldiers, never die; they just fade away.)

To that end, here is a process for evaluating content channels. I'd love to hear your input, as well.

STEP #1: DETERMINE VALUE OF BRAND

All marketing, including content marketing (heck, really every decision your company makes), should begin with your value proposition. After all, the main focus of your content marketing should be communicating helpful information that is in line with the value of your brand.

Obviously, crafting an effective value proposition is a much bigger topic than I can cover here, but here are a few high-level tips that may help you out:

- **Answer this question** – *Why should [Prospect Here] choose [Brand Here] instead of [Competitor Here]?* Obviously, you may need to do this more than once if you're targeting more than one type of prospect or have more than one competitor.

- **Identify and express your value proposition** – You can use this simple value proposition worksheet to help you answer the above question and to identify and express your value prop. Also, make sure you find evidentials, which are elements that help you to support the claims made in your above answer.

- **Evaluate your answer** – Be sure to get input from others inside your company yet outside the Marketing department (What does Customer Service or Product Development think the value of the brand is?). And, of course, you ultimately have to test your value proposition to see how effective it is with your target audience.

STEP #2: DETERMINE VALUE OF PRODUCT(S)

Now do the same exercise as in step #1 to determine the value of your products. Just slightly change the question to, *Why should [Prospect Here] choose [Product Here] instead of [Competitor Product Here]?* (If you are a one-product company, you can likely skip this step).

STEP #3: CONDUCT PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

Those first two steps are really independent of content marketing, and you should have already done these for your marketing as a whole. However, I felt it was important to include them because your content marketing is essentially an extension of your brand and product value propositions.

That said, let's now dive into some content aspects:

- **Identify target audience** – At whom does this content aim? Decision makers? Influencers? How old are they? What income level? Where do they live?

  There are endless ways you can break down this information, but you're essentially trying to discover what type of information they are looking for and where they go for that information.

- **Identify channels for analysis** – This step is crucial for overcoming "I Hear Twitter is Hot and I Should Use It" Syndrome. You might love Twitter, but does your intended audience?

  For example, let's say my mom was your target audience. She thinks it's called Twiddle. And she's amazed at how they fit all those pictures into a digital camera. In other words, Twitter is not the right channel for reaching her.

  You can start by looking at your analytics. Which content channels are already driving traffic to your website?

- **Discuss with your team** – As with value propositions above, not all of the wisdom resides within the Marketing department. What has Customer Service learned about your customers, the information they're looking for, and where they find it? What about Sales?

STEP #4: DETERMINE WHAT THE IDEAL CHANNELS FOR COMMUNICATING CONTENT WOULD LOOK LIKE

In anything I've worked on in my marketing career, I've learned it never hurts to engage in a little blue sky thinking.

For example, if a few years ago you thought a great content channel to reach your audience with would be like Facebook but more visual, then you could have been a successful early adaptor when Pinterest came along.

Or, you might even find the need to create your own community.

Either way, grab a whiteboard and ask yourself these questions:

- **What would the ideal channel's value be?** – To your potential audience. Why would hearing about this new channel stop them in their tracks and make them sign up right away? What element of that can you leverage using the current content channels that are at your disposal?

- **How would you use the ideal channel(s)?** – What would these channels offer you, the content creator, that you aren't able to utilize now? Is there any way to work within the confines of today's channels to make possible what you currently view as impossible?

STEP #5: CREATE A DRAFT CONTENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Now that you understand the value of your brand and its products, know how your target audience likes to get its information, and have pushed the limit on thinking about how you could possibly communicate better with your audience, it's time to create a draft content infrastructure.

For each channel in that content infrastructure, you should have this information:

- **To whom does the channel speak?** – It doesn't have to be every member of your target audience either. You just have to make sure the channel is appropriate for at least one targeted persona in the audience (for example, it might appeal to influencers but not executive-level decision makers).

- **What content can we produce?** – On a recent webinar, I received a question along the lines of, "We're a boring B2B company, so how can we produce videos?"

  At the time I said, "If a tongue cleaner and a concrete equipment company can produce effective, engaging videos, then so can you."

  Now, I'm not so sure I was right. After all, just because Pearl Jam can rock the Garden, doesn't mean I can.

  So, do a little corporate soul searching on this one ... can we create the type of content that is expected in this channel? Will we be able to have a blog as informative as competitive sources

of information? Will we be able to have a YouTube channel as entertaining as other choices the customer has?

How is our company organized, and what is its culture? Is information easily accessible? Will subject matter experts contribute to our content?

These are not yes or no questions; you're grading yourself along a scale and trying to prioritize in which content channels to invest your resources. That said, even with infinite resources, you should not invest in infinite channels.

As the knight says in *Indiana Jones*, "But choose wisely, for while the true Grail will bring you life, the false Grail will take it from you." Producing content poorly, or that is a poor fit for a content channel or social network, is likely worse than doing nothing at all. And, this ties into the next question …

- **Can we support this channel until the sun (or Wal-Mart) expands enough to swallow up the Earth?** – That is, after all, the point of this exercise.

   Much like having a baby, conception is the easy and fun part. But will you still be dedicated to that content channel when it's an annoying teenager?

   How frequently will you add new content to this channel? How often will you read and respond to customer feedback?

   Important questions, because that Google+ account you last updated eight months ago telegraphs the message that you'll abandon your customers, as well.

- **Does the channel support my brand's and products' value propositions?** – The channel itself communicates value. For example, should a serious B2B brand be on Facebook? How do the ads surrounding your YouTube videos affect the perception of your brand's value?

   I won't answer these questions; I'll just leave them out there. But make no mistake, the channel itself sends signals about the value of your brand to potential customers.

- **What is the value proposition of your content on this channel?** – *Why should [Prospect Type Here] [Read Your Blog To Learn About Fixing an Appliance] instead of [Get Information To Fix An Appliance In Any Other Way]?*

   Even your free content needs an effective value proposition. That is the final litmus test. If you can't answer the above question, you're just wasting time and money investing in that content channel.

STEP #6: CREATE AND DISPERSE YOUR CONTENT CHANNEL RECOMMENDATIONS

You have a pretty good understanding of which channels are worth the significant investment of time, money, and resources necessary to have an impact on your content marketing.

Now that you have created your content infrastructure, one last piece of advice from me to you.

Call it a "draft." And distribute it to your team and to appropriate departments internally. For two reasons:

- **You're always going to overlook something** – Call it Murphy's Law, or whatever you like. Even after going through the above steps, having something that looks like a plan will likely jog the thinking of someone in IT who will say, "I was reading an industry forum, and found that competitor X is going to launch the same ..."

- **Get buy-in** – Content marketing is not simply a marketing effort. It is an entire company effort. If you want to create a blog, much of the information you fill it with will come from outside of the Marketing department.

  So if you don't have the proper leaders and teams on board, you'll have selected the perfect content channels ... but have nothing to put in them.

CONTENT MARKETING: TARGETED PERSONA STRATEGY LIFTS SALES LEADS 124%

- Adam Sutton, Senior Reporter

Content quality is in the eye of the beholder. You have to understand the audience before you can "wow" it with great blog posts, whitepapers and webinars.

The marketing team at Skytap, a self-service provider of cloud automation solutions, understands this well.

"In the last 12 to 18 months, we have put a lot of focus and energy toward understanding who our buyers and personas are in any given deal, and then catering our content to those groups," says Nate Odell, Director of Marketing, Skytap.

Skytap launched a content marketing strategy in May 2012 to generate and convert more leads. The team saw great year-over-year results:

- 210% increase in North American site traffic

- 55% increase in organic search traffic

- 97% increase in leads from online marketing

- 124% increase in leads from all channels (online as well as offline events and programs)

- 73% increase in opportunities from online marketing

"If we didn't have content, I don't believe that we would have had as much success as we did in 2012," Odell says. "Content marketing is just so crucial."

The foundation of the team's strategy is a deep understanding of its prospects and buyers. Here's how the team set that foundation and improved upon it:

STEP #1. SET BASIC AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

Skytap's customers are typically middle- and enterprise-level companies who use cloud computing to accomplish at least one of the following:

1. Test software throughout its development

2. Provide virtual software training

3. Provide software demonstrations

These "use-cases," as Odell calls them, give Skytap a natural way to segment its content marketing strategy.

STEP #2. RESEARCH THE SEGMENTS

Skytap wanted to target its content to key players within these groups to give it more impact. The team collected research from many sources, including:

- CRM and lead-tracking data

- Search and other behavioral data

- Information from sales reps

- Conversations with existing customers

The company takes a "hands-on" approach to customer engagement, and that information contributed to the team's research.

"Whether you are in sales, or marketing, product management or product development, and whether you are a managing director or a VP, you are expected to engage with customers at some level," Odell says.

STEP #3. DIG DEEPER IN EACH SEGMENT

In its research, the team wanted to identify the typical roles involved in a sales deal for each of Skytap's three use-cases. This includes people who:

- Recognize the need for a solution

- Give final approval for the purchase

- Procure the solution

- Use the solution

The business titles typically involved in the deals were important pieces of information. For example, this could be a senior software engineer who is asked to evaluate a solution as part of the sales process.

"It's really important for us to find patterns around the titles we see in deals in each use-case so we can know with probably 90-95% accuracy that if we approach these folks in other organizations who are similar, we are going to have a much higher rate of success selling into these organizations," says Odell

Create a profile

The team examines the common characteristics of the people in these roles to create a full persona. This includes gathering information about each persona:

- Product of interest (use-case)

- How they found relevant information

- What they searched for online

- Relevant pain points

- Obstacles that prevent the person from moving forward

Start with important roles

Creating this many personas is a big task. The team continues its work today, and Odell is careful not to let the project spiral out of control.

"Instead of saying, 'Let's just go understand everybody,' we need to be very methodical and say, 'Let's go understand the particular use-cases and all the individuals we typically see in those deals and really understand what they're looking for.'"

STEP #4. PLAN TARGETED CONTENT

Since targeted marketing typically earns a better response than generic marketing, Skytap strives to target particular use-cases and personas in its content. Odell mentions the company's email newsletter as an example.

"It would be really easy for us to do a general newsletter that had everything from development and testing, to virtual training and software demos, but that's not very targeted. You're going to lose readers based on their level of interest."

Case studies

Testimonials

Here are a few examples of how the company targets its content:

- The **case studies** and **testimonials** on its website feature satisfied customers for each of the company's three use-cases.

- Visitors to the company's blog can view posts by **categories**, such as "virtual training," "development and testing" or "product development."

Blog post categories

- **Blog posts** speak to specific roles, such as one titled "Sales Engineers: Own Your Time and Leverage the Cloud."

Blog posts

- **Website copy** can also speak to specific roles. Here's an example from a services page:

  "Developers, test engineers and QA managers are faced with a dilemma: How do you get access to a scalable, ready-to-go cloud development and testing environment quickly, easily, and securely?"

Website copy

STEP #5. ESTABLISH A CONTENT REVIEW PROCESS

Skytap publishes a steady stream of high-quality content. Since its audience is highly specialized, and the topics are very granular, the company has a rigorous review process to ensure the material meets a high bar.

The company hired a managing editor to keep this process on track. That person is tasked with continuing Skytap's targeted content strategy, as well as these two tasks:

1. Maintain volume

Every member of the marketing team is tasked with creating content for Skytap's strategy. Other subject matter experts throughout the organization contribute, as well. The editor's job is to make sure this content arrives on time. Even Odell contributes.

"I drive 100% of the case studies. Between myself and the managing editor, we will split the number of whitepapers we author. ... Our events manager will write up summaries of events."

2. Maintain quality

The managing editor also provides the final stamp of approval on all content before its published, Odell says.

"We are not in the business of creating meaningless content garbage."

Thorough review

Establishing a repeatable process for editing content is important to maintaining its quality. Skytap's review "is pretty intensive," Odell says, and includes several executive managers and subject matter experts.

Here's a quick summary:

1. A piece of content is created

2. Reviewed by relevant, internal experts

3. Reviewed by executives

4. Reviewed by a project manager

5. Reviewed by managing editor

6. Published as part of a campaign

During each review, the piece may be edited and go through several drafts.

CONTENT MARKETING: AN 8-POINT ANALYSIS FOR YOUR BLOG

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

Blogging can be a very effective element of your marketing mix. For example, an online retailer realized a 172% ROI from its blog.

Of course, as with any marketing tactic, just having a blog is not enough. So, if your blog is underperforming, or you haven't yet begun to invest in this content channel, perhaps it's time for a tune-up.

Inspired by the come-ons from the local oil and lube joints for "160-point winter readiness car inspections," here is an eight-point analysis you can conduct to identify areas for improvement – and we all have them, the MarketingSherpa blog is no exception – on your blog.

POINT #1: POSTING FREQUENCY

On many blogs, the frequency and cadence of the blog posts is sporadic. You might see a blog post on Wednesday, then one on Friday, then no posts for a week, then two on Thursday.

An element of effective content is consistency. Let the journalists of the world be your guide here. For example, I have a weekend subscription to my local newspaper, *The Florida Times-Union*. Every Saturday and Sunday, a newspaper waits for me on my driveway.

If I were to stumble out of my house one Sunday morning – Tony Soprano-style – to find no newspaper waiting, well, I'd start to question the quality of the newspaper. If it just happened once, I would probably not think too big a deal of it. But, if the newspaper was no longer reliably on my driveway on the weekend, I would start to question the reliability of the information in it.

The same goes for your blog.

That said, you have a tough challenge to face as a content marketer, because you can't sacrifice the quality of your content for a reliable cadence.

To serve both masters – content quality and reliability – you need to set up an editorial calendar you know you can consistently over-deliver on and build up a queue of content. In other words, if you're writing your blog posts the same day they are posted, then you have a problem. For example, I'm writing this post on February 15.

That queue will wax and wane in size as you become busy with other duties, but it is your insurance and buffer against missing a scheduled deadline. You can still add some real-time posts to take advantage of general news or changes in your industry. Just make sure you have plenty of high-quality, evergreen posts in your queue to comfortably meet every date you are promising to your readers.

POINT #2: CONTENT VALUE

"We know you have a choice of airlines when you fly, and we want to thank you for flying with us."

While this has become less true of the airline industry after the American Airlines and US Airways merger, it is more true every day in the blogosphere, especially in hyper-competitive industries that have a lot of quality content marketing such as information technology and marketing.

Sure, you could publish only self-promotional posts. But why would anyone read them? Or share them?

When writing every post, you must ask yourself the central value proposition question – If I am a *[particular prospect, e.g., IT manager]*, why should I *[read this blog post]* rather than [get information from any other source, anything from an industry magazine to a competitor's blog]?

The end results of every blog post must be to serve your audience. So, focus on value as your top objective – it is more important than length, promotions or frequency.

POINT #3: BLOG TITLES

Blog titles aren't just titles, they're also ads. They might show up in RSS feeds, or tweets, or along sidebars of a newsletter.

When writing a headline, you have to communicate enough value so your ideal prospects want to click on the headline and read more information.

Bad titles are usually bad because they are:

- Too salesy or focused on a brand
- Too clever and unclear of the value of the post
- Not relevant to your audience

- Too long and confusing
- Sometimes, just plain odd and clearly an afterthought

Good titles are usually good because they:

- **Clearly show this blog post is relevant to an audience**. This is especially important for B2B marketing. Let marketers know which job functions or industry issues you're discussing, so they know it is relevant for them. For example, "Email Marketing Basics: 4 tactics of the incredible email marketer" is clearly aimed at email marketing specialists who are fairly early in their career.

- **Clearly show the value of reading the post.** For example, "The Best Blog Titles for Your Content: 6 Best Practices for How to Get the Click." Adam Vavrek clearly communicates the value for reading the post – learning a specific number of ways (6) to get people to click and read more.

POINT #4: HEADER

This is another place where, and you'll notice a common theme here, you need to communicate value. In this case, to convert a casual browser – who found a specific post through organic search or social media – into a long-time, committed reader.

Determining the value proposition for your blog will help you determine the value to communicate in your header. I often get the question from marketers thinking of investing in content marketing, "But, if they could read *[respected industry news source here]*, why would they ever read my blog?"

By creating the value proposition for your blog, you are essentially answering that question.

For example, if you are a systems integrator in Jacksonville, you likely don't want a header that says, "IT Industry News and Information." With that header, you're competing with every other IT news source on the globe.

A more effective header might be "Inside tips and techniques for database managers." Or even "Helping small and medium business with killer tips about database management."

Understanding this value could also help shape what you name the blog. For this example company, we might want to call it the "Jax Database Blog" if your target companies are all in the Jacksonville area.

POINT #5: RIGHT PANEL

As discussed above, your blog posts shouldn't sell — they should be about value for the audience. However, a key element of content marketing is the marketing.

So, your right panel is an excellent place to include a relevant promotion or other advertisement. You might also want to consider:

- Email newsletter sign-up
- Links to your social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc.)
- A live Twitter feed, recent comments or other ways to highlight and encourage audience participation
- Hey, you're a marketer – this is an area that should come naturally to you. Have fun!

POINT #6: TAGS AND CATEGORIES

Some blogs are pretty random when it comes to tags and categories. Some overuse "general" or "miscellaneous" categories, which defeats the purpose of a category in the first place.

This is an area where a little forethought really helps. Once you've set up the overall value of your blog, determine the key elements of that value you will be communicating on your blog. It doesn't hurt if these tie into your SEO keyword strategy, as well.

For example, if you're a homebuilder, key categories might be the phases of the purchase decision and home construction. Then, you can use tags to highlight key topics discussed in each blog post.

So, a blog post about a luxury home built with recycled materials in one of your Jacksonville neighborhoods might be in the "Construction" category and include tags like "luxury," "green building" and "Jacksonville." To help with consistency, create a standard list of tags every blogger at your company can use. One person's "green building" is another person's "sustainable" and a third person's "eco-friendly." A mix of these terms in the body of the post itself can help with SEO.

However, being consistent with your categories and tags will not only help readers navigate your blog, it can help you pull material from your database for later compilations and content re-use. For example, a special report PDF featuring "10 luxury homes using green-building techniques" is much easier to pull together if you are consistent with your tags.

POINT #7: SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION

A major value of a blog is its shareable nature, and the ability for your audience to distribute it for you. To facilitate this, social media integration is key.

The jury is out on the best way to do this. Some blogs prefer having as many social media sharing options

as possible littering the top, middle or bottom of the post like signs in Times Square, all calling for your attention.

Personally, I'm a fan of one clear, key call-to-action for your fans to share based on their social media usage. In the case of the MarketingSherpa blog, we use the retweet button. But, we also include more sharing options in a subdued fashion at the bottom of the post, for those highly motivated to use a different social network.

We settled on Twitter as the main social network by looking at our analytics, and finding Twitter was the main source of inbound traffic from a social network. Also, qualitative research from interactions with our audience showed that Twitter was the most popular social network.

For your audience, a different social network may be more popular. Use your analytics and audience interaction to determine which social networks to feature prominently on your blog.

Whatever you choose, having a counter on your blog showing the number of shares will instantly bring life to your blog, and show others are reading it. If you're just starting out, it will help to do some industry outreach first to make sure others are reading it, before adding a social share counter button.

Point #8: Author bios

"We believe that people buy from people, that people don't buy from companies, from stores or from websites; people buy from people. Marketing is not about programs; it is about relationships."

– Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS

Nowhere is this truer than on a blog. Let's think back to the newspaper analogy, where readers come to rely on and enjoy hearing from Paul Krugman, Thomas Frank, Mike Lupica, etc.

Your author bios are a way for your audience to connect both literally by including Twitter and LinkedIn info, and figuratively by understanding how that author's experience can help the reader better understand a topic.

You might consider creating a separate page with author bios, and linking to it from your top navigation or a right-hand column.

Appendix A: Marketing Research Charts of the Week

TOP MOBILE MARKETING OBJECTIVES

Q: What are your TOP BUSINESS OBJECTIVES for mobile marketing in the next 12 months?

Week of Jan 08, 2013
From the *2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report*
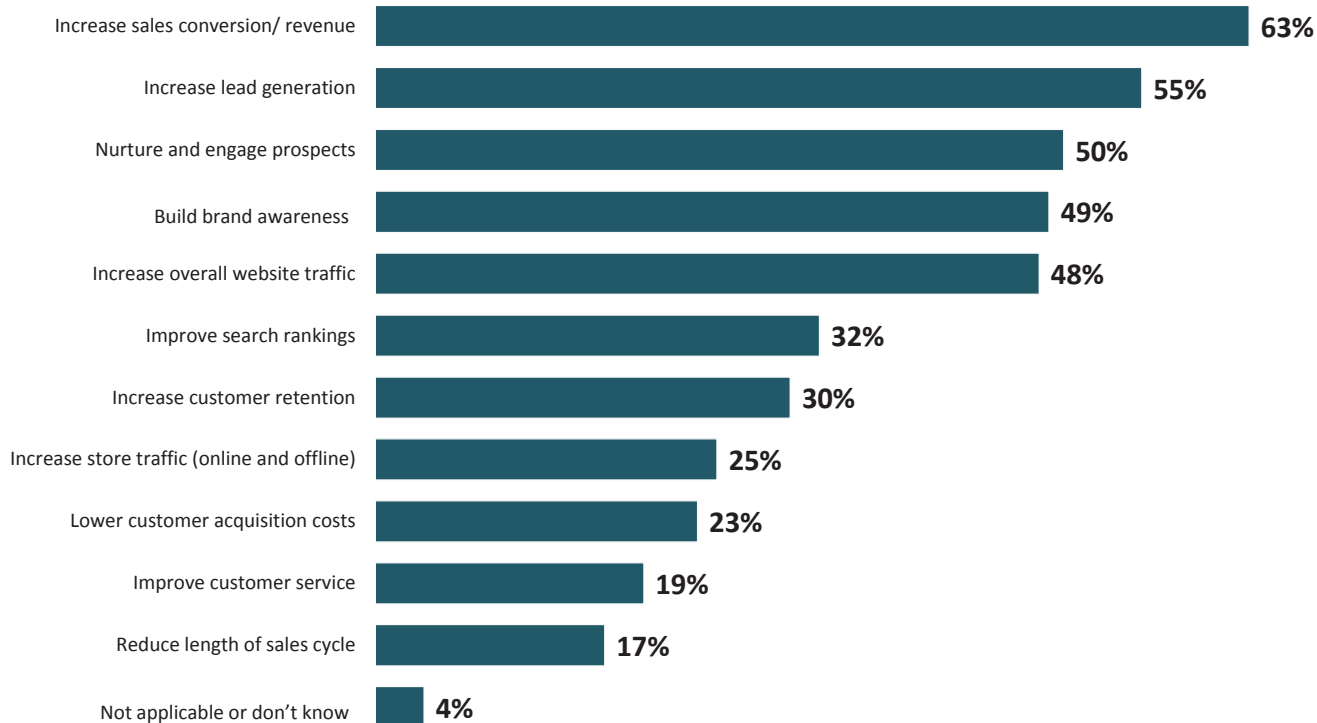
Objective	Percentage
Increase sales conversion/ revenue	63%
Increase lead generation	55%
Nurture and engage prospects	50%
Build brand awareness	49%
Increase overall website traffic	48%
Improve search rankings	32%
Increase customer retention	30%
Increase store traffic (online and offline)	25%
Lower customer acquisition costs	23%
Improve customer service	19%
Reduce length of sales cycle	17%
Not applicable or don't know	4%

©2012 MarketingSherpa Mobile Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded August 2012, N=283

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ENGAGEMENT RATE OF LOCAL MOBILE MARKETING TACTICS

Q: What percentage of customers/prospects interact with your organization's LOCAL mobile marketing tactics?

Week of Jan 15, 2013
From the *2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report*
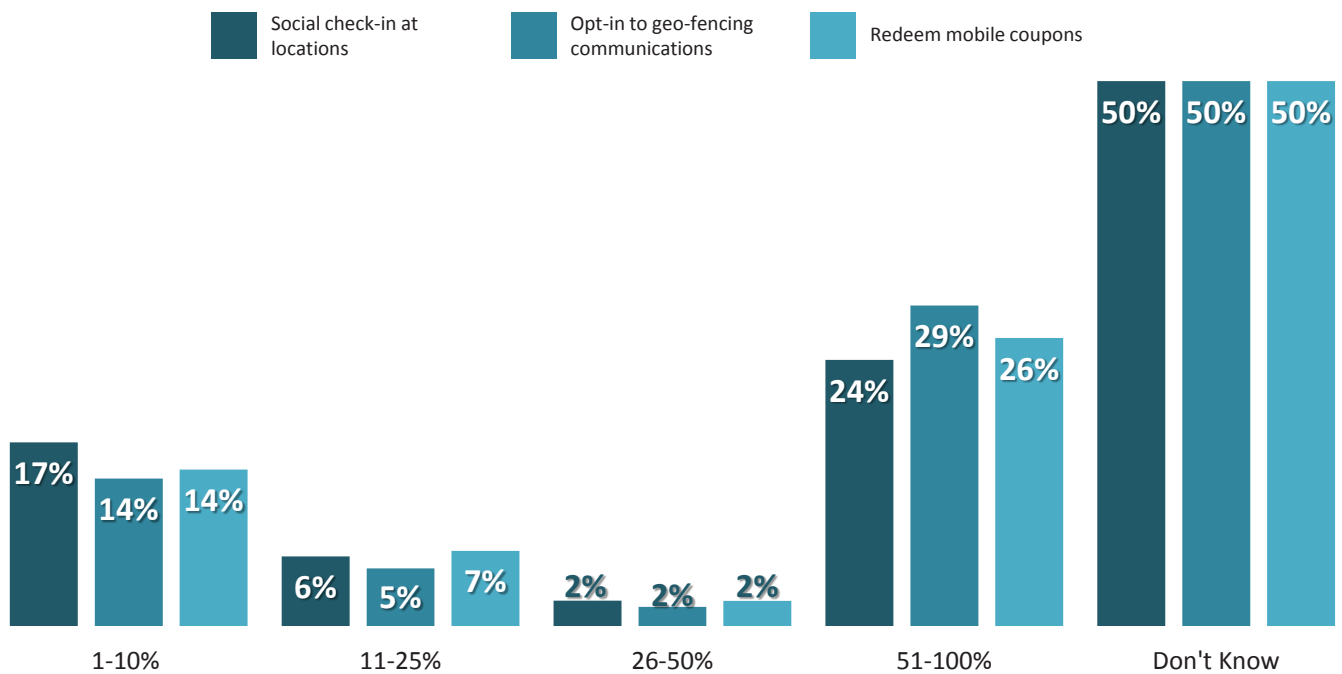
Legend:
- Social check-in at locations
- Opt-in to geo-fencing communications
- Redeem mobile coupons

	1-10%	11-25%	26-50%	51-100%	Don't Know
Social check-in at locations	17%	6%	2%	24%	50%
Opt-in to geo-fencing communications	14%	5%	2%	29%	50%
Redeem mobile coupons	14%	7%	2%	26%	50%

©2012 MarketingSherpa Mobile Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded August 2012, N=172 N=170 N=174

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CUSTOMERS INTERACTING WITH MOBILE EMAIL MESSAGES

Q: What percentage of customers/prospects interact with your organization's mobile EMAIL messages?

Week of Jan 22, 2013
From the *2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report*
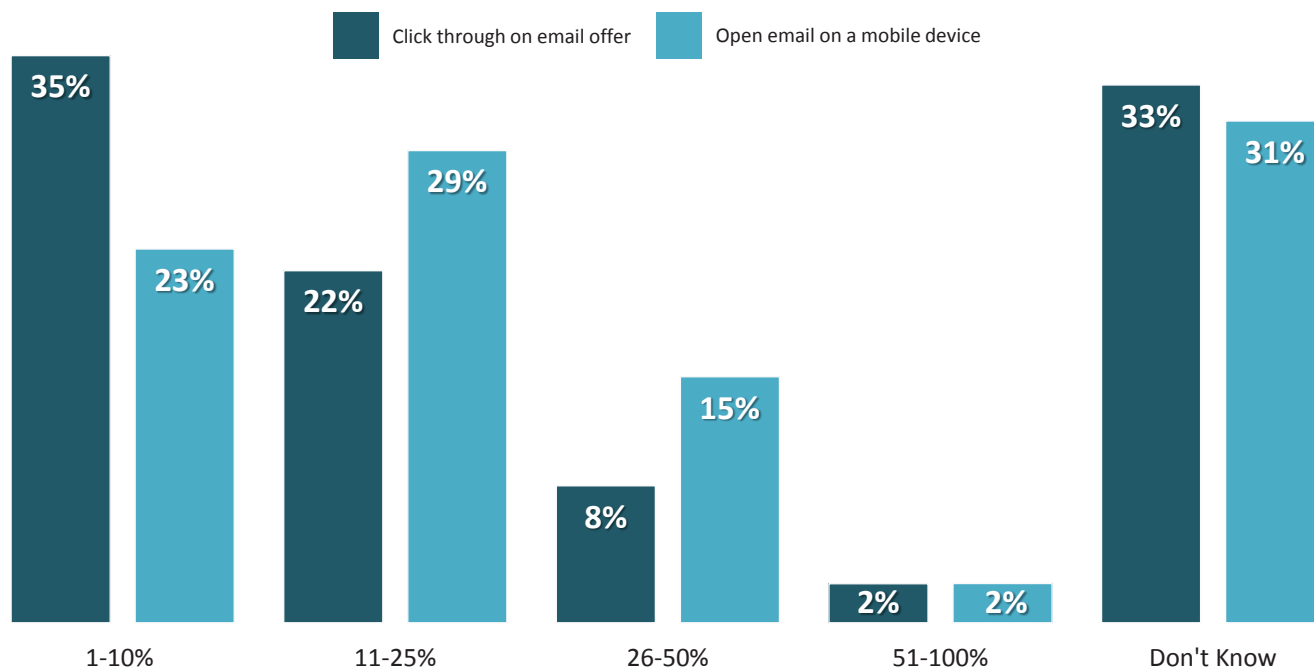
Click through on email offer   **Open email on a mobile device**

Category	Click through on email offer	Open email on a mobile device
1-10%	35%	23%
11-25%	22%	29%
26-50%	8%	15%
51-100%	2%	2%
Don't Know	33%	31%

©2012 MarketingSherpa Mobile Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded August 2012, N=166 N=167

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TOP MOBILE MARKETING CHALLENGES

Q: Which barriers exist to overcoming your organization's top challenges?

Week of Jan 29, 2013
From the *2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report*

Challenge	Percentage
Lack an effective mobile marketing strategy	55%
Inadequate staffing resources and expertise	55%
Insufficient budget for mobile initiatives	45%
Inadequate understanding of mobile user conversion path	35%
Inability to track/measure mobile user behavior to segment mobile audience	30%
Failure to develop a customer profile and/or theory for the mobile user	28%
Lack of compelling content to engage mobile user	25%
Difficulty merging mobile data with other systems (e.g. CRM)	24%
Unclear ownership of mobile initiatives	24%
Lack of executive support	21%

©2012 MarketingSherpa Mobile Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded August 2012, N=422

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MARKETERS' COLLECTION OF ANALYTICS DATA
Q: How much analytics data does your organization collect?

Week of Feb 05, 2013
From the *2013 Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report*
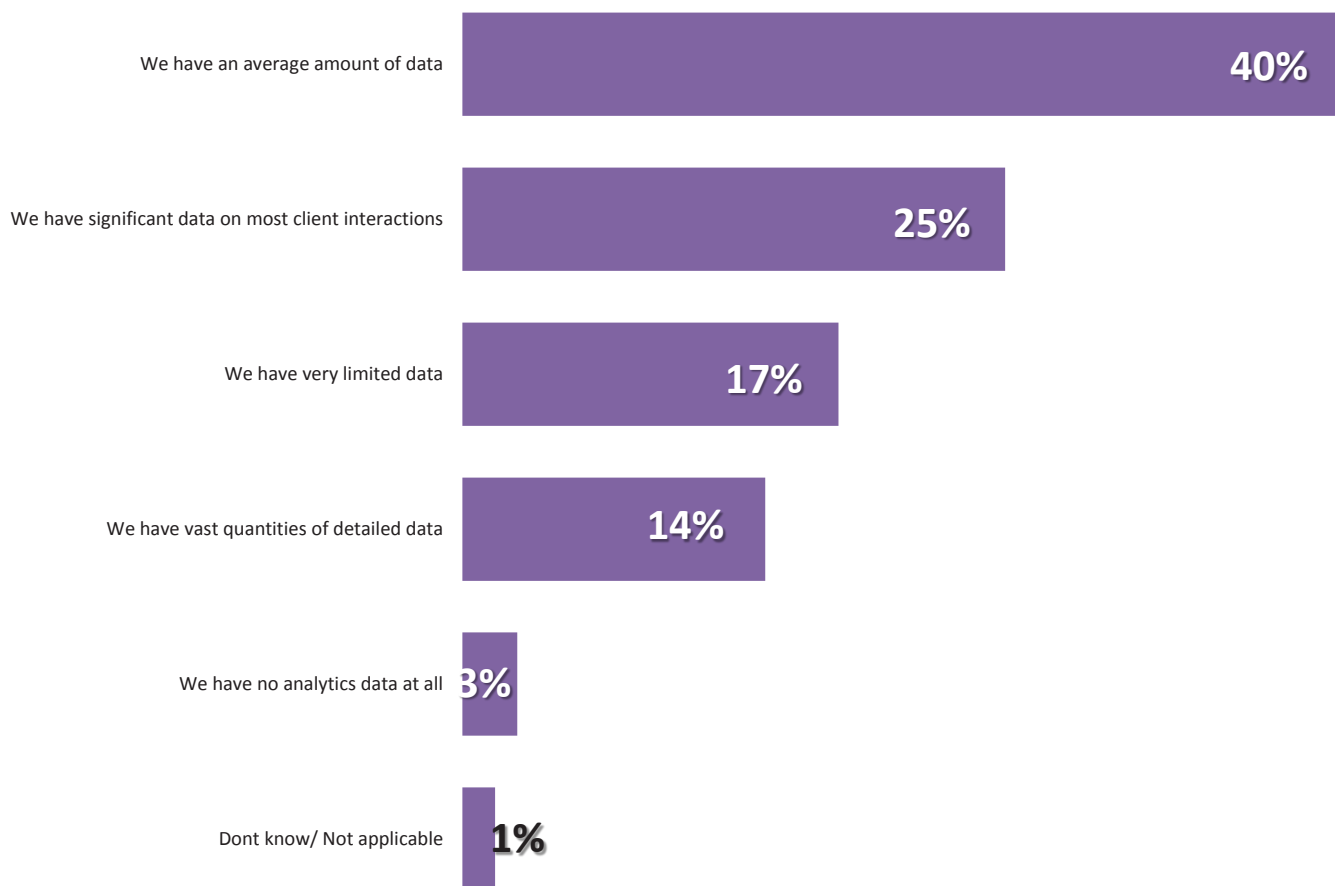
Category	Percentage
We have an average amount of data	40%
We have significant data on most client interactions	25%
We have very limited data	17%
We have vast quantities of detailed data	14%
We have no analytics data at all	3%
Dont know/ Not applicable	1%

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Marketing Analytics Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded November 2012, N= 682

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ANALYTICS USAGE FOR MESSAGE CREATION

Q: Which of the following analytics do you routinely use to create different message types?

Week of Feb 12, 2013
From the *2013 Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report*
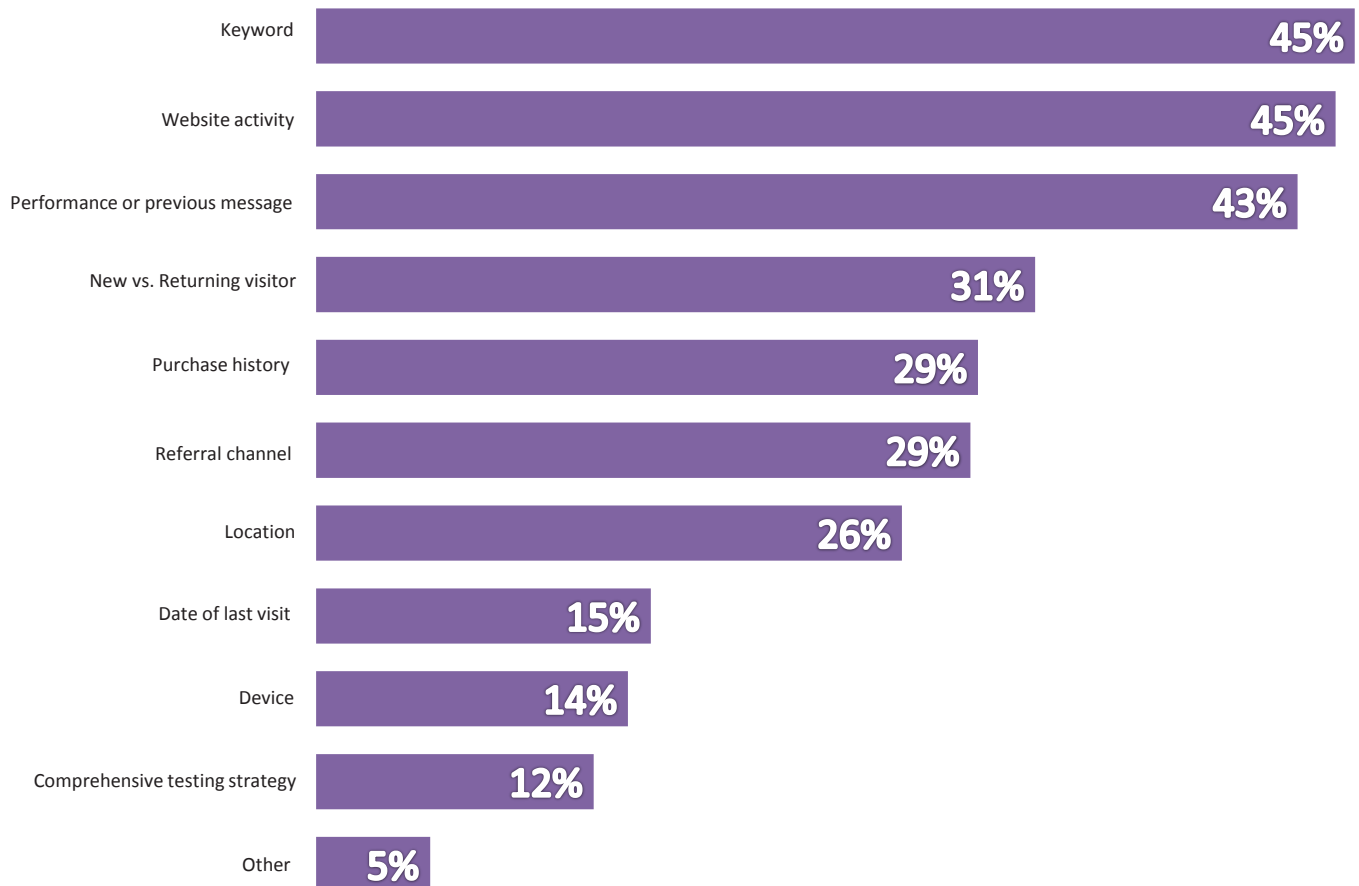
Category	Percentage
Keyword	45%
Website activity	45%
Performance or previous message	43%
New vs. Returning visitor	31%
Purchase history	29%
Referral channel	29%
Location	26%
Date of last visit	15%
Device	14%
Comprehensive testing strategy	12%
Other	5%

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Marketing Analytics Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded November 2012, N= 602

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TOP ANALYTICS OBJECTIVES FOR 2013

Q: What are your organization's most important marketing analytics objectives for 2013?

Week of Feb 19, 2013
From the *2013 Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report*

Objective	Percentage
Acting on data to improve marketing performance	66%
Combining data from multiple sources to draw correlations and make predictions	39%
Measuring attribution and interactions across channels	28%
Linking data together at the individual customer level	28%
Improving data hygiene and quality issues	27%
Hiring data-savvy marketing talent and/or training current staff	27%
Funding new analytics tools and solutions	27%
Integrating disparate systems and siloed data	27%
Gaining executive-level awareness and support	26%
Aligning marketing and IT	17%
Reducing latency/processing data more rapidly	12%
Clarifying regulatory barriers to data utilization	4%

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Marketing Analytics Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded November 2012, N= 273

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NEW EMAIL MARKETING DEVELOPMENTS FOR 2013

Q: What new developments will affect your email marketing program in the next 12 months? Please select all that apply.

Week of Feb 26, 2013
From the *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*
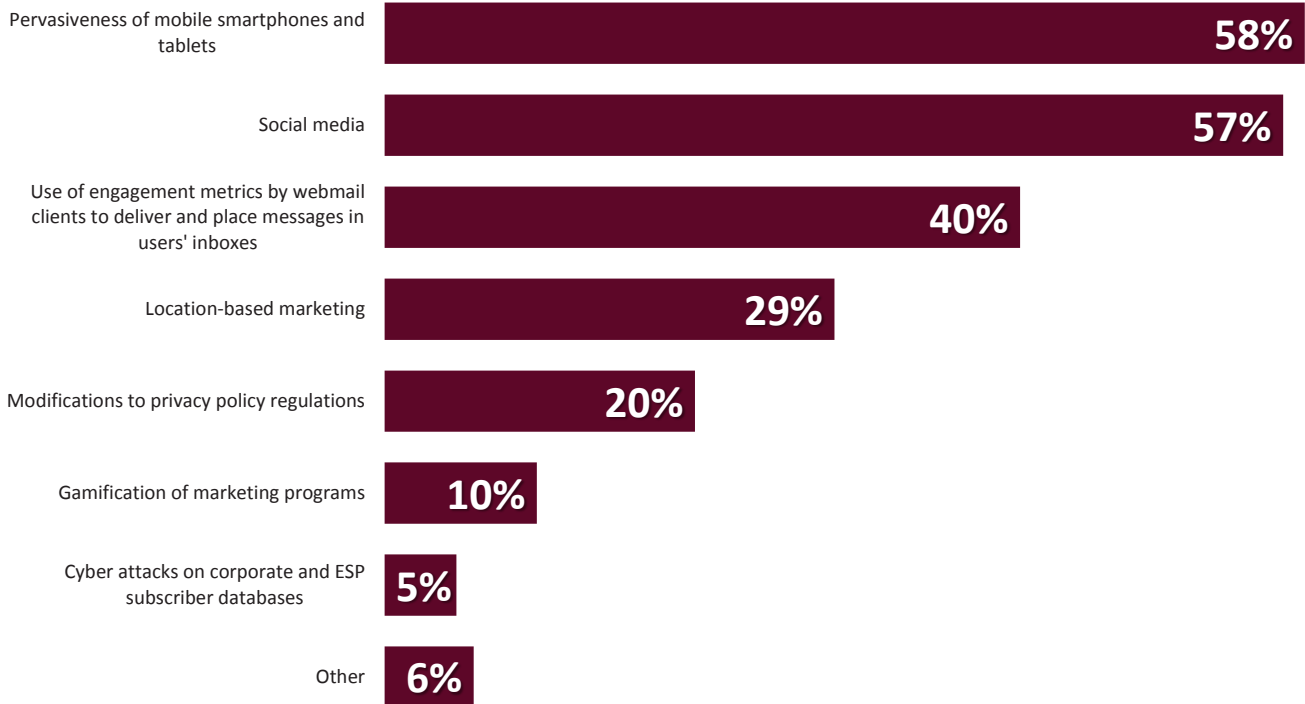
Development	%
Pervasiveness of mobile smartphones and tablets	58%
Social media	57%
Use of engagement metrics by webmail clients to deliver and place messages in users' inboxes	40%
Location-based marketing	29%
Modifications to privacy policy regulations	20%
Gamification of marketing programs	10%
Cyber attacks on corporate and ESP subscriber databases	5%
Other	6%

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=1,095

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EMAIL MARKETING ROI

Q: What is the estimated ROI from email marketing programs for your organization?

Week of Mar 05, 2013
From the *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*
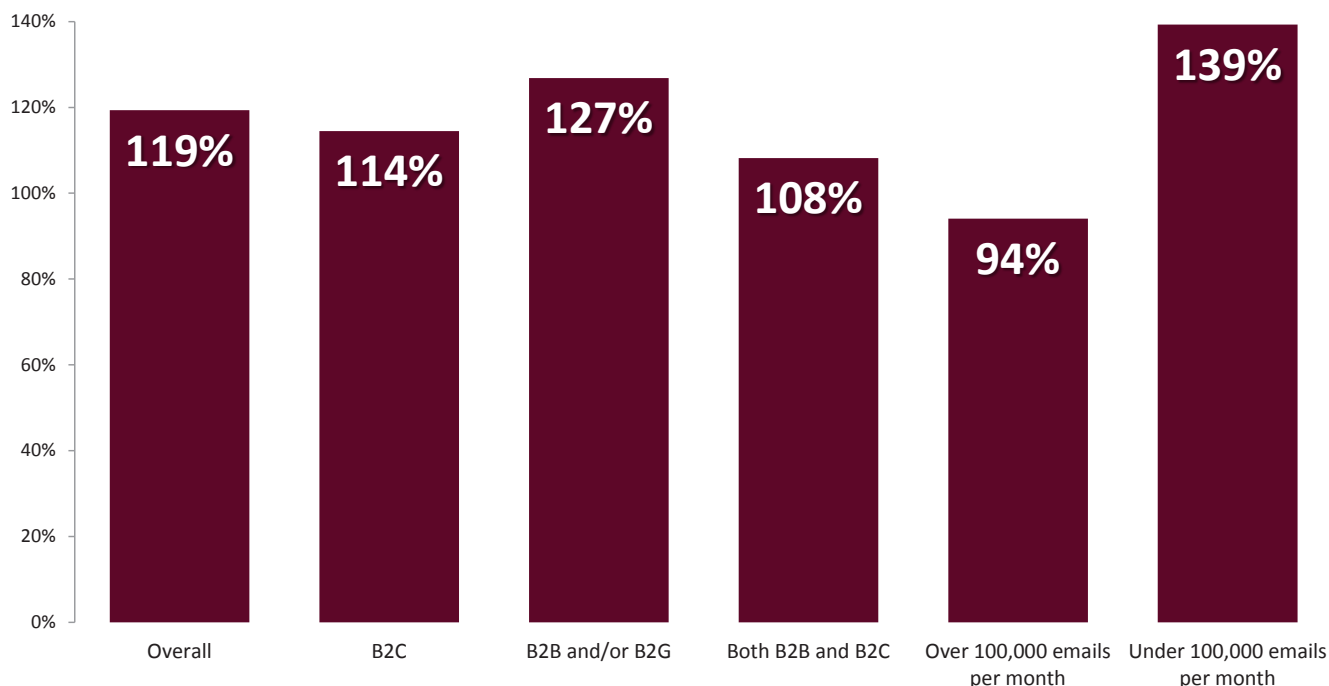
Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N≥42

AUTOMATED EMAILS SENT BY ORGANIZATIONS

Q: What type of automated, event-triggered, lifecycle email messages does your organization deploy? Please check all that apply.

Week of Mar 12, 2013
From the *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*
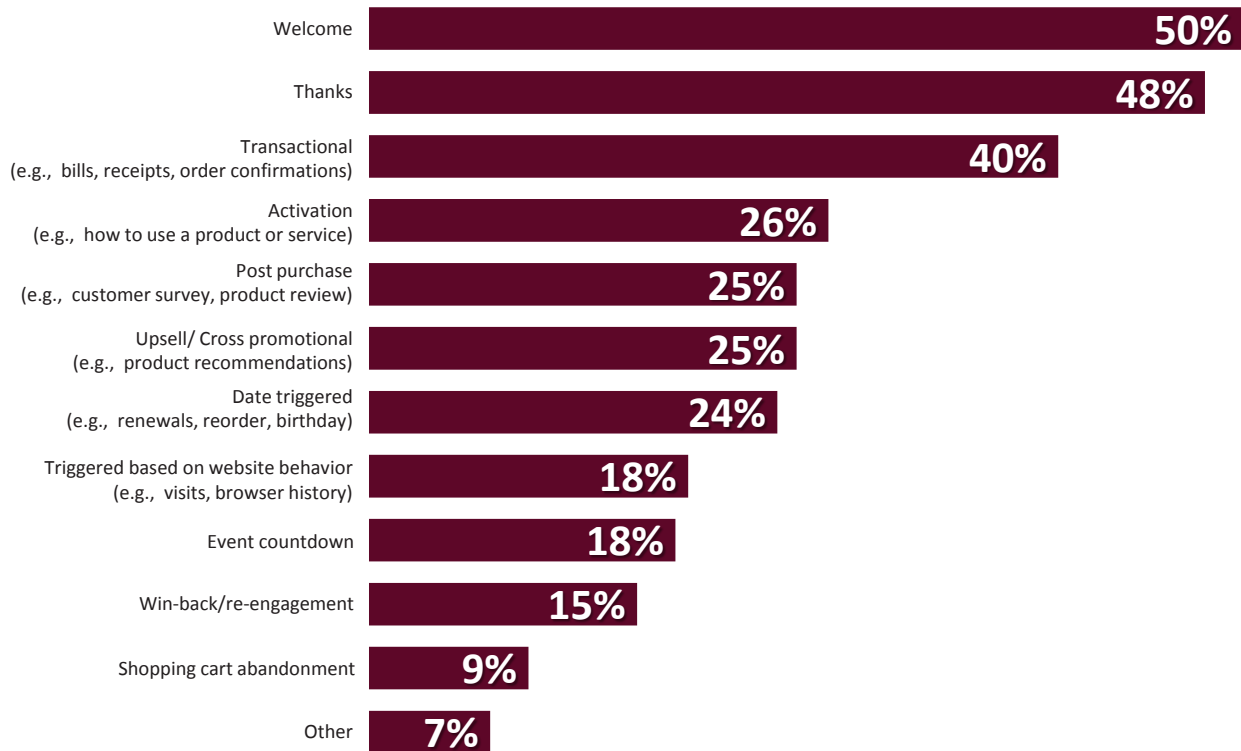
Welcome	50%
Thanks	48%
Transactional (e.g., bills, receipts, order confirmations)	40%
Activation (e.g., how to use a product or service)	26%
Post purchase (e.g., customer survey, product review)	25%
Upsell/ Cross promotional (e.g., product recommendations)	25%
Date triggered (e.g., renewals, reorder, birthday)	24%
Triggered based on website behavior (e.g., visits, browser history)	18%
Event countdown	18%
Win-back/re-engagement	15%
Shopping cart abandonment	9%
Other	7%

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=272

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MARKETERS' LIST GROWTH TACTICS

Q: Which of the following tactics is your organization using to drive email list growth? Please select all that apply.

Week of Mar 19, 2013
From the *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*
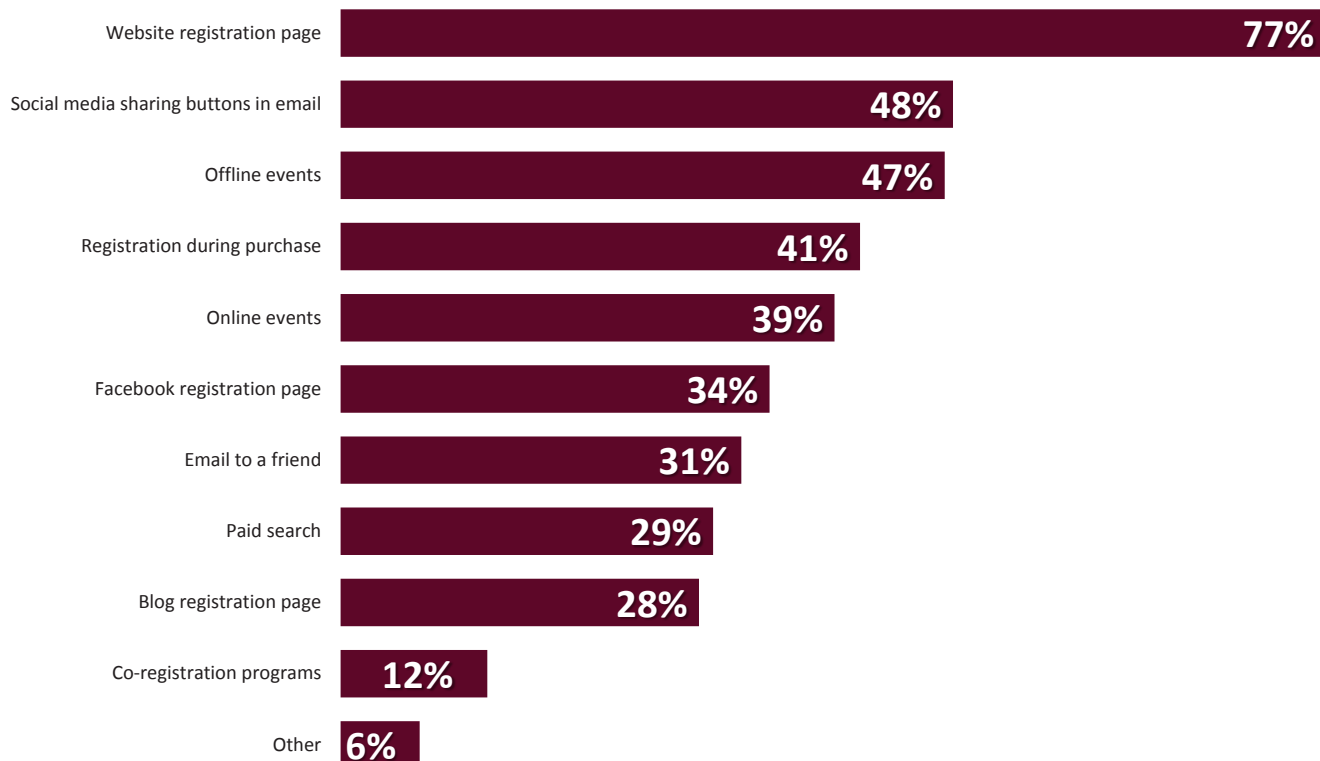
Tactic	%
Website registration page	77%
Social media sharing buttons in email	48%
Offline events	47%
Registration during purchase	41%
Online events	39%
Facebook registration page	34%
Email to a friend	31%
Paid search	29%
Blog registration page	28%
Co-registration programs	12%
Other	6%

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=451

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IMPROVING EMAIL DELIVERABILITY

Q: Which of the following tactics is your organization using to improve email deliverability rates? Please select all that apply.

Week of Mar 26, 2013
From the *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*

Tactic	Percentage
Provide an easy unsubscribe process	62%
Measure and remove hard bounces	51%
Clean lists regularly	41%
Remove inactive subscribers	39%
Maintain an opt-in only subscriber list	39%
Evaluate soft bounces	27%
Request to be white listed	22%
Authenticate Sender ID, SPF, or DKIM	21%
Monitor inbox placement rate	19%
Launch reactivation campaigns	17%
Learn reputation score	15%
Sign up for feedback loops	13%
Subscribe to a black list monitoring service	11%
Send repermission campaigns	7%
Seek certification	7%
Don't know / Not Applicable	12%
Other	2%

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=593

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Appendix B: Content Directory

MECLABS Research Digest

CONTENT DIRECTORY FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2013

This directory includes all of the content published by MECLABS through its brands, MarketingSherpa, MarketingExperiments and B2B Lead Roundtable, during the first quarter of 2013. You can browse the titles and summaries of this content, and see the full case study, article, video or publication by visiting a content piece's URL.

You can also view more content by visiting one of MECLABS' websites:
MarketingSherpa.com – View additional case studies and how-to articles
MarketingExperiments.com – See the latest discoveries found in the MarketingExperiments laboratory
B2B Lead Roundtable Blog – Learn more about lead generation, lead nurturing, lead management and more

MARKETINGSHERPA CASE STUDIES

B2B Social Media: Intuit grows Facebook audience 22%, extends reach 5x
Date: Wednesday, January 2, 2013
Summary: The Intuit marketing team proved the power of social media in B2B marketing in a campaign that combined mobile training and a social contest. The team's Facebook "Likes" increased 22% in the first week, and customers were twice as likely to recommend an Intuit product after the training. See how the team organized the contest and increased its Facebook reach by five times.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0079

Social Media Marketing: Startup achieves 900% Facebook fan growth through sweepstakes
Date: Thursday, January 3, 2013
Summary: As a small startup founded in 2010, SnapKnot needed a way to trim the budget while growing business at the same time. Previously relying on Google AdWords, the company decided to move the majority of its efforts to social media. This case study covers how SnapKnot turned a Facebook promotion into not only an increase in fans, but also in Twitter followers, visitors to its site and paying customers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0083

Email Testing: How the Obama campaign generated approximately $500 million in donations from email marketing
Date: Tuesday, January 15, 2013
Summary: The 2012 U.S. presidential election is finally over. MarketingSherpa has shaken off its political hangover and pulled insights from Obama for America's email strategy to help your marketing in 2013. We sat down with the campaign's email director to see how his team raised hundreds of millions of dollars in a matter of months. Inside, we show the best segments the team uncovered, and how one tactic increased conversions 300%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0081

Content Marketing: Webinar strategy increases registration, lead capture 91%

Date: Wednesday, January 16, 2013

Summary: This B2B newsletter article covers how one company went from a trial-and-error process of determining content and scheduling its webinars to a consistent "rhythm of business." The company now has set days of week and time of day for its webinars, and ongoing monthly series covering specific topics. Read on to learn how this organized webinar strategy led to a 91% increase in webinar — and lead capture — registration.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0086

Email Marketing: CNET win-back campaign sees 8% subscriber re-engagement

Date: Tuesday, January 22, 2013

Summary: In this MarketingSherpa case study, read how CNET, a news and information source for the tech-savvy, started a win-back campaign as part of an overall list cleanse to ensure high levels of deliverability for its email newsletters and marketing sends.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0072

Content Marketing: Targeted persona strategy lifts sales leads 124%

Date: Wednesday, January 23, 2013

Summary: In this article, see how one B2B firm tailored content to segments of its audience, and increased leads 124% after launch. You'll also learn how they dug deeper to target personas and earn great results.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0084

Email Marketing: Expedia Cruise Ship Centers uses data-triggered human interaction to increase bookings 81%

Date: Tuesday, January 29, 2013

Summary: Using data effectively can help personalize email, a tactic 32% of marketers find effective according to MarketingSherpa's 2012 Email Marketing Handbook. In this case study, read how Expedia Cruise Ship Centers used the information it had on past customers and integrated it with its telephone sales force.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0073

B2B Marketing: How accounts payable company's new process increased Marketing's contribution to revenue 1,300%

Date: Wednesday, January 30, 2013

Summary: Seeking to create a "high performing" and aligned buyer's cycle from lead gen to closed deal, the marketing team at AvidXchange undertook a complete overhaul of the Marketing-Sales process. This case study looks at a yearlong effort that created a formal testing and optimization program, upgraded the company's technology, and even dramatically improved Sales-Marketing alignment.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0078

Social Media Marketing: How New York Public Library increased card sign-ups by 35%

Date: Thursday, January 31, 2013

Summary: The New York Public Library uses National Library Card Sign-up Month as an opportunity to bring in many new library users. To do so, the library implemented a social media campaign using quotes from celebrities. The marketing team witnessed a surge in interactions online with the library and its followers.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0036

Email Marketing: 98% conversion rate of qualified leads thanks to email education drip campaign

Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2013

Summary: To save resources, including the valuable time of its five full-time staff members, Iron Tribe Fitness built a website and a series of 11 emails both focused on educating prospects about its niche service. With a combination of email marketing and staff personally qualifying leads, Iron Tribe was able to cut the amount of people with whom they conducted in-person consultations to 53% of prospects, converting 98% of those to signing a contract.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0074

How Toshiba Medical Provides Marketing Resources for Its Customers

Date: Friday, February 8, 2013

Summary: Toshiba America Medical Systems sells products to customers who, in turn, use the products to sell their services. By providing online marketing materials through its resource center, Image Maker, this B2B company effectively co-markets its products to customers.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0026

Email Marketing: Wireless provider increases open rate by 537% and clickthrough by 92% with personalized daily newsletter

Date: Tuesday, February 12, 2013

Summary: Newsletters are an often neglected strategy, with 46% of marketers reporting their email newsletter as staying the course and 11% having a floundering program, according to the MarketingSherpa *2012 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*. In this case study, read how C Spire Wireless drastically increased engagement by integrating personalization into its daily newsletter program, NEWSLINK.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0082

Mobile Marketing: 7 tips based on CNET's mobile newsletters

Date: Thursday, February 14, 2013

Summary: When upper management asks to develop a mobile marketing strategy, marketers may find themselves scrambling to devise a plan and completing a project audiences do not want. Diana Primeu, Director of Member Services, CNET, discusses how her team was able to plan a mobile newsletter strategy through research efforts and time.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0031

Email Marketing: Weekly newsletter sees 400% lift in reactivation of inactive subscribers with personalization
Date: Tuesday, February 19, 2013
Summary: In this case study, see how Eventful personalized its weekly newsletter and launched a new email alert system, honing in on its 20 million users' specific interests, raised its clickthrough rates by 97% and saw a 400% increase in reactivation for inactive subscribers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0080

B2B Marketing: Manufacturer's "Cheaper than China" branding campaign increases sales 33%
Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2013
Summary: When China-based manufacturers began competing with The Rodon Group in the U.S. marketplace, armed with the perception U.S. firms couldn't compete on price, the marketing team knew it needed to cut through the fog of mislaid marketplace perceptions. Learn how a completely revamped marketing strategy resulted in a 450% increase in organic website traffic and a 33% lift in sales.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0071

Facebook Ads: How Zappos.com manages a $10 million strategy
Date: Thursday, February 21, 2013
Summary: Zappos.com's Facebook ads drive traffic to its website and earn an annual ROI in the $10 million range. We sat down with one of the program's managers to understand how the team uses the ads and what might change in 2013.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0076

Email Marketing: 236% more revenue from flash sale test
Date: Tuesday, February 26, 2013
Summary: Case-Mate tested a flash sale in early December and increased revenue 236%. Then, the team relaunched two weeks later and more than doubled the first sale's conversion rate. Find out how the team set up the first sale and tweaked the second to climb higher.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0070

Event Marketing: Virtual event campaign drives 10,155 registrations and 1,800 new database names
Date: Thursday, February 21, 2013
Summary: This case study covers why and how Marketo opted to host an online virtual event to announce its LaunchPoint partner ecosystem. Read on to discover how the marketing automation vendor segmented its own database, utilized social media -- including paid promotion on Facebook -- and leveraged its partners for promotion to wider audiences.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0075

Lead Generation Optimization: How Expedia CruiseShipCenters' increased previous customer conversions 22% by removing its lead capture form

Date: Friday, March 1, 2013

Summary: At MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013, Expedia CruiseShipCenters explained how its marketing team increased its conversion rate 22% by removing its lead capture form. Read on to learn the company's process with two case studies focused on lead generation optimization.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0010

Search Engine Marketing: Google Product Listing Ad strategy lifts average monthly revenue 129%

Date: Thursday, March 7, 2013

Summary: BabyEarth, a baby products retailer with both brick-and-mortar and e-commerce outlets, made extensive use of both Google Shopping and paid search in its marketing. This case study examines how BabyEarth tackled Google PLAs, and used tactics that differentiated PLAs from PPC ads, along with engaging in testing and optimization, to achieve a 129% increase in average monthly revenue from PLAs.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0077

Email Marketing: Health care system rebuilds program for small list, sees 700% clickthrough rate increase

Date: Tuesday, March 12, 2013

Summary: Small email lists usually translate to small staffs and a small budget, which can make it difficult to properly assess and overcome email program shortcomings. Unity Health System has a modest list from which to recruit nursing students to join its staff. See how it re-evaluated its overall message to make each name count and improved clickthrough rates by 700% and open rates by 23%.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0111

Search Engine Marketing: E-commerce site turns an 82% bounce rate around for a 400% conversion increase

Date: Thursday, March 14, 2013

Summary: SEO is a large bucket comprised of a number of components, and it can be difficult for marketers to stop every possible leak. However, diligence and knowledge of each and every aspect of SEO can grow a company's objectives through the search engine optimization process. In this case study, read how Tops Products was able to see a 400% conversion rate increase with its diligent SEO strategy.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0112

Social Media Marketing: Michaels Stores increases Pinterest board followers by 86% with contest

Date: Thursday, March 21, 2013

Summary: With a new upscale product line, Michaels Stores turned to Pinterest to reach out to customers. By holding a contest where users pinned images of new products for a chance to win a $500 Michaels gift card, it saw a 86% rise in followers of its Pinterest board by 86%.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0113

B2B E-Commerce: Redesigned online form increases quotes 67.68%

Date: Wednesday, March 27, 2013

Summary: Website redesign can be particularly important for e-commerce websites because online buying behavior, and ease-of-use expectations from website visitors, can change over time. Read on to find out how Company Folders redesigned its entire website, and then tackled its online quote form and experienced a dramatic 67.68% increase in total quotes.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0114

MARKETINGSHERPA HOW-TO ARTICLES

Mobile Marketing: Providing relevant content dynamically

Date: Wednesday, January 3, 2013

Summary: According to the MarketingSherpa *2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report*, only 11% of surveyed marketers reported planning on using dynamically personalized mobile content to improve relevance and engagement. This could be a great oversight on the part of marketers active in the mobile marketing channel. Read on to learn how predictive analytics could help your campaign, and to see the value in dynamic content through an email case study.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0034

Content Marketing: A process for evaluating content channels

Date: Thursday, January 4, 2013

Summary: When engaging in content marketing, the question of "where?" always comes up. If you're just getting started, you want to know on which channels you should focus your content. Read on for a process for evaluating content channels best for your company.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0022

Email Marketing: The 5 goals of a successful program

Date: Tuesday, January 8, 2013

Summary: There are five key goals of successful email marketing programs. And to optimize those goals, marketers should also include two more elements: measuring and testing. Read on for the five goals, and some suggested reading and resources on each to help you improve your email marketing.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0013

Email Marketing Basics: 4 tactics of the incredible email marketer

Date: Thursday, January 19, 2013

Summary: Sometimes the basics are what set the good marketers apart from the incredible marketers. Read on to learn about the four tactics every email marketer should know: the reward delivery, the double opt-in, the welcome series, and the email marketing integration.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0015

Content Marketing: 5 questions to ask subject matter experts to get the ball rolling

Date: Friday, January 11, 2013

Summary: Content marketing, at its essence, is really just a connection. It's linking those who know something (subject matter experts) with those who want to know it. So, to help you generate content for your blogs, videos, email newsletters, podcasts, whitepapers, and the like, here are five general questions that we have found beneficial.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0025

Mobile Marketing: 63% of marketers view increasing sales conversion and revenue as a top objective

Date: Friday, January 15, 2013

Summary: In the MarketingSherpa *Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report*, we asked marketers about their business objectives for mobile marketing. After revealing the results of the survey, we turned to our audience for insights on this data. Here's what they had to say about mobile for sales enablement and real-time marketing.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0032

SMB Marketing in 2013: 68% of small businesses to increase marketing budget

Date: Thursday, January 17, 2013

Summary: Recent research from AWeber found 68% of small businesses plan to increase their marketing budget in 2013. Read on to learn some insight into where SMB marketers should focus in 2013 from Rick Jensen, Senior Vice President, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, Constant Contact.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0023

SMB Marketing in 2013: 85% of SMBs to increase use of email

Date: Friday, January 18, 2013

Summary: This post covers the results of an AWeber survey, including an infographic summarizing the research. Read on for tips and insights from Hunter Boyle, Senior Business Development Manager, AWeber, and Gail Gardner, Small Business Advisor, GrowMap.com.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0024

Email Marketing: Why don't you want to hear from your customers?

Date: Tuesday, January 22, 2013

Summary: Does your company send out "no reply" emails? By not monitoring your email inboxes, you could be overlooking serious benefits. Read on to learn about these missed opportunities, and for insight from Ryan Phelan, Vice President of Strategy, Acxiom/Digital Impact.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0019

Mobile Marketing: 50% of marketers do not know how many customers interact with their local mobile marketing

Date: Thursday, January 24, 2013

Summary: In the MarketingSherpa *Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report*, we asked marketers about their local mobile marketing efforts. A surprising 50% of marketers don't know what percentage of customers/prospects interact with their organization's LOCAL mobile marketing tactics. Read on to learn three tips on optimizing your mobile efforts we've learned from your successful peers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0028

B2B Marketing: 74% challenged by generating high-quality leads

Date: Friday, January 25, 2013
Summary: On the latest episode of Marketing Research in Action, Milap Shah, CEO, NexSales, discusses research from the MarketingSherpa *B2B Marketing Benchmark Report*. Watch Shah discuss the challenge of generating high-quality leads, as well as generating quality versus quantity of leads.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0011

B2C Email Marketing: Consumers are fickle

Date: Tuesday, January 29, 2013
Summary: According to research by Emailvision and YouGov, 50% of consumers in the United Kingdom felt getting their name wrong was a reason to think less of the brand, while only 28% indicated they would be willing to share their name. Read on to learn additional data points and insights from this research on consumer opinions about email marketing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0014

Content Marketing: 3 tips for producing engaging email content

Date: Thursday, January 31, 2013
Summary: In this how-to article featuring information from a Return Path-sponsored webinar, see how to develop a plan for cultivating and publishing email content, which can lead consumers to the more extensive content on your website or blog.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0098

Mobile Marketing: 31% of marketers don't know their mobile email open rate

Date: Friday, February 1, 2013
Summary: Mobile-friendly emails are a necessity when marketers look to target their audiences. However, many of those marketers are unaware of how many consumers utilize mobile email. With designing for mobile first, marketers have found their content is increasingly reader-friendly on PCs, as well.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0018

Mobile Marketing: 6 mobile marketing challenges every marketer faces

Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2013
Summary: Various mobile marketing challenges can be an obstacle for any marketer. By understanding your audience, optimizing mobile for customer needs and other strategies, marketers can effectively reach more audiences through the mobile channel.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0030

Mobile Social Media Marketing: 3 tips to take advantage of this growing convergence

Date: Thursday, February 7, 2013

Summary: he ever-evolving styles of smartphones and other mobile devices have opened the door to mobile social media marketing. By utilizing multichannel marketing, creating highly-sharable content and designing for easier viewing on smaller screens, marketers can target their audiences and stay on the cutting edge of technology.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0033

2013 Mobile Marketing Trends: 2 key data points to help you understand this growing behavior

Date: Tuesday, February 12, 2013

Summary: Knowing the demographics, particularly age, of an audience is extremely important when it comes to mobile marketing. The MECLABS Business Intelligence team compiled data and resources to help marketers understand mobile marketing trends and to give insight for the successful future of their mobile marketing efforts.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0029

Video Marketing How-to: 4 tactics from a small business that generated 1 million YouTube views

Date: Thursday, February 14, 2013

Summary: Video marketing is quickly becoming a speedy, effective and SEO-friendly way for marketers to reach consumers. Read on for four tactics from two video marketing leaders in small business, including one who generated one million video views on YouTube. These tactics will take you from the genesis of an initial idea to cultivating a robust video program.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0097

Search Engine Marketing: Navigating Facebook Graph Search

Date: Friday, February 15, 2013

Summary: Facebook Graphic Search is the newest addition coming soon to all Facebook users' profiles. While it's still in beta testing, starting on a strategy now could help marketers stay ahead of the pack when the feature is implemented platform-wide. Read on for some tips and tactics for this new search engine marketing avenue.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0037

Mining Gold through Email Integration: 3 lessons from MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2013 winners

Date: Tuesday, February 19, 2013

Summary: At Email Summit 2013, the MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2013 presented the perfect opportunity to show how some marketers used email to effectively engage their audiences. Many of the winning campaigns featured email integration, including campaigns with Facebook contests, multiple media channels and utilizing Pinterest.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0017

MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013: Using buyer behavior in email campaigns
Date: Thursday, February 21, 2013
Summary: At MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013, Loren McDonald, VP of Industry Relations, Silverpop, shared with the audience how to use buyer behavior to improve email campaigns. Read on to learn Loren's tactics to target audiences using a personal marketing approach.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0016

MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013: Social media is email with fresh paint
Date: Friday, February 22, 2013
Summary: Jay Baer, President, Convince & Convert, spoke on day one of MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013 on the relationship between email and social media, and how to use data from both to reach consumers more directly. Read on to also learn his insights on social login and cross-channel data testing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0020

Content Marketing: An 8-point analysis for your blog
Date: Tuesday, February 26, 2013
Summary: Online blogging can be a surprising source of high ROI for your business. However, starting a blog or maintaining one already in place takes planning, organization and a clear focus to effectively reach your audience. Read on for eight tips on how to begin or improve your blogging efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0035

Social Media How-to: 3 ideas for building engaging visual social media
Date: Tuesday, March 5, 2013
Summary: Now is the time for marketers to adjust how they approach their audiences on social media. Use the expertise in this how-to article featuring three marketers on the frontlines of visual social media to craft your approach for this increasingly relevant aspect of marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0096

Mobile Marketing: 5 takeaways from MarketingSherpa case studies
Date: Thursday, February 28, 2013
Summary: By examining the wealth of knowledge in the MarketingSherpa *2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report*, the top mobile tactics marketers are focusing on for the next six months are also the most popular topics for recent MarketingSherpa case studies. Read on for the top 5 takeaways from essential mobile marketing case studies.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0027

Email Marketing: What are the top three steps for effective email marketing?
Date: Tuesday, March 5, 2013
Summary: Email marketing is a process that takes time and testing to truly understand and perfect. While there are many tips, tricks and ideas marketers can utilize to aid their efforts, these three steps are at the

top of the list for effective email marketing. Read on for these steps as well as related resources to aid your email marketing campaigns.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0021

MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013 Wrap-up: Top 5 takeaways for email marketers
Date: Tuesday, March 5, 2013
Summary: After mining the best of our notes and resources, we have put together the top five takeaways from MarketingSherpa's 8th Email Summit at the Paris Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0099

Email Marketing: User-generated content helps drive 16% clickthrough rate
Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2013
Summary: Litmus, an email testing and email marketing analytics vendor, launched a new feature for its product and services offering with a single email to its subscriber list. Read on to find out how the marketing team utilized an animated GIF, clever subject line and multiple calls-to-action to drive 233 free trials and a 31.21% open rate.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0085

Email Marketing: 58% of marketers see mobile smartphones and tablets most impacting email
Date: Thursday, March 7, 2013
Summary: In the MarketingSherpa *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*, 58% of surveyed marketers revealed the pervasiveness of mobile smartphones and tablets to be the top new development in their email programs in the next year. Read on for three takeaways from your peers based on this research.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0012

Social Media Marketing: Social metrics from "likes" to ROI
Date: Friday, March 8, 2013
Summary: The social media marketing channel provides a wealth of data marketers can use for analytics to optimize and improve campaigns. Read on to learn how marketers are tracking sales and ROI in social media and the current challenges with social media analytics tools.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0142

Marketing Research in Action: Don't focus on mobile-optimized email, focus on revenue
Date: Tuesday, March 12, 2013
Summary: At MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013, Manny Ju, Director of Product Management, BlueHornet, discussed mobile email marketing in the latest episode of Marketing Research in Action. Read on for three takeaways to focus on revenue in email marketing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0115

Gamification: 3 tips for gamification apps as part of your content marketing
Date: Thursday, March 14, 2013
Summary: With more than 200 people playing reward-based online games, it is worthwhile to incorporate gaming into your content marketing. Read on for three tips to get your gamification program started.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0116

Email Marketing: 5 questions you should ask to know if you're using CRM as a glorified autoresponder
Date: Friday, March 15, 2013
Summary: CRM and marketing automation are powerful tools marketers can use to leverage analytics to effectively engage customers, but some marketers are underutilizing these tools. Read on to learn five questions every marketer should themselves do discover if they are using their CRM and marketing automation platforms as a glorified autoresponder.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0117

Marketing Strategy: How to find answers to the most common marketing questions
Date: Tuesday, March 19, 2013
Summary: At MarketingSherpa, we are often asked many questions about specific marketing issues. In this blog post, read on to hear some of the top questions and how to answer them.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0118

Marketing Career: National guide to digital marketing salaries
Date: Friday, March 22, 2013
Summary: In the ever-changing world of digital marketing, new careers in social media are here to stay. Read on to learn more about the future of digital marketing careers and for a free salary guide from Crandall Associates.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0119

Email Marketing: 3 overlooked aspects of automated messages
Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog, we reveal three insights from your peers about automated email messages. Read on for their Chart of the Week feedback to learn more about lead nurturing, marketing practices and customer lifetime values.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0120

Customer Relationship Management: Bring Finance into the CRM world
Date: Thursday, March 28, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog, we examine insights into CRM and integrating Finance into the data mix as well. Read on for tips from Lou Guercia, President and CEO, Scribe Software, on how to begin this integration process.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0121

MARKETINGSHERPA RESEARCH CHARTS

Marketing Research Chart: Top mobile marketing objectives
Date: Tuesday, January 8, 2013
Summary: This chart of the week explored marketers' top mobile marketing objectives, and how they have helped shape their mobile strategies. Be sure to share your own analysis of this chart in the MarketingSherpa LinkedIn Group for a chance to be published in a future blog post.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0095

Marketing Research Chart: Engagement rate of local mobile marketing tactics
Date: Tuesday, January 15, 2013
Summary: In this marketing research chart, we learn how customers/prospects interact with marketers' LOCAL mobile marketing tactics. Interestingly, half of survey respondents simply didn't know their level of interaction with customers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0090

Marketing Research Chart: Customers interacting with mobile email messages
Date: Tuesday, January 22, 2013
Summary: This marketing research chart explored the question, "What percentage of customers/prospects interacts with your organization's mobile EMAIL messages?"
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0088

Marketing Research Chart: Top mobile marketing challenges
Date: Tuesday, January 29, 2013
Summary: In this marketing research chart, we learn about marketers' top mobile challenges, and how they have affected marketing planning. When asked which challenges were most prevalent while aiming to achieve mobile objectives, 55% of surveyed marketers indicated "Lack of effective mobile strategy," with an equal percentage citing "Inadequate staffing resources and expertise."
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0094

Marketing Research Chart: Marketers' collection of analytics data
Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2013
Summary: In this marketing research chart, we learn about marketers' current analytics data gathering, and how they classify this data in terms of quantity. Of our surveyed marketers, 79% claimed they have accrued average to above-average amounts of data for marketing purposes.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0091

Marketing Research Chart: Analytics usage for message creation
Date: Tuesday, February 12, 2013
Summary: This chart of the week explored marketers' current use of analytics data to create different message types. When asked which information marketers use to build upon messages, or create different message types, we found "tried and true" approaches were still commonly employed among respondents.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0087

Marketing Research Chart: Top analytics objectives for 2013

Date: Tuesday, February 19, 2013

Summary: In this marketing research chart, we learn about the marketing analytics objectives deemed most important in planning for the coming year, chosen by our surveyed marketers.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0093

Marketing Research Chart: New email marketing developments for 2013

Date: Tuesday, February 26, 2013

Summary: In this marketing research chart, we learn about new email marketing developments expected to affect marketers in 2013. As email marketing continues to evolve, marketers must be prepared for the myriad of changes and developments that go alongside the adoption of new technologies, integration with other channels and shifts in customer behavior.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0092

Marketing Research Chart: Email marketing ROI

Date: Tuesday, March 5, 2013

Summary: This chart of the week explored marketers' perceptions of email marketing ROI. When asked to estimate their email programs' return on investment, our surveyed marketers claimed an average ROI of 119%, with B2B and/or B2G marketers claiming the highest return at 127%.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0089

Marketing Research Chart: Automated emails sent by organizations

Date: Tuesday, March 12, 2013

Summary: In this marketing research chart, we learn about the types of automated emails being sent by organizations. We found the two most-common automated, event-triggered, lifecycle emails being sent were the "welcome" (50%) and "thank you" (48%) sends.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0122

Marketing Research Chart: Marketers' list growth tactics

Date: Tuesday, March 19, 2013

Summary: This chart of the week explores the types of tactics employed by organizations to grow and expand email lists.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0123

Marketing Research Chart: Improving email deliverability

Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2013

Summary: In this week's chart, we learn about the types of tactics employed by organizations to improve email deliverability rates. Myriad factors play a role in the improvement of email deliverability, so read on to learn how marketers use those factors to help their deliverability.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0124

MARKETINGSHERPA WEBINARS

Email Marketing: 3 tips for producing engaging email content

Date: Thursday, January 7, 2013
Summary: According to MarketingSherpa's *2012 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*, 69% of the marketers we surveyed consider delivering highly relevant content a top objective. To help you create relevant content, Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, and Courtney Eckerle, Reporter, both of MECLABS, spent 60 minutes discussing taking inventory of your existing library of marketing content, building an editorial calendar, recycling content ideas, and more.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0109

Four Techniques to Improve Analytics Based on Customer Knowledge

Date: Monday, February 4, 2013
Summary: In this 60-minute MarketingSherpa webinar, Matt Bailey, Founder and President, SiteLogic Marketing, will offer his insight on actionable steps for those interested in developing and measuring the results of their own social media strategy.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0110

Email Marketing Webinar: How a former Email Summit attendee achieved

Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2013
Summary: This MarketingSherpa Webinar, sponsored by Vocus, will help you get more out of your email campaigns. Rachel Hoppe and Daniel Burstein will delve down into a case study that shows a considerable lift in the generation of sales qualified leads.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0125

Best in Show: Top Takeaways from Email Summit 2013

Date: Wednesday, March 20, 2013
Summary: This MarketingSherpa Webinar allows you to gain all of the greatest takeaways from 16 hours of Email Summit 2013 sessions in just 30 minutes.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0126

MARKETINGEXPERIMENTS

Homepage Optimization: Further test ideas for a page that converts 4 times higher

Date: Wednesday, January 2, 2013
Summary: Live optimization sessions help marketers bridge the gap between customer theory and application. But even after a big lift, the testing (and learning) must continue. Read on to learn more about a real-world example of a homepage that converted four times higher after a live optimization session, as well

as to gain three testing ideas for further improvement from MECLABS optimizers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0062

Mobile Marketing: 59% did not perform any mobile testing or optimization
Date: Friday, January 4, 2013
Summary: According to MarketingSherpa's *2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report*, marketers believe mobile devices are changing customer behavior. Yet, only 13% of marketers are conducting mobile testing. Read on for more information on this mobile research, as well as thoughts on the research from your peers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0041

A/B Testing: Split tests are meaningless without the proper sample size
Date: Monday, January 7, 2013
Summary: While numbers are powerful, they can also be misleading. See why having a sufficient sample size is important to any A/B split test, as well as six resources to help you with sample size sufficiency in your online testing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0043

A/B Testing: Changing 3 words results in 43% increase in funded accounts
Date: Wednesday, January 9, 2013
Summary: Achieving great results with A/B testing doesn't always require major changes. See how a large financial institution realized a 43% increase in funded accounts by changing just three words on a landing page. By altering the content to communicate the serious implications of opening an account rather than simply "learning more," the landing page attracted prospects with higher motivation.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0063

Marketing Efficiency: Conversion optimization is the science of doing marketing better
Date: Friday, January 11, 2013
Summary: With budgets always a struggle, it's helpful to find ways to improve efficiency. Conversion optimization is essentially the science of doing marketing better. Read on for four steps to optimize your conversions.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0040

Email Marketing Timing: When is the optimal time to send your next marketing email?
Date: Monday, January 14, 2013
Summary: When is the best time to send your marketing emails? Does your audience respond better to one particular day of the week over the rest, or maybe to morning sends over afternoon ones? Email marketing is not a "one-size-fits-all" approach, and knowing your market is essential to the timing of marketing emails.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0056

Landing Page Optimization: 262% increase in lead rate

Date: Wednesday, January 16, 2013

Summary: Often, a quote request landing page is key to the success of a lead generation strategy. By minimizing friction and overcorrecting for anxiety, you can see big increases on this type of page. See the control and treatment from a multifactor split test that lead to a 262% increase in lead rate.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0064

Value Proposition: Congress has a value exchange problem … do your marketing offers?

Date: Friday, January 18, 2013

Summary: For every offer you make to prospective customers, they weigh the value versus the cost when they decide if they will act on your offer. Read on to learn why you simply cannot overlook the value exchange with your prospective customers.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0047

E-commerce: A/B split test produces 36% more cart completions

Date: Monday, January 21, 2013

Summary: Testing elements of your e-commerce shopping carts can lead to large increases in completed sales. See how a MECLABS Research Partner used a variable cluster test to achieve 36% more cart completions.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0050

Search Marketing: 46% more conversions from PPC ad test

Date: Wednesday, January 23, 2013

Summary: PPC advertising can be a great channel for driving traffic to your landing pages. Even better, PPC ads can produce high-quality traffic that is ready to convert. See the treatments and results of a PPC ad test that generated 46.6% more leads than the control.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0065

Timing and Email Marketing: Sunday generated 23% higher clickthrough than Tuesday in test

Date: Friday, January 25, 2013

Summary: Relevant content is crucial to the success of email messages, and timing of that message in the inbox can have just as large of an impact on its success. That's because the right time to send an email is one of the three core components to email relevancy. Learn how a MECLABS Research Partner discovered the best to send its emails.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0061

Credibility: 9 elements that help make your marketing claims more believable

Date: Monday, January 28, 2013

Summary: Unless your value proposition is believable, it is essentially worthless. You must be transparent,

specific and provide proof of the truth. Read on for nine types of proof you can provide your prospective customers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0049

Email Marketing: 7 resources for email optimization
Date: Wednesday, January 30, 2013
Summary: With Email Summit 2013 approaching, the MECLABS team shared additional insight in email marketing optimization. A vast number of resources, including these seven, will complement the knowledge shared at the event.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0054

Email Marketing: How do customers read your emails?
Date: Friday, February 1, 2013
Summary: Watch as Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS, explains how customers react to your email marketing sends. The full Web clinic video replay is also available for additional learning on the optimization of email sends.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0053

Email Copywriting: Tips from 3 of your peers
Date: Monday, February 4, 2013
Summary: Email copywriting is essential to optimization, and if done effectively, marketers will achieve gains. Your peers have sounded off on techniques for crafting intro lines, gearing your message to the appropriate audience (B2B and B2C), and designing your emails effectively with graphics and text. Learn from their techniques in this blog post.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0060

Email Optimization: 4 optimization suggestions to test in your next send
Date: Wednesday, February 6, 2013
Summary: Susquehanna Bancshares, a regional financial services holding company, encountered a challenge with optimizing its email marketing strategy. Read on to learn four optimization suggestions based on a real-world example from a member of our audience you can use to aid your email optimization efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0055

Lead Generation: 4 tips to present value before cost
Date: Friday, February 8, 2013
Summary: Some industries may encounter additional friction in their lead generation due to the nature of the product. In the case of mortgage lending, constantly presenting the value of the product throughout the lead generation path is essential to moving more consumers in the sales-marketing funnel.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0046

Marketing Analytics: 4 techniques to discuss with your data analysts

Date: Monday, February 11, 2013

Summary: For all marketers, marketing data analytics is essential to predicting customer behavior. However, only a small percentage of marketers are creating and testing hypotheses. In this webinar replay, MarketingSherpa presenters explain techniques to improve analytics on customer knowledge.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0039

Email Marketing: What you can learn from an 80% decrease in clickthrough rate

Date: Wednesday, February 13, 2013

Summary: For marketers, seeing a positive increase in test results is the ultimate goal. However, receiving a loss in your testing can lead to other discoveries that will transform losses into gains. Seeing losses can prove the status quo is being challenged in your testing, and by systematically cataloging results, marketers can improve their overall testing efforts.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0057

Mobile Optimization: How the Ritz-Carlton Destination Club increased its mobile email traffic 243%

Date: Friday, February 15, 2013

Summary: Mobile email marketing remains a tactic underutilized by marketers, but is yielding some impressive ROI to those pioneering the strategy. Watch a session from MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2012 to learn how one marketing team built a mobile pilot program that increased its mobile traffic 243%.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0044

Email Copywriting: How a change in tone increased lead inquiry by 349%

Date: Monday, February 18, 2013

Summary: Understanding how tone affects the performance of your emails can aid your email copywriting efforts. Read further to learn how one event management software provider was able to increase its lead inquiry rate by 349% using the right voice to speak to its potential customers.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0052

Email Marketing: 3 questions every marketer should ask about negative lifts

Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2013

Summary: Marketers approach negative lifts with a stigma of failure instead of using the experience as a valuable learning tool to gain customer insights. Read further to find out what you can learn from a decrease in conversion, including three questions every marketer should ask themselves about negative test results.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0059

Value Proposition Optimization: 5 simple steps to discovering your value proposition using an email campaign

Date: Friday, February 22, 2013

Summary: Value proposition is at the heart of all your marketing efforts. Understanding the core motivations that appeal to your customers can increase the performance of your email marketing campaigns significantly.

Read further to learn five steps you can use to make your email campaigns a proving ground for your value propositions.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0045

Marketing Analytics: 20% of marketers lack data

Date: Monday, February 25, 2013
Summary: In the MarketingSherpa *2013 Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report*, 20% of marketers surveyed said they have very little or no data on their customers' behavior. Read on to learn how marketers can begin or improve their data efforts by answering key questions related to customer behavior and the tools needed to capture this data.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0038

Value Proposition: A simple spreadsheet to help you categorize your products' value

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2013
Summary: Keeping customers in mind during all marketing efforts such as email sends, meetings and campaigns is important to rank your products' value. Using the MarketingExperiments Value Proposition Spreadsheet in this blog, marketers can rank their products' value in appeal, exclusivity and credibility.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0048

Email Marketing: Email has become another way to interrupt people's lives

Date: Friday, March 1, 2013
Summary: In an interview at Email Summit 2013, Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS, revealed how email marketing can be the biggest challenge for marketers. Providing valuable insight, Flint offered advice to help keep the relationships alive between marketers and their audiences through email optimization.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0058

Email Copywriting: Simplification, specificity, focus on customer generates 400% increase in CTR

Date: Monday, March 4, 2013
Summary: Learn from one marketer's efforts to improve their email marketing by examining a step-by-step guide of their email copy. The results of these tests generated a 400% increase in CTR. These impressive tests were presented at MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013 in Las Vegas along with many other case studies that yielded positive gains.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0051

Test Interpretation: How over-measuring helped us discover a hidden 198% increase in leads

Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2013
Summary: With testing efforts, marketers should never expect tests to perform the way they think they will. To truly understand test results, marketers may find it useful to over-measure in their testing efforts. Read on to learn how a hidden 198% increase in leads was discovered through over-measuring.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0042

Marketing Management: Can you create a marketing factory?

Date: Friday, March 8, 2013

Summary: In the MarketingSherpa Executive Guide to Marketing Personnel, marketers indicated a challenge in a scarcity of skilled individuals in their marketing departments. To overcome this issue, marketers would benefit from using a patented, repeatable methodology. Read on to learn more about the Conversion Sequence, patented by Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS, and Jalali Hartman.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0127

Marketing Strategy: 4 steps to developing an effective and strategic test

Date: Monday, March 11, 2013

Summary: At MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013, many marketers expressed a need for a deeper understanding of test planning and strategic planning. At MECLABS, we test solutions to problems, not ideas. Read on to learn the thought process to craft a strategy-centered test.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0128

PPC Optimization: Tips from your peers on regional differences, Google Product Listing Ads, distracted visitors and offline conversion

Date: Wednesday, March 13, 2013

Summary: With pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, marketers pay money every time an ad drives someone to a landing page, so improving conversion is crucial to a healthy ROI. Read on to hear from your peers about how to optimize PPC conversion for higher ROI.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0129

Email Optimization: A single word change results in a 90% lift in sign-ups

Date: Friday, March 15, 2013

Summary: At MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013, Michael Aagaard, Copywriter, ContentVerve, discussed call-to-action (CTA) optimization in his presentation, "How to Optimize and Test: Calls-to-Action for Maximum Conversions." Read on for three tests from his talk and takeaways you can use to improve your CTA optimization efforts.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0130

Form Field Optimization: 3 optimization opportunities from a real-world form field page

Date: Monday, March 18, 2013

Summary: Cost doesn't just exist where monetary transactions exist. When you ask prospects for information, there will be an associated cost. To optimize your form fields to mitigate these costs will require everyone who works on your marketing to have a clear understanding of your value proposition. Read further for three optimization suggestions from the MECLABS research team using a real-world example you can use to aid your lead generation optimization efforts.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0131

E-commerce: 2 benefits of presenting competitor pricing on your website

Date: Wednesday, March 20, 2013

Summary: Listing competitor pricing on your website can help customers see the value in your product or service. Read on for more benefits of including competitor pricing on your webpages.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0132

Online Testing: 6 test ideas to optimize the value of testimonials on your site
Date: Friday, March 22, 2013
Summary: Testimonials and reviews of your product or service can be powerful tools on your websites. Read on to learn six test ideas for optimizing the value of testimonials.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0133

Marketing Questions: Making claims for new products, e-commerce landing pages
Date: Monday, March 25, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments blog post, we answer some of the questions we ran out of time to answer during the previous Web clinic, "Converting PPC Traffic." Read on to hear questions from your peers and learn about establishing credibility and landing page optimization for e-commerce sites.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0134

Web Usability: The Squint Technique and other insights from your peers
Date: Monday, March 25, 2013
Summary: We wanted to learn some Web usability, so we turned to the MarketingExperiments community for insights. Read on for the "Squint Technique" and other insights from your peers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0135

MARKETINGEXPERIMENTS WEB CLINICS

When Should You Send An Email? - How one of the largest banks in the world discovered when to send its emails
Date: Thursday, January 24, 2013
Summary: Do you know the optimal time to send your next marketing email? Watch this Web clinic replay to learn how you can apply five email timing factors to your marketing campaigns.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0068

Email Copywriting Clinic: Live, on-the-spot analysis of how to improve real-world email campaigns
Date: Thursday, February 14, 2013
Summary: How do you write the subject line, first sentence, body copy and call-to-action in an email? Watch this Web clinic replay to learn how you can apply six email copywriting principles to your marketing campaigns.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0066

The Web as a Living Laboratory: The Three Most Important Discoveries from Over a Decade of Experimentation

Date: Thursday, March 07, 2013

Summary: What if there was a way to use every email campaign to learn more about your customers? Watch this special Web clinic replay, recorded live at MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013 in Las Vegas, to learn how you can apply three of the most important discoveries from a decade of experimentation to your email marketing campaigns and build your customer theory.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0067

Do Optional Form Fields Help (or Hurt) Conversion? - How one required form field was hindering a 275% lift in conversion

Date: Thursday, March 7, 2013

Summary: Have you ever wondered what the impact of optional form fields are on lead flow? Watch this Web clinic replay to learn how you can apply three key principles of form field optimization to your lead flow process.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0069

Converting PPC Traffic: How strategic keyword placement increased conversion by 144%

Date: Thursday, March 21, 2013

Summary: Watch this Web clinic replay to learn three key factors of PPC campaign optimization and how you can apply those principles to increase the probability of conversions on your landing pages.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0137

B2B LEAD ROUNDTABLE

Sales-Marketing Alignment: How consistent messaging helped ADP engage customers at a faster pace

Date: Monday, January 7, 2013

Summary: In many organizations, Marketing and Sales tell the same story from very different perspectives, resulting in inconsistent messaging reach prospects. Read on for a high-level breakdown of the five-step process ADP used to achieve Sales-Marketing alignment and to engage customers at a faster pace.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0003

Intro to Lead Generation: How to determine if a lead is qualified

Date: Monday, January 14, 2013

Summary: After receiving a question about lead qualification from a reader, we decided to share the answer publicly to help other marketers, as well. Read on to learn what lead qualitifaction is, about firmographics, BANT, predictive analytics, and more.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0001

How Technology on the Trade Show Floor Can Help Your Sales Team Work Smarter and Sell More

Date: Monday, January 21, 2013
Summary: Trade shows and conferences are still the biggest areas of investment for marketers, according to the most recent MarketingSherpa *B2B Marketing Benchmark Report*. Read on to learn the real value of trade show interaction and how to optimize your conversations at trade shows.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0004

3 Steps that Helped Skyline Exhibits Increase New Product Sales by 18%

Date: Monday, January 28, 2013
Summary: During the economic downturn of 2008, Skyline Exhibits, a global trade show exhibit company, invested in innovation. Read on for a high-level overview of the steps the marketers at Skyline take to ensure they focus on innovation that produces recognition and revenue.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0002

Lead Generation: How golf sponsorship generates prospect inquiries for a software company

Date: Monday, February 4, 2013
Summary: KeyedIn Solutions found by sponsoring an up-and-coming professional golfer, its abilities to gain exposure and network with executives increased. Through careful consideration and reflection on company values, the software technology and consulting company achieved its goals.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0006

B2B Sales and Marketing: How a staffing company gained 242 qualified leads in just three months in a new market

Date: Monday, February 11, 2013
Summary: Opening a new division in a new city for any company can be a challenge, especially with lead generation. TERRA Staffing Group, having a strong reputation in Seattle, found itself in new territory when it opened offices in Portland, Ore. By hiring a lead generation company, more prospects were interested due to TERRA's teleprospecting efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0007

Sales and Marketing: The technology behind CRM

Date: Monday, February 18, 2013
Summary: For a complex sale, CRM technology can make the difference between a customer moving up through the marketing-sales funnel and completely falling out. Many companies use more than one vendor for their CRM needs, as sometimes Marketing and Sales can require different specific needs. See how marketing automation technologies may offer some companies another option if they are working with multiple CRM software pieces.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0008

How Dissatisfied CEOs Push Marketers into the Future

Date: Monday, February 25, 2013

Summary: According to a MarketingWeek article, 70% of CEOs have lost trust in marketers. However, CEOs have just woken up to a new trend in marketing: aligning key performance indicators (KPIs) with clear marketing objectives. Read on to learn how marketers are making it a goal to improve acting on data to boost performance.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0005

Trade Show Marketing: Tips for increasing prospect engagement

Date: Monday, March 4, 2013

Summary: At MarketingSherpa Summits, such as the recent Email Summit 2013, sponsors have the opportunity to engage prospects in hour-long roundtable sessions. Sponsors can build rapport, and marketers can network with other professionals in the group. Read on to learn more about the positive aspects of holding roundtable sessions with sponsors at trade shows.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0009

Marketing Analytics: 3 steps to help Sales and Marketing improve productivity

Date: Monday, March 11, 2013

Summary: According to the MarketingSherpa *2013 Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report*, only 37% of marketers surveyed indicated they routinely use analytics for their marketing planning. Read on for three tactics Appfolio used in its marketing analytics to help Sales and Marketing improve productivity.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0138

Content Marketing: How a telecommunications company uses controversy to drive millions in pipeline

Date: Monday, March 18, 2013

Summary: Tellabs, a telecommunications company, has a process that distributes thought-provoking content. In return, these efforts have created a multi-million dollar pipeline of pending deals every year. Read on to learn from its process for controversial content.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0139

Email Marketing: How to maintain low opt-out rates

Date: Monday, March 25, 2013

Summary: In this B2B Lead Roundtable blog, watch Brian Carroll, Executive Director, Revenue Optimization, MECLABS, answer how to maintain low opt-out rates in your email messaging campaigns.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0140

VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

The End of Business as Usual
Date: Tuesday, January 8, 2013
Summary: Brian Solis, author of The End of Business As Usual: Rewire the way you work to succeed in the customer revolution, explores a new consumer landscape in this session, presented at MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2012. Discover how your company can rise to the top of "digital Darwinism" and evolve as quickly as consumer behavior does.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0103

In the Year 2013: Email marketing technologies and tactics of the near future
Date: Tuesday, January 8, 2013
Summary: Five industry experts from Yahoo!, Silverpop, MECLABS, Other Inbox and Rabbit eMarketing sit down at Email Summit 2012 to brainstorm about what email marketing will look like in the near future. Covering four buyer personas, actionable advice is offered for reaching each of them. Mobile, in-line video, privacy legislation, dynamic content and social media integration are all discussed in this 40-minute session.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0100

Converting Email Prospects to Customers: Case study by Brian Clark and Sonia Simone
Date: Wednesday, January 9, 2013
Summary: In this video, Brian Clark and Sonia Simone, Copyblogger Media, address the marketing challenge of getting that final conversion, from email subscriber to paying customer. The video includes three Copyblogger case studies that illustrate the conversion ideas presented by Clark and Simone
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0105

Optimizing the Evolving Landscape of Mobile Email Marketing
Date: Thursday, January 10, 2013
Summary: This presentation provides the blueprint on how Alex Corzo, Manager of Digital Strategy and Services, Marriott Vacations Worldwide Corporation, and his team developed a mobile marketing program at The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club (a Marriott Vacations brand). Corzo faced two key challenges: email landing pages were not optimized for mobile, and limited resources for a major mobile optimization effort. The solution was launching a basic pilot test to make the case for mobile optimization.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0106

Content Marketing: Content-rich emails to prime your prospects
Date: Thursday, January 17, 2013
Summary: Marcus Sheridan, co-owner, River Pools and Spas, details how content marketing improved his pool and spa business after seven years of "doing it wrong." After spending hours teaching consumers about his product and service in person, he realized it was slowing down their purchase process. Sheridan lays out

how content creation is as easy as turning common consumer-business interactions into what he calls "the greatest sales tool in the world."
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0102

Personal vs. Robotic: How to turn automated email into personal experiences that drive new and repeat sales

Date: Thursday, February 7, 2013
Summary: Jermaine Griggs, Founder, Hear & Play Music, explains how his SMB email marketing team applies a personal touch to automated email campaigns by using demographic and psychographic data to match the message with the customer. This process improves conversion, lowers email opt-out and increases customer retention.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0101

Mobile Marketing Panel

Date: Wednesday, February 13, 2013
Summary: This panel on mobile marketing for the complex sale includes four industry experts presenting four case studies. Topics covered in the panel discussion include mobile as the next frontier, mobile marketing to a moment, complex sales and mobile advertising.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0104

How the Heritage Foundation increased donations 274% by using MECLABS methodology

Date: Thursday, March 28, 2013
Summary: Watch Nathaniel Ward, Manager of Online Programs, The Heritage Foundation, and Tim Kachuriak, SVP of Innovation & Optimization, Pursuant, in this Optimization Summit 2012 presentation, speaking about how the Heritage Foundation increased donations by 274% by using MECLABS methodology.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0141

PUBLICATIONS

Free Excerpt from the *2013 Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report*

Date: Monday, January 28, 2013
Summary: See how fellow marketers choose metrics, define ROI and turn marketing analytics into actionable items.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0108

Free Excerpt from the *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*

Date: Monday, February 18, 2013
Summary: Learn how to better engage your email subscribers, the volume of emails currently sent by marketers, and the new developments expected to affect email marketers in 2013.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0107

About MarketingSherpa LLC

MarketingSherpa is a primary research facility, wholly-owned by MECLABS, dedicated to determining **what works in marketing** via exclusive case studies, surveys, and results data analysis. Then we publish what we learn so our community of marketers and weekly readers can improve their results and train their teams.

Praised by *The Economist*, Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge Site and Entrepreneur.com, Marketing-Sherpa is distinguished by offering **practical, results-based marketing** information researched and written by a staff of in-house reporters.

MarketingSherpa features:

- **Best Practices:** 1,000+ brand-side marketer case studies and 3,500+ creative samples
- **Research:** 2,000+ marketing and research abstracts
- **Instruction:** 800+ how-to articles
- **Newsletters:** 230,000+ marketers read weekly case studies on topics such as email, search, social, lead generation, lead nurturing, optimization and content marketing
- **Training:** 100+ live, hands-on training sessions providing practical and proven solutions
- **Summits:** 3 annual vendor-neutral, research-based marketing events

About MECLABS

MECLABS is a science lab that uses real-world research and training to **help business leaders get better use out of sales and marketing technology and resources**, including Internet marketing, website optimization, and lead management. We have been involved in direct research partnerships with companies throughout Europe and North America since 2001.

MECLABS deploys a rigorous methodology to conduct research. This research is compiled from:

- More than **10 years** of research partnership with our clients
- **1,300** experiments
- Over **1 billion** emails
- **10,000** landing pages tested
- **5 million** telephone calls
- **500,000** decision-maker conversations

MECLABS has consulted with companies like CISCO, Johnson & Johnson, *The New York Times*, 1-800-FLOWERS, and NetSuite to optimize sales and marketing processes and achieve triple-digit ROI gains.

Register for Summits and Workshops at MECLABS.com/training or contact:
Customer Service (available M-F, 9:00am-5:00pm ET)
service@marketingsherpa.com
1-877-895-1717 (outside the U.S. call 401-383-3131)

Call for Research Partners

Over the last 20 years, MECLABS has conducted more than 10,000 web page experiments to understand why people say "yes". This research is obtained through Research Partnerships, where we apply our science and methodology to their websites to achieve customer learning and increase conversion rates. We help to uncover relevant, practical insights that enable our Research Partners to discover what works – for their products, with their target customers, in today's ever-changing marketplace.

We are currently looking for Research Partners with real-world challenges, deadlines, and budgets in the following areas:

- Ecommerce performance
- Subscription growth and retention
- Lead generation capture and management (including lead nurturing)

Current and Past Research Partners include:

1-800-flowers   The New York Times   Johnson&Johnson

AMERICAN EXPRESS   REUTERS   CISCO

To learn more about Research Partnership opportunities, please visit meclabs.com/Partnerships or call (651) 255-7665