ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Table of Contents

## Acknowledgements

## Table of Contents

## How to Use this Digest

### Content by Topic

**Site Optimization**

### Major Experiment Briefing

**How Many Columns Should I Use?** How using the best page layout led to a 681% relative increase  
- Austin McCraw, Jon Powell, Shaun Metzger

**Less is More:** Maximize conversion by removing website distractions  
- Jesse Kraker, Senior Research Manager

**A/B Testing:** Is responsive design worth the investment?  
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

### Major Experiment Briefing

**Radio Buttons vs. Dropdowns:** How knowing the right way to collect customer information led to a 10% lift in orders  
- Jon Powell, Austin McCraw, Paul Cheney, Lauren Pitchford, Shaun Metzger

**Landing Page Optimization:** Radio buttons vs. dropdowns  
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content
## Email Marketing

### Major Experiment Briefing

**Email Messaging Tested:** A recent experiment reveals the two words that increased email clickthrough by 13%
- Jon Powell, Austin McCraw, Paul Cheney, Shaun Metzger

### Marketing Research Chart: Does email produce an ROI?
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

### Marketing Research Chart: How do you know the most effective layout and images for your marketing sends?
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

### E-commerce: 2 tactics to increase relevance in your email sends
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

### Email Marketing: Genuine mistake or evil genius email tactic?
- Lauren Pitchford, Senior Optimization Manager

### Email Marketing: Nonprofit cleans list and lifts open rate 225%
- Adam Sutton, Senior Reporter

## Marketing Optimization

### Major Experiment Briefing

**Responsive Design Tested:** What a recent experiment reveals about the potential ROI of mobile design
- Austin McCraw, Jon Powell, Paul Cheney, Shaun Metzger

### Multichannel Campaigns: How do you avoid zombie marketing?
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

### Why Empathetic Marketing Matters and 7 Steps to Achieve It
- Brian Carroll, Executive Director of Revenue Optimization
Major Experiment Briefing

The Most Effective Calls-to-Action: 5 principles discovered for increasing customer response
- Austin McCraw, Jon Powell, Shaun Metzger

Customer Management

Lead Generation: Balancing lead quality and lead quantity
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

Inbound Marketing

Social Media: 3 brands that totally get using Vine
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

Social Media 101: Branding for the PR-impaired marketer
- Maria Lopez Fernandez, Research Analyst

Content Marketing

Content Marketing: How to serve customers when they shouldn’t buy from you
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

Do You Make These 5 Mistakes in Content Marketing?
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

The Domino Theory of B2B Content Marketing
- J. David Green, Director, Marketing Partnerships

Content Marketing: 9 examples of transparent marketing
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

Content Marketing: Interviewing internal resources
- David Kirkpatrick, Manager of Editorial Content

Content Marketing: Tips from your peers on making use of internal resources
- David Kirkpatrick, Manager of Editorial Content
Appendix A: Marketing Research Charts of the Week

All charts written by Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

**2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report**

Does email produce an ROI? .......................................................... 119

63% say registration during purchase effective for list building .......... 120

How do you know the most effective layout and images for your marketing sends? ......................................................... 121

How organizations are segmenting subscribers .................................. 122


Can you expand upon a single successful split test? ...................... 124

**2013 Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report**

Only 26% of marketers track branded vs. non-branded keywords .......... 125

**2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report**

75% of strategic marketers use A/B testing to learn about customer behavior .......... 126

How do CMOs make decisions? .......................................................... 127

How companies learn about customers ............................................. 128
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question your assumptions for true customer-centric marketing</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical website conversion path elements</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Content Directory</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

**Case Studies**

**Landing Page Optimization:** Radio buttons vs. dropdowns
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

**Email Marketing:** Nonprofit cleans list and lifts open rate 225%
- Adam Sutton, Senior Reporter

**How-To Articles**

**Less is More:** Maximize conversion by removing website distractions
- Jesse Kraker, Senior Research Manager

**A/B Testing:** Is responsive design worth the investment?
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

**E-commerce:** 2 tactics to increase relevance in your email sends
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

**Email Marketing:** Genuine mistake or evil genius email tactic?
- Lauren Pitchford, Senior Optimization Manager

**Multichannel Campaigns:** How do you avoid zombie marketing?
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

**Why Empathetic Marketing Matters and 7 Steps to Achieve It**
- Brian Carroll, Executive Director of Revenue Optimization

**Lead Generation:** Balancing lead quality and lead quantity
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

**Social Media:** 3 brands that totally get using Vine
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content
**Index of Content by Type**

**Social Media 101:** Branding for the PR-impaired marketer  
- Maria Lopez Fernandez, Research Analyst  

**Content Marketing:** How to serve customers when they shouldn’t buy from you  
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content  

**Do You Make These 5 Mistakes in Content Marketing?**  
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content  

**The Domino Theory of B2B Content Marketing**  
- J. David Green, Director, Marketing Partnerships  

**Content Marketing:** 9 examples of transparent marketing  
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content  

**Content Marketing:** Interviewing internal resources  
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content  

**Content Marketing:** Tips from your peers on making use of internal resources  
- David Kirkpatrick, Manager of Editorial Content  

**Charts of the Week**

**Marketing Research Chart:** Does email produce an ROI?  
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content  

**Marketing Research Chart:** How do you know the most effective layout and images for your marketing sends?  
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content  

**Web Clinics**

**How Many Columns Should I Use?** How using the best page layout led to a 681% relative increase  
- Austin McCraw, Jon Powell, Shaun Metzger
Radio Buttons vs. Dropdowns: How knowing the right way to collect customer information led to a 10% lift in orders
- Jon Powell, Austin McCraw, Paul Cheney, Lauren Pitchford, Shaun Metzger

A Email Messaging Tested: A recent experiment reveals the two words that increased email clickthrough by 13%
- Jon Powell, Austin McCraw, Paul Cheney, Shaun Metzger

Responsive Design Tested: What a recent experiment reveals about the potential ROI of mobile design
- Austin McCraw, Jon Powell, Paul Cheney, Shaun Metzger

The Most Effective Calls-to-Action: 5 principles discovered for increasing customer response
- Austin McCraw, Jon Powell, Shaun Metzger
Dear Marketer,

Welcome to the MECLABS Quarterly Research Digest – a snapshot of the research and content across MECLABS.

To help you discover the most useful content published by the MECLABS’ brands, we’ve put together a collection of our most popular work from MarketingSherpa, MarketingExperiments, and B2B Lead Roundtable.

We look at our readers’ social shares to learn what pieces of content they have found most helpful over the quarter. We include MECLABS’ three content-producing sites:

- **MarketingExperiments** – The most popular post of each month, as featured in the MarketingExperiments Best of the Month Newsletter
- **MarketingSherpa** – The most-shared Chart of the Week, 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 an article 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 Digest, you will find two additional resources:

- **Marketing Research Charts of the Week** – A section dedicated to MarketingSherpa’s Benchmark Studies, where we include all of 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 produced this quarter to find additional works to help your marketing efforts.

  - 21 MarketingSherpa case studies
  - 22 MarketingSherpa how-to articles
How To Use This Digest

- 12 Charts of the Week, from 3 Benchmark Reports
- 6 MarketingSherpa webinar video replays
- 26 MarketingExperiments articles
- 5 Web clinic video replays
- 13 B2B Lead Roundtable articles
- 8 video presentations

While this is a collection of our most popular work, not every piece may be relevant to your unique 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 how-to articles and research charts to case studies and Web clinics.

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

Happy reading,

Selena Blue
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P.S. If you conduct an interesting experiment, we would love to learn about your work. Feel free to send us the details at editor@meclabs.com. We will carefully reflect on the implications of your findings and potentially publish them (with your permission) in a future edition of the MECLABS Quarterly Research Digest.
SITE OPTIMIZATION
The legendary architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, said, “Less is only more where more is no good.”

He was speaking, of course, about designing homes, but he easily could have been talking about building webpages. Specifically, he could have been sitting at a Web design roundtable discussing the use of columns and his observation would have been as succinct and apt as it was in its original context.

When you begin to design a webpage, the question of how many columns to use is one of the first you encounter. Like an architect designing an entryway, a Web designer must contemplate how to best use the space he has to accomplish his goal, whether it is conveying an emotion or the communication of a value proposition.

In light of the importance of this column design decision, marketers have searched for a one-size-fits-all approach to guide their designs and maximize their conversion. But does such an approach exist? Let us examine an experiment to help answer that question.

**Experiment 1:**
**Which column layout performs best?**

The experiment is Test Protocol 1736a in the MECLABS Research Library. For this test, we partnered with a large technology company that sells software solutions to small businesses. The company was driving traffic to a landing page with branded PPC ads, and the marketing team wanted to improve the order rate from the page.

In **Figure 1.1**, you can see the control page. The main content column on the left is roughly twice the width of the slimmer secondary information column on the right. The treatment (**Figure 1.2**) simply does away with the secondary column, leaving the main content column to stretch across the whole width of the page. You can examine them side by side in **Figure 1.3**.
Figure 1.4

Figure 1.5
Was there a significant difference between the two pages? Yes, the one-column treatment page produced an astounding 681% relative increase in orders. Additionally, it generated a 606% increase in revenue per visit.

This is not a one-time phenomenon. Numerous tests in our library suggest a one-column layout improves conversion. Figures 1.4 and 1.5 are two such examples. Why is this the case? More importantly, is it always the case?

**Why the one-column page performs better**

In the tests we have run where one-column designs beat out multi-column opponents, our analysts discovered common themes. One being that the single column provides a clear eye-path, which is not confusing to visitors. The presence of two columns necessarily divides the visitor’s attention.

Another reason for the one-column layout success is the flow of the page drives the visitor down through the page and toward the call-to-action. It eliminates distractions by providing a linear sequence that is easy to comprehend and follow.

There are certainly reasons why a single-column layout can be successful, but is there evidence to conclude it should always prevail over multi-column layouts? Can we form an underlying theory that allows us to consistently choose the best page layout?

**Experiment 2:**

**Which column layout is best for non-branded PPC ads?**

Having seen such impactful results from the one-column layout in the first test, we decided to run a second test of the same kind. This time, however, we focused our attention on our Partner’s non-branded PPC landing page. Everything about the test was exactly the same, except the ads directing visitors to the page were targeting non-branded terms. This is the equivalent of the searcher typing in “adhesive bandage” rather than “Band-Aid.”

Did we see the same kind of outstanding results? No. In fact, we saw a decrease in conversion of 85%.

**Why didn’t the one-column results translate?**

The results of Experiment 2 were unexpected and puzzling. Why would a winning treatment suddenly perform poorly in the same channel? To gain a fuller understanding of what we could learn from this test, we conducted a meta-analysis by combing through the MECLABS Research Library to find similar tests and comparing the results.
Figure 2.1

Directory Page
TP1460 TP1165
TP1746 TP1182
TP1560 TP1460
TP1315 TP1503
TP1499 TP1488
TP1203 ...

Main Offer Page
TP1457 TP1475
TP1306 TP1469
TP1633 TP1585
TP1639 TP1422
TP1658 TP1616
TP1635 ...

Transaction Page
TP1621 TP1192
TP1356 TP1091
TP1267 TP1214
TP1268 TP1500
TP1636 TP1511
TP1498 ...

Figure 2.2

3-Column Layout
Create Your Free Account

54% In Revenue per Order
Homepage traffic

2-Column Layout
Create Your Free Account

15% In Revenue per Order
Shopping cart traffic

Figure 2.3

2-Column Layout
Create Your Free Account

60% In Conversions

1-Column Layout
Create Your Free Account

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We identified a large number of Test Protocols that fitted our criteria, and, by and large, we could have picked out a column-layout pattern for each type of webpage (Figure 2.1). However, there were still significant outliers that needed to be investigated. You can see those displayed in the orange boxes. For example, why did the three-column layout in Figure 2.2 outperform the two-column layout (contrary to the established pattern)? Why did the two-column homepage in Figure 2.3 beat the one-column design? We needed answers, and in the course of our meta-analysis, we found them.

**AN UNDERLYING THEORY FOR CHOOSING OPTIMUM PAGE LAYOUT**

The breakthrough insight during our meta-analysis was the realization that the prospects were in the same part of the conversion funnel (Figure 3.1), but they were in different parts of the customer funnel (Figure 3.2).
Essentially, prospects searching for branded keywords had prior knowledge of the value proposition and were further into the customer funnel. For these prospects, a single-column layout performed better.

Meanwhile, those searching for non-branded terms were just beginning their interaction with the business and value proposition, and they needed more options to figure out what they wanted. Whereas a one-column layout might scare them off, a multi-column layout allowed them the freedom to discover the best option for them.

Using this insight, we recategorized each Test Protocol in the analysis according to its stage in the *customer thought sequence* as opposed to the *conversion path*. In doing so, we discovered a single pattern that encompassed all Test Protocols analyzed.

At the beginning of the thought sequence, the highest-performing pages often have three or more columns that are evenly weighted. However, as the thought sequence progresses, column counts in high-performing pages drop. If there are two columns, they are unevenly weighted.

**Choosing the ideal number of columns**

When designing our webpages, we must understand there is no single answer to the question, “How many columns should I use?” Sometimes “less” is optimal, and sometimes “more” is optimal.

Once we understand where the customer is in the mental – not physical – conversion funnel, we can apply two key principles:

**Key Principle #1.** The more we know about what the visitor wants, the more we should focus on that desire. That means using fewer columns, with a heavier-weighted column to focus on the known desire.

Guiding the visitor through that heavier-weighted column with the content they are looking for and leading them to a call-to-action in a simple, comprehensive eye-path is key.

**Key Principle #2.** The less we know about what the visitor wants, the more we should enable them to self-select. This requires a design with more columns that are equally weighted.

With equally weighted columns, you are allowing the prospect to pick what they desire, which then allows you to focus on that desire. You can use their initial behavior to design subsequent pages that will match their thought sequence.

As we’ve seen in the experiments, following these principles can help us to present visitors with a layout that matches their mental location in the buying process. In doing so, we’ll improve not only customers’ experiences, but also conversion.
i. See [http://fllwfoundation.tumblr.com/post/37988642124/plusarchitekt-less-is-only-more-where-more-is](http://fllwfoundation.tumblr.com/post/37988642124/plusarchitekt-less-is-only-more-where-more-is)

ii. The MECLABS Value Proposition Development Online Course teaches you how to develop and communicate your company’s value proposition:
   [http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/value-proposition-development/overview](http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/value-proposition-development/overview)

iii. Learn about the methodology MECLABS uses to conduct its experiments:
   [http://www.meclabs.com/methodology](http://www.meclabs.com/methodology)

iv. See the MECLABS Research Catalog for a list of experiments performed from 2008 to 2012:
   [http://www.meclabs.com/catalog](http://www.meclabs.com/catalog)

v. Learn more about this test on the MarketingExperiments Blog:

vi. See how a better eye-path increased conversion by 59% on a homepage:
   [http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/site-metrics/homepage-optimization-tes.html](http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/site-metrics/homepage-optimization-tes.html)

vii. Watch the MarketingExperiments Web clinic, “Page Templates that Work,” to learn about three effective webpage templates discovered by MECLABS researchers:
    [http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/page-templates-that-work.html](http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/page-templates-that-work.html)
LESS IS MORE: MAXIMIZE CONVERSION BY REMOVING WEBSITE DISTRACTIONS
- Jesse Kraker, Senior Research Manager

The old adage “less is more” holds true when it comes to website optimization. To optimize your website, you need to remember to stick to the goal of your site and not distract your visitors with links and other elements that can stop them from reaching that goal.

In this MarketingExperiments Blog post, we’ll review a recent test from one of MECLABS’ online retail Research Partners and how the team was able to achieve a 10% lift in checkout completion rate by simply removing distracting elements.

The MECLABS team recently ran a test within the checkout pages for the online retailer.

The goal of the test was to increase the checkout completion rate.

CONTROL

TREATMENT
The team identified a number of elements causing friction within the checkout pages and likely distracting visitors from completing the checkout process. They tested a treatment that removed those elements.

(Editor’s Note: For the purposes of the MarketingExperiments testing methodology, friction is defined as “a psychological resistance to a given element in the sales or sign-up process.”)

The most drastic change was removing the static navigation bars – left navigation and top navigation – from the checkout pages.

This removed visually distracting elements from the pages as well as deleted possible exit points for visitors, keeping visitors focused on proceeding through the checkout process.

The team also took out a page within the checkout process that was simply confirming the visitor had created an account.

This step was unnecessary and forced visitors to make one extra click to proceed through the funnel, giving them an additional opportunity to abandon the funnel, and again, distracted them from the goal of the checkout pages.

What you need to know

By simply removing friction-causing elements from the checkout pages, the team was able to increase the checkout completion rate by 10%, which equated to a 19.95% increase in revenue per visit to the checkout process.

When optimizing your website, you should evaluate each page element and consider whether it is helping the goal of your site or distracting visitors. Any potentially distracting element is an opportunity to test how your pages perform with those elements removed.

Always remember that less is more when it comes to your website. Keep your pages focused and remove any elements that prevent visitors from completing your goals for the site, such as completing a checkout.
A/B Testing: Is responsive design worth the investment?
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

Is responsive design worth the investment?

It depends on whom you ask.

You can ask the experts, receive a variety of replies and hopefully draw some conclusions from their answers. Or, you can look to your customer data for insights through a little testing and optimization.

During a recent Web clinic, Austin McCraw, Senior Director, Content Production, and Jon Powell, Senior Manager, Research and Strategy, both of MECLABS, revealed how marketers at a news media organization decided to forego relying on expert opinions and put responsive design to the test.

First, let’s review the research notes for some background information on the test.

**Background:** A large news media organization trying to determine whether it should invest in responsive mobile design.
**Goal:** To significantly increase the number of free trial sign-ups.
**Primary Research Question:** Which design will generate the highest rate of free trial sign-ups?
**Approach:** A/B multifactor split test

Here’s a screenshot depicting both design approaches as they render responsively and unresponsively on desktop, tablet and mobile devices.

*Android devices also included in this test*
RESULTS

56% Aggregate increase in conversion

The responsive design treatment showed an aggregate statistically significant difference in free trial subscriptions when compared to the control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Conversion Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control – Unresponsive</td>
<td>3.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment – Responsive</td>
<td>5.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Relative Change: 56.41%

*Android devices are also part of these results

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The responsive design treatment showed an aggregated statistically significant difference in free trial subscriptions when compared to the control.

To learn more about why the responsive design outperformed the unresponsive, watch the free on-demand Web clinic replay of “Responsive Design Tested” (http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/responsive-design-tested.html) to see the results of the experiment when Austin and Jon unpack the test beyond the aggregate level.
As a marketer, you face many complicated questions in your daily work life:

- How do I get my website to rank higher in Google?\(^i\)
- Why is my shopping cart leaking revenue?\(^i\)
- How do I get more people to buy?

In light of these very real, and very complicated, questions, it may be a matter of relatively little importance whether you use radio buttons or dropdowns to collect prospect information. It may seem simple and clear cut.

“Just test it and declare a winner so we can all go implement it and see results!” would be an understandable reaction.

However, as with other areas of marketing, what appears clear-cut often has subtle nuances hiding beneath the surface. In these nuances lie those extra percentage points of conversion you are desperately seeking. Before we can discover and explain those subtle nuances so you can implement and benefit from the research, we must test.

**An Experiment: Do Radio Buttons or Dropdown Menus Produce the Highest Conversion Rate?**

The experiment is Test Protocol 1774 in the MECLABS Research Library.\(^ii\) The goal of the test was to increase the number of subscriptions to the Research Partner’s program, a database of military personnel (similar to Ancestry.com, only for the military). The test was fascinating because the only difference between the two treatments was the switch from radio buttons to a dropdown menu.
You can view Treatment 1 (with radio buttons) in Figure 1.1 and Treatment 2 (with the dropdown) in Figure 1.2. As you can see, Treatment 2 is a considerably shorter page due to the dropdown condensing the area where the radio buttons were. Common Web design principles would have us believe the shorter page should increase conversion. But what did we find?
Treatment 1’s radio buttons actually outperformed the dropdown version by 9.8%.

This is an interesting result, but now we must face the looming question: Why?

Understanding Why Radio Buttons Won

Key Principle #1. One of the most effective ways to improve the performance of a webpage is to reduce friction.

In marketing terminology, we use the word “friction” to describe any psychological resistance encountered along the path to a conversion. Oftentimes, this is encountered when superfluous steps, forms or copy are added to a page, increasing its length (see Figures 2.1-2.3). Therefore, in general, decreasing a page’s length is optimal for conversion.
Key Principle #2. However, in our attempts to minimize friction (length-oriented), we must beware of undermining the conversation with the customer in two ways:

- Intensifying difficulty-oriented friction
- Eliminating necessary value force

As we saw in the radio buttons versus dropdown test, simply decreasing length does not always reduce friction. So while it is a worthy pursuit, it can backfire in two key ways.

**Identifying difficulty-oriented friction**

Unnecessary length is the most common form of friction, but it is not alone. The **difficulty of navigating a page or making sense of a value proposition is also a form of friction**.

For example, in the experiment above, we hypothesized that we could reduce friction by condensing the radio buttons into a dropdown menu. This change would simultaneously reduce overall page length and eliminate competing options on the page. We expected this would increase conversion.

However, **by reducing the length, we inadvertently increased the difficulty** of completing the step for prospects. Instead of clearly seeing all of the options available, they had to click on the dropdown and squint to examine the options.

In **Figure 3.1**, we have another example in which an attempt to reduce length-oriented friction actually increased difficulty-oriented friction. In place of a lengthy three-step checkout process, we theorized an accordion-style process would increase conversion by having all of the steps on the same page. Contrary to our expectations, **the new page decreased conversion by 29%** because navigating the accordion-style design actually increased the perceived difficulty of completing the process.

**Figure 3.2** shows another experiment where we unintentionally decreased conversion by 60% when we eliminated the suggested donation amounts from a nonprofit’s donation form. Rather than decrease friction by reducing length, we increased friction by increasing difficulty.

**Maintaining the power of your value force**

Every time a prospect faces a decision, whether to continue to the next step in your funnel, they do a quick – often subconscious – analysis of cost versus value (**Figure 4.1**). If the balance tips in the direction of cost, they abandon the page without completing the step. If it falls in favor of value, they take the action and move on to the next page, form or step.
Figure 3.1

Figure 3.2

Figure 4.1
By replacing the radio buttons with a dropdown menu, we not only increased the difficulty for the user, but we also negatively impacted the power of the value force. In Figures 4.2 and 4.3, you can see how the pricing is displayed differently, with the radio buttons highlighting the lower monthly price and the dropdown causing prospects to see the larger total price first. By de-emphasizing the savings and/or placing the total price before the monthly price in Treatment 2, we undermined the value of the purchase.

In another fascinating test, we saw a similar result. The Research Partner was an addiction and mental health rehabilitation facility, and Figure 4.4 shows the control page for the experiment. The call-to-action appears only at the bottom of the very long page. We hypothesized that we could increase conversion by shortening the page and moving the call-to-action above the fold, so we created the treatment you see in Figure 4.5.
Figure 4.6

Figure 4.7
But surprisingly, the new page decreased conversion by 69%. By cutting out a large amount of the copy, we actually removed the main driver of value on the page. The people coming to the page needed all of that information to make them feel comfortable submitting their information. Hence, our attempt to decrease friction actually increased it by undermining the value of the offer.

In Figures 4.6 and 4.7, you can see two examples where we made small additions to a pages’ forms and increased conversion, further proving that length is not the only form of friction. In the test in Figure 4.6, we added a block of text that helped qualify the visitor and aided them to see they had found the right product – and we saw a 36% lift. In Figure 4.7, we actually added a field to a form and increased conversion by 24% because the field reminded the prospect of the value they were receiving.

**Radio Buttons vs. Dropdowns: Which is Right for You?**

Unfortunately, it’s not as simple as radio buttons or dropdowns being better than the other. Various elements of the decision-making process are at work. We’ve seen how friction plays a large part of the process in our first two principles.

However, we’ve also discovered a third key principle we’ve yet to discuss that sums up what we’ve learned.

**Key Principle #3. In the end, increasing conversion is less about the technique (dropdowns vs. radio buttons), and more about understanding the entire mental impact (cost vs. value).**

While radio buttons best affected the entire mental process of the prospect in the case of our Research Partner discussed above, it is not necessarily always the case. In each individual circumstance, we must consider the entire mental impact of our design choices and attempt to reduce friction without simultaneously increasing difficulty or undermining value. If you can accomplish that, conversion will increase.

---

i Read this MarketingSherpa case study to learn how a wine retailer and publisher uses content marketing to drive e-commerce sales and how the team increased organic traffic 154% last year:
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/traffic-increase-generic-seo-keyword-effort

ii Watch this MarketingExperiments Web clinic to learn how to reduce cart abandonment:

iii Download the MECLABS Research Catalog to view other experiments performed in the lab:
http://www.meclabs.com/catalog
iv Learn how to identify friction to get more sales and leads in this MarketingExperiments Blog post:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/landing-page-optimization-research-topics/landing-page-friction.html

v Learn what role friction plays in the MECLABS Conversion Heuristic:
http://www.meclabs.com/methodology#heuristics

vi Watch this MarketingExperiments Web clinic to learn more about this accordion-style checkout experiment:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/accordion-style-checkouts-tested.html

vii Learn how to evaluate the value exchange of your webpages and offers:
Landing Page Optimization: Radio Buttons vs. Dropdowns
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

Radio buttons or dropdowns?

The question is arguably on the borderline of arbitrary, but as we discovered, this choice is far more important than one might think.

During a recent Web clinic, Austin McCraw, Jon Powell and Lauren Pitchford, all of MECLABS, revealed the results of an experiment that put button options to the test.

So, let’s take a closer look at the research notes for some background information on the test.

**Background:** A large people search company catering to customers searching for military personnel.

**Goal:** To significantly increase the total number of subscriptions.

**Primary Research Question:** Which subscription option format will produce the highest subscription rate: radio buttons or a dropdown menu?

**Approach:** A/B single factorial split test

Treatment 1

1. Select Your Subscription Option

   **Recommended Option**
   - **1 Month**
     - £8.95 per month!
   - **3 Months**
     - £25.95 per month!
   - **6 Months**
     - £47.95 per month!
   - **12 Months**
     - £95.95 per month!
In Treatment 1, the research team hypothesized that the length of the radio button layout was a source of user friction in the form.

Editor’s Note: For the purposes of the MarketingExperiments testing methodology, friction is defined as “a psychological resistance to a given element in the sales or signup process.”

**Treatment 2**

In Treatment 2, the team tested a dropdown style option selection to reduce the perceived friction in the display.

**Results**

10% Relative increase in orders

*In this case, the radio button field outperformed the dropdown field by 10% in order rate.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Order Rate</th>
<th>Stat. Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 1 – Radio Buttons</td>
<td>11.73%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 2 – Dropdown</td>
<td>10.69%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Relative Change: 9.8%
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

In this case, the radio button option outperformed the dropdown by a relative difference of almost 10%.

Although we usually feature testing that statistically validates at 95%, this is a great reminder of how testing and optimization works when applied in the real world.

Ultimately, it’s all about how confident you are in your results or as Anuj Shrestha, Data Scientist, MECLABS, explained in a previous post (http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/analytics-testing/online-testing-rewards-risks.html), “The reason statistical significance is so important in experimental testing is it quantifies the amount of risk that one is willing to take in drawing inferences from a test.”

To learn more about why the radio button outperformed the dropdown layout, watch the free on-demand Web clinic replay of “Radio Buttons vs. Dropdowns” (http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/radio-vs-dropdown.html) for testing insights from the MECLABS research team you can use to aid your own conversion rate optimization efforts.
Email Marketing
Email Messaging Tested
A recent experiment reveals the two words that increased email clickthrough by 13%

The greatest asset to a marketer is an action that requires minimal effort to implement, yet significantly impacts conversion. This kind of “low-hanging fruit” is difficult to come by, as most significant improvements require significant implementation costs.

In the course of our testing, we occasionally identify such an opportunity. Email is perhaps the easiest medium to use for split testing. In fact, almost 50% of marketers surveyed for the MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Report are already split testing and optimizing their emails.

So, what if all you had to do was change two words in an email? A recent experiment from the lab did just that, and taught us four critical lessons about email copywriting.

An Experiment: Can Two Words Make a Difference?

The experiment, Test Protocol 2136 in the MECLABS Research Library, was conducted to increase the clickthrough conversion of an email. The sender of the email is a well-known audio technology company that sells personal and professional sound equipment. The test was a single-factorial split test, which means there was only a single variable between the two treatments – in this case, only two words.

In Version A (Figure 1.1), the three call-to-action (CTA) buttons were labeled “Show Now.” In Version B (Figure 1.2), the CTA copy stated “View Details.” That was the only difference between the two treatments; every other detail was exactly the same.
Did we see a change in clickthrough conversion? Yes, **Version B produced a 13% lift in conversion.**

Why did such a seemingly small change to the CTA copy have such significant impact on conversion? Four key principles were uncovered.

**Email Copywriting for Optimal Conversion**

**Key Principle #1.** It is not the magnitude of change on the page that impacts conversion, but rather the magnitude of change in the mind of the customer.

You are not optimizing an email; you are optimizing a thought sequence. This is essential to understand when writing copy for an email (or any media). Therefore, even a relatively small change in the physical email copy can have an outsized impact on conversion if it has a drastic impact on the prospect’s thought sequence. The difference between “Shop Now” and “View Details” is miniscule in terms of change to the actual email; however, in the mind of the reader, there is a vast gulf between the two.

Even a relatively small change in the physical email copy can have an outsized impact on conversion if it has a drastic impact on the prospect’s thought sequence.
Key Principle #2. We must understand that for every CTA in an email, there is an implied psychological calculus cost in the mind of the customer (value vs. cost).

Every time a person is faced with a CTA, an internal psychological calculus takes place. Essentially, they weigh the value of what they stand to gain against the perceived cost of getting it. Figure 2.1 illustrates this. If the perceived cost outweighs the value, prospects will not take the action. “Show Now” is all cost because “shopping” involves work. Even though the value of the product may have been built elsewhere in the email, the CTA copy itself is value-negative. Conversely, “View Details” adds value by offering more information without implying work.

Key Principle #3. One common mistake we make in our email calls-to-action is asking for too much (cost), too soon (prior to the customer understanding the value).

If you ask for too much in terms of cost in an email CTA (e.g., “Sign Up,” “Buy Now,” “Get Started,” etc.), you will tip the calculus toward cost for the prospect and lose the conversion. Your goal in an email to provide enough value and a low enough cost barrier that the prospect clicks through to the website.

Often, we ask for too much, too soon when we use company-logic rather than customer-logic. For example, when creating the “Shop Now” email CTA, the marketer’s thought process might have been:

1. I don’t want my customer to be confused, so I’ll make this email about a single product.

However, that’s not what the prospect is thinking. Rather, their thought process might look something like this:

1. I thought this was a single product. Why do I have to shop for it?
2. However, my boss is pushing me to hit my numbers. If they only buy this single product, I won’t make my revenue goals this month.

3. If I can show the customers in the email that the site has more than one product on it, perhaps they will be encouraged to shop around and buy more products.

2. I may (or may not) think that shopping is fun, but I also understand that it implies work. Why do I need to work to get my speaker?

3. Not only does “shop” imply work, but it also implies I am ready to buy. I am not ready to buy. I don’t know enough yet about your offer to want to “shop.”

If you want your emails to convert well, they must be written with customer-logic in mind.

**Key Principle #4.** We must ensure that we are presenting the right “asks” at the right time. And we must beware of conflating the objective of an email with the objective of a landing page.

Ultimately, we are moving prospects through a series of mental “yeses.” When we conflate the purpose of an email with the purpose of a landing page, we skip several of these mental yeses. **The purpose of an email is to get a click; the purpose of a landing page is to get a sale.** In **Figure 3.1**, on the left side of the illustration, you will see how the “Show Now” email skips several mental yeses by asking the prospect to shop too soon. To the right, you can see how the treatment email fixes that problem.

**The purpose of an email is to get a click; the purpose of a landing page is to get a sale.**

**Figure 3.1**
**Email Copywriting: What does, and does not, work**

The three emails in Figures 4.1-4.3 are examples from the MECLABS Research Library of emails that conflated the objective of an email with the objective of a landing page.

“Find Your Solution” implies work and assumes the prospect is ready to purchase a solution. “Learn More” offers value without implying work.

“Subscribe and Save” assumes the reader is ready to subscribe. “View Subscription Options” is the next mental yes the prospect needs to give.

**Writing Better Email Calls-to-Action**

Significant conversion lifts could be as close as two words away, and you can use the four key principles discussed throughout this article to help you discover what those words are for your unique situation.

At the end of the day, it’s about infusing more value than cost in the mind of the prospect when asking for a click – not a sale – in your email.

Keep these principles in mind when writing your emails and reap the benefit of higher clickthrough rates, which will lead to more sales from the landing page.

See this and other research findings in the MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report: http://www.meclabs.com/training/publications/benchmark-report/2013-email-marketing/overview

See the MECLABS Research Catalog for a list of experiments performed from 2008 to 2012: http://www.meclabs.com/catalog

Learn about the MECLABS methodology for testing: http://www.meclabs.com/methodology

Watch the Email Summit 2013 presentation, “How to Optimize and Test Calls-to-action for Maximum Conversions,” to gain takeaways on improving the value and relevance of your CTAs: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/analytics-testing/call-to-action-copy-testing.html

Learn about your customers to take a customer logic approach to marketing: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/general/marketing-intelligence.html
“Email marketing, even as basic as we did it in 2012, outperformed all other forms of online marketing combined for us. We are investing much more in email. It works better than PPC, better than online display ads, and provides a channel for content marketing.”

The above quote is from a marketer who completed the *MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Study* survey, in which we asked:

**Which statement best describes your organization’s perception of email marketing’s ROI (return on investment) at budget time?**

- Email marketing is producing a ROI: 60%
- Email marketing will eventually produce a ROI: 32%
- Email marketing is unlikely to produce a ROI: 4%
- Other - Write a response below: 3%

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=957
Email marketing is producing an ROI for 60% of marketers

Why is email marketing producing an ROI for so many?

As one marketer responded, “ROI on email marketing is easier to measure/test/optimize. Social media is time-consuming and ROI is difficult to measure.”

Another marketer responded more broadly, “Email helps us stay top of mind with customers and prospects.”

A quick look at the breakout data shows email producing an ROI for:

- 70% of B2C-only marketers
- 56% of B2B and B2G marketers
- 62% of B2C and B2B marketers

32% of marketers do not see an ROI yet — but expect to

Not all marketers have already documented an ROI for email marketing, but many who haven’t yet do have faith that they will.

One marketer’s goal was to “develop a more consistent email marketing schedule with interesting content, which delivers a measurable positive ROI.”

Email marketing will eventually produce an ROI for:

- 25% of B2C-only marketers
- 35% of B2B and B2G marketers
- 32% of B2C and B2B marketers

Email marketing is unlikely to produce an ROI for 4% of marketers

A slim minority of marketers did not see email marketing as a beneficial investment. Why not? Perhaps it was because they did a more thorough job of calculating the actual cost.

As one marketing manager said, “Email marketing produces a financial ROI if you ignore the time cost of the staff involved.”
Email marketing is unlikely to produce an ROI for:

- 3% of B2C-only marketers
- 5% of B2B and B2G marketers
- 3% of B2C and B2B marketers

3% of marketers had other ideas

Many of these marketers might be looking at ROI more holistically, and are therefore uncomfortable measuring ROI for a specific tactic, like the marketer who responded, “Email is part of an overall lead generation program, not a sole producer of ROI.”
In the MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report, we asked:

Which of the following email campaign elements do you routinely test to optimize performance? Please select all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call-to-action</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message (e.g., greeting, body, closing)</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days of the week sent</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout and images</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of day sent</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landing page</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target audience</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalization</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From line</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout and images specifically for mobile viewing</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=264
EMAIL IS MORE THAN JUST WORDS

As the title of a 2009 documentary suggests, advertising creative can pretty much be broken down into two things — “Art & Copy.”

As you can see from the data in the above chart, the three most tested and optimized email campaign elements all involve copy.

It isn’t until we get to the fifth-most tested element — layout and images — that we get to the art. One reason for this is testing layout and images is harder than subject lines, the most-tested element, for example.

This explains why 86% of marketers test subject lines, but only 47% test layout and images.

That difficulty was expressed in a Benchmark Report survey response that said, “We are a marketing agency, and our clients have shown some disinterest in testing different images on the same email campaign because of the lack of time. They are creating campaigns at such a pace that testing attributes, such as images, becomes quite difficult because they need to send the campaign ASAP when they have the designs ready.”

OR IS IT?

The irony is, once marketers test layout and images, they learn that the best layout and images might be none at all.

That is, just strip down the email and let the copy shine, as this company president explained in this Benchmark Report survey response:

“In the last few years, we’ve found it more effective to move from heavy HTML emails with tables, images, etc., to simple HTML emails that resemble plain text emails. And our response and engagement has gone way up while our unsubscribe and spam reports have gone down. It seems people have come to correlate heavy HTML emails with spam in their email inbox much like the yellow or pink envelope was correlated with junk mail in physical mailboxes 15 or 20 years ago.”
Relevance.

Relevance is the biggest reason why a customer opens your emails amid the flurry of messages they don’t open.

True relevance is elusive, tough to achieve and even harder to maintain.

In this MarketingSherpa Blog post, I wanted to share two tactics for moving the relevance dial that you can use to aid your own email marketing efforts.

**Move from Rebates to Readership**

For some marketing teams, promotional sending is habitual on a scale viewed as borderline narcotic.

With limited time and resources, incentives intuitively seem like the right move to drive sales, but when the customer experience becomes built on a quid pro quo discount purchase relationship, you’ve got a bit of a problem on your hands.

So how do you break the cycle of promotional-only emails?

Well, one approach Marcia Oakes, Senior Online Marketing Manager, Calendars.com, shared in a recent case study is to create relevant content that celebrates your product and engages your customers.

Marcia’s team realized that their problem was two-fold, as calendars are a seasonal product and even promotions have their limits with customers.

“There are only so many ‘calendar clearance’ messages that our subscribers will receive before they will opt-out,” Marcia explained, adding, “We don’t want our list to go cold. That would hurt us with our deliverability with the major ISPs.”

Marcia’s team built a monthly newsletter around blogging and social media that engaged their subscribers with year-round entertaining content.

Their move beyond promotions to audience building resulted in open rate increases of 46% over the previous year.
MARCH 2013
IT’S SPRING CLEANING TIME.
ARE YOU READY TO GIVE YOUR HOUSE THE ONCE OVER?
EXPLORE OUR INTERACTIVE CALENDAR

1 HAPPY FLIP DAY!
2 MR. GROWTH BIRTHDAY
3 HOW TO CLEAN YOUR DISHWASHER
4 PI DAY
5 ARTIST OF THE MONTH
6 PLANT A FLOWER DAY
7 FAMILY GAME NIGHT
8 NEW VIDEO! SAY OUR GREAT SENTENCES
9 DAY OF SPRINGS
10 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS
11 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
12 SPRING CLEANING FOR THE WORKPLACE
13 SPRING CLEANING FOR THE WORKPLACE
14 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
15 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
16 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
17 ST. PATRICK’S DAY
18 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
19 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
20 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
21 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
22 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
23 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
24 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
25 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
26 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
27 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
28 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
29 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
30 SPRING CLEANING TIPS
31 EASTER

The secret….
of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one. - Mark Twain

Staff Picks
Jessica M shows you her favorite calendars!
» See More
CUSTOMERS WILL ABANDON MORE THAN JUST YOUR CART

I think it’s important here to make a distinction.

Moving beyond a tactic doesn’t mean you abandon it altogether.

It just simply means you take one more deliberate step toward doing it better than you did yesterday, and hopefully better than the other guy.

For example, Laura Santos, Marketing Manager, Envelopes.com, saw an opportunity to move beyond cart abandonment triggers and seized it.

Laura’s team used their customer data to determine a chance existed to increase sales among their multiple-visit shoppers by sending emails to customers triggered by abandoned product pages that encouraged them to return and complete the transaction.

The tactic slashed checkout abandonment rates by 40% in less than two years while increasing overall checkout conversions by 65%.
You can learn more about how Laura’s team used triggered sends and testing to increase their ROI in a recent case study, “E-commerce: Moving beyond shopping cart abandonment nets 65% more checkout conversions” (http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article-case-study-cart-abandonment-checkout-conversions-ecommerce).

ALL ROADS LEAD TO RELEVANCE

No matter the goal of your next email send, it’s important to remember the big picture view of why you send emails in the first place: to delight your customers with relevance.

Whether that relevance is an offer for your latest premium product, an incentive to complete an abandoned purchase, or heck, even an offer for free shipping – the important thing here is that being delightful means you have to be relevant.

Good customers demand no less and great customers deserve no less.

Also, these examples are just a few opportunities to aid your email marketing efforts in e-commerce.
Email Marketing: Genuine Mistake or Evil Genius Email Tactic?
- Lauren Pitchford, Senior Optimization Manager

Just the other day, I received an interesting email from a company that shall not be named (we’ll call them “the Brain” for the purposes of this post).

This email read, “Thank you for your interest in our 2013 Canadian Bacon Report.” I was invited to access my copy of the report, download my free copy of the presentation and attend a related webinar.

The thing is, while I *am* a subscriber of the Brain’s list, I was not at all interested in the report, nor did I ever indicate that I was ever interested (no offense to Canada).

I sat puzzled for a second and then just proceeded to delete and move on with my inbox purging.

Later that night, a little email notification popped up on my phone that stated, “Yeah, We Messed Up. Our Apologies …” It was from the Brain.

This conversational and customer service email informed me that they had a “technology glitch” and accidentally sent me the report.

“But don’t get us wrong,” the email stated, “This is a great report, as are all 18 of our global reports on bacon.”

Not-so-shameless plug.

They apologized for sending me something that may not have been of my interests.

Post apology, the Brain seized the opportunity to ask me to update my email preferences to make sure they were sending me email communications based on my preferred topics: “It will be less than 30 seconds, we promise.”

Genuine Mistake or Evil Genius Email Tactic?

I wasn’t sure until curiosity got the best of me, and I decided to “update” my email preferences.

My conclusion: evil genius.
After I “updated my preferences” with information that was never asked of me when I signed up for the Brain’s list, I received a third email.

This email stated it all: “Subscription Confirmation: Thank you for joining the Brain’s mailing list.”

Update, not so much; list subscription ploy was more like it. I wasn’t sure whether I should be offended or impressed.

Whether this was truly a mistake or a calculated psychology tactic, it probably worked well for them for a couple of reasons.

It took a customer-serving approach to something that typically seems more company-serving:

- Updating your email preferences – aka telling the marketer what subjects are most interesting to you so they can market to you better.

- Instead of a generic “please update your preferences for our benefit,” it was a, “So sorry, please help us. Going forward, we want to make sure we’re sending you things you are interested in.”

It also puts the reader in the right psychological mindset to want to update their preferences.

I received something that I was not interested in, so yes, I will tell you what I am interested in so this doesn’t happen again.

So what do you think? Mistake or evil genius?
A large email list is often a point of pride for marketers, and John Andrews, Director, Centennial Institute, was no different.

In several years, he gathered about 45,000 contacts for Centennial, a public policy think tank associated with Colorado Christian University.

However, Andrews worried about the list’s validity. He had no way of checking whether the addresses were active, but he knew he received a flood of bounce notices each time he sent a newsletter.

“We began to realize that we had a hellacious bounce rate and that our list was quantitatively impressive, yet deceptively so, because a lot of our emails were going into the ether and reaching nobody,” he said.

Email was Centennial’s “lifeline,” Andrews said.

The channel helped convinced people to attend monthly events and buy tickets to the group’s large annual conference. Andrews worried that if he did not act, the channel would not be viable for much longer.

Centennial set out to realign its email marketing strategy, beginning with an overhaul of its list and moving on to a redesign of its email newsletter template and schedule.

Step #1. Get executive support

Andrews is the director of his organization, but not every marketer has that luxury. Some have multiple superiors and lack absolute authority over their email marketing and lists.

Since Centennial planned a complete overhaul, marketers who wish to do the same should gain support from executives or other departments. This will help prevent you from stepping on toes or interfering with the work of others.

Explain to your colleagues that no stone will be left unturned and to speak up if they need certain aspects of the program changed or maintained.
Step #2. Clean the list

Centennial previously sent its newsletter blindly without tracking or reports. After partnering with a service provider, the team began receiving performance metrics and reviewing them after each campaign.

The team continued to send its newsletter as usual, but now they could see the performance metrics of the list. Each month, the team reviewed performance and made the following changes to its list.

Change #1. Remove hard bounces

A “hard bounce” is a notice that an email is permanently undeliverable. Email servers typically send these notices when they receive an email that is sent to an address that doesn’t exist. Any addresses that caused a hard bounce for Centennial were immediately removed from the list.

Change #2. Three strikes for soft bounces

Soft bounces are notices that an email cannot be delivered now but may be deliverable later. For example, the inbox may be full. Centennial assumed that a person with such an address might want its emails, so the team created a rule to remove addresses if they caused three consecutive bounces.

Change #3. Remove inactive subscribers

After six months of sending the newsletter and reviewing performance, Centennial had a long list of addresses that did not open or click an email for the entire period. The team chose to remove these names from the list, as it was hurting overall performance and undermining the program’s deliverability.

This was not an easy decision to make.

“I’ve got to say, that was like cutting off my arm,” Andrews joked.

Make it easy to join and leave

The team also made it easier to join and leave the list. A simple form (See Figure 1.1) on Centennial’s site allowed visitors to join, and the team added an unsubscribe link to the bottom of the email that allowed recipients to opt-out with a few clicks.

Figure 1.1 - Email list sign-up form
Step #3. Grow the list

Centennial cut more than 75% of its list through the changes above, but the team felt confident that the new list was stronger. The nonprofit now had to find new subscribers.

Event registrations

The team partnered with the internal events management team, which is responsible for running Centennial’s annual Western Conservative Summit. Together, they enabled registrants to enter the email program during registration.

“A big part of the newsletter is associated with our summit, so when anyone registers, their address is sent to us and they get on the list,” Andrews said.

Other sources

The team also gathered opt-ins by hand at regular monthly events and mentioned its newsletter in its Facebook and Twitter profiles. Additional work to build the list through social media is in the planning stages at the time of this article.

Step #4. Redesign the email template

Before the overhaul, creating and sending an email was a manual, inconsistent process.

“I was composing them on my own screen, slapping some text in there, grabbing some photos, and occasionally putting in a link. There was nothing disciplined or systematized about it,” Andrews said.

The team wanted to eliminate the “play it by ear” approach and instead send a consistent newsletter design. The new design (Figure 1.2) included the following:

- **Consistent header** — The team used a header graphic to begin each email with a rich design and sharp logo.

- **Consistent sections** — The design is broken into sections, and the sections are maintained for every campaign. Readers know where to look to find the introductory letter, upcoming events schedule and information about the annual summit.

- **Event promotion** — Centennial’s annual summit is a major event for the team, so it is given special mention at the bottom of every newsletter. Readers receive updates about the event’s date and other information as it’s released.
Figure 1.2 - New email template design
“We realized that that’s worthy of being in the 12 months out of the year because it’s never too far-fetched to be bragging on the last one and or talking about the next one,” Andrews said.

**Step #5. Commit to a schedule**

Instead of sending the newsletter whenever the team got a chance, Centennial committed to a twice-monthly schedule that always delivered emails on a Wednesday. This required emails to be written and proofed several days beforehand.

**Always test subject lines**

Centennial also started testing subject lines in every campaign. The team wrote two subject lines and sent them to different segments, each to 10% of the list. The best performer was then used to reach the remaining 80% of subscribers.

Regular tests helped the team uncover phrases and topics that sparked interest with readers.

“We look at the results of every email to see what is really hitting home with the audience. For example, one time we mentioned a political figure in the subject line and got a huge spike,” Andrews said.

In addition to the sending schedule, the team also committed to a monthly review of the program’s performance and agreed internally to proactively improve performance in the future.

**Results**

Six months into the effort, after Centennial dropped the inactive subscribers from its list, its list size shrunk an eye-popping 78%. The performance of the list, however, had skyrocketed.

Results since the overhaul:

- Open rate up to 225% higher (previous average: 12%; now as high as 39%).
- Clickthrough rate up to 117% higher (previous average: 6%; new average: 9%; now as high as 13%).
- Bounce rate fell 96.5% (began at 18%; now down to 0.62%).

Centennial is seeing impact on its event registrations as well. Ticket sales to its biggest event in 2013, the annual Western Conservative Summit, reached an all-time-high of 2,100. While the team cannot directly attribute that growth to the email overhaul, Andrews said there is no doubt of a correlation.
For example, the team tracked more than 1,300 email clicks to the event’s registration page during a period where 1,000 registrations were received.

“I’m absolutely sure that the attractive and persuasive face that we’re presenting through our email is part of that overall growing success that we have,” he said.

Looking ahead, Centennial hopes to see more action on the “donate” button it added to its email template.

“The right kind of pitch, especially if it’s low-dollar and well-motivated action, I’m sure will be giving us more cash flow coming off of our email relationships,” Andrews concluded.
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]

\[ \text{eme} = rv(of + i) - (f + a) \]
Responsive Design Tested
What a recent experiment reveals about the potential ROI of mobile design

Over the last couple of years, mobile has become a fixture in the marketing world that can no longer be overlooked. Many marketers will tell you one of their chief struggles is the shift from desktop to mobile. As a result, we often receive questions revolving around the importance of designing pages so they properly display on a mobile device.

One method for doing this is called “responsive design.” Responsive design is a way to code a webpage so it automatically adjusts itself to fit neatly within the pixel range of any viewing device. In Figure 1.1, you will see an example of how this works. The responsive design automatically shrinks to fit the smaller devices, while keeping all of the text visible within the margins.

You have probably already guessed the potential benefit of such a design strategy: less friction in the conversion process. Marketing intuition tells us this makes sense. If you make a page easier to read and navigate, customers and prospects will experience less friction as they move through the conversion process. If they experience less friction, you will see conversion rates increase.

Many experiments performed in the MECLABS Research Laboratory have proven that reducing friction increases conversion. The question to answer, then, is whether or not responsive design actually does reduce friction. To answer this, we must test.
**AN EXPERIMENT:**
**DOES RESPONSIVE DESIGN IMPACT THE FRICTION EXPERIENCED BY THE VISITOR?**

Test Protocol 1933 in the MECLABS Research Library is the subject of our attention for this article, and what a subject it is. Our Research Partner for the experiment is a large media organization that wanted to increase its free trial subscriptions. Before committing funding and time to implement responsive design, the company wanted to test and see if there was a statistical reason to make the switch.

Because we are testing responsive design, three main facets define the test: desktop conversion, tablet conversion and mobile conversion. We will analyze each section in greater depth, but let us first examine the overall results of the test.

In **Figures 2.1-2.4**, you can see the control and treatment versions of each browsing experience.
We must note some important factors for each experience:

**Desktop Experience:**
- All important content is available on both experiences
- Faux pop-up design is eliminated when rendered in the responsive version

**Tablet Experience:**
- Control requires lateral scrolling to read the entire headline and see the image
- Control eliminates the supporting image from initial view
- Treatment wraps the headline, making it entirely visible
- Treatment includes the image in initial view
- Treatment renders “x” (to close window) as a “No Thanks” button
Mobile Experience:
- Control cuts off headline and form fields, requiring lateral scrolling
- Both control and treatment eliminate the image from view
- Treatment wraps the headline, making it entirely visible

What does your intuition tell you? Will the responsive design impact conversion?

The results indicate “yes.” The responsive pages produced a 56% aggregate increase in conversion.

On the surface, this would seem to indicate that responsive design reduced friction. However, a closer look at the results tells a different story – a surprising and important story. Let us begin with the desktop.

**Testing the Desktop Experience**

As we mentioned above, the desktop experiences of the control and responsive treatment were very similar (Figure 3.1). The only difference was the responsive design was unable to render the faux pop-up background present in the control. We can surmise the design of the control already had a decent conversion rate, as it won as a treatment in a previous test. So how did it perform against the responsive design in this test?

![Unresponsive and Responsive Desktop Screenshots](image)

The responsive design treatment improved conversion by an impressive 105%.

This is a surprising result. What caused it? We will return to that question after looking at the other two experiences.
Testing the Tablet Experience

The tablet experiences varied much more between test versions than the desktop versions (Figure 3.2). The iPad control rendered the page decently, but it cut off the headline and failed to show the image. The Android control rendering was a mess that required pinching and scrolling to make sense of the page. So you may expect that the results were even greater in favor of the responsive treatment. What did the results reveal?

There was actually no statistical difference between the control and treatment designs.

Let that result sink in for a moment. It certainly threw us for a loop. The desktop experience, which varied very little, produced a huge positive gain. However, the big design improvements on the tablet experience made no difference at all. By now, the questions are mounting and we still have mobile results to analyze.

Testing the Mobile Experience

Mobile is the biggest test for responsive design. Tablets are growing in popularity, to be sure, but phones are everywhere. Moreover, the differences between the desktop and mobile versions are stark (Figure 3.3). The control pages were even more truncated than on the tablet, and they required even more pinching and scrolling to access all of the content. Alternatively, the treatment pages for both Apple and Android devices fully rendered the headline and required only vertical scrolling to move easily through the page. So that has to count for something in terms of conversion, right?
Wrong. The control and treatment produced no statistical difference in conversion.

The questions that need to be answered are clear: Why did the desktop produce drastic results, yet the mobile versions failed to improve response? Can we make a judgment regarding whether or not responsive design is effective at reducing friction for the user?

**Why did the desktop treatment produce a significant lift?**

The mobile and tablet treatments made significant changes in layout; however, they did not make significant changes in the friction experienced by the customer. The desktop treatment did something slightly different.

The move to responsive design coincidentally reduced both friction and anxiety by eliminating the pop-up appearance of the control. What began as a minor variable necessitated by the complex programming nature of responsive design actually became the most important driver of conversion.

Over time, experience has trained us to associate some level of anxiety with pop-up advertisements. They frustrate us by halting our momentum toward something we desire. They annoy us by clogging up our desktop. Because of this, our accidental elimination of the faux pop-up design actually greatly increased conversion by lowering anxiety, while the drastic design changes in the tablet and mobile experience failed to affect the friction felt by visitors.

What does this mean for responsive design then? We can glean three key principles.
WHY RESPONSIVE DESIGN IS NOT ALWAYS A BEST PRACTICE

Key Principle #1. Responsive design, like any new technology or technique, does not necessarily increase conversion. This is because we are not optimizing design; we are optimizing thought sequences.

When it comes to new technology, our marketing intuition can often be biased. We see potential lifts where none actually exist. This is why it is so important to test. With responsive design, then, it is crucial to realize that it does not necessarily increase conversion. It optimizes the design, but not necessarily the thought sequence. The thought sequence is what we need to optimize to see an increase in conversion.

Key Principle #2. Responsive design is only as effective as the degree of change it affects in the mind of the customer.

Responsive design can certainly be effective, but only if it succeeds in reducing friction in the mind of the customer. From our test above, we have no evidence that it does that. Therefore, as with many design strategies, we cannot develop a blanket “use” or “do not use” guideline. It depends on your specific circumstances.

Key Principle #3. This requires you to consider not only how responsive design will impact the look of the page, but the customer’s perception on two levels:

- **Friction:** How much will responsive design decrease perceived effort?
- **Anxiety:** How much will responsive design decrease perceived concern?

To decide if responsive design will benefit you, you must identify whether it will decrease the friction and/or anxiety encountered by the customer in the conversion process. Will a responsive design lower the perceived effort it takes to complete the next micro-yes? Will it eliminate any perceived concern the customer could have with continuing the process?

Of course, until you test, you are relying on marketing intuition to guide you. This can be effective, but as we have seen above, it can also be misleading. So take a good, hard look at your pages. Decide if responsive design could help decrease friction or anxiety. Then, continually test until you know for sure.

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i Litmus research found mobile opens now represent 51% of email opens: [https://litmus.com/blog/email-client-market-share-where-people-opened-in-2013](https://litmus.com/blog/email-client-market-share-where-people-opened-in-2013)

ii See example experiments where reducing friction have increased conversion: [http://www.marketingexperiments.com/landing-page-optimization/hidden-friction.html](http://www.marketingexperiments.com/landing-page-optimization/hidden-friction.html)
See the MECLABS Research Catalog for a list of experiments performed from 2008 to 2012:
http://www.meclabs.com/catalog

Learn to identify friction on your landing pages:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/landing-page-optimization-research-topics/landing-page-friction.html

You can address customer anxiety in three ways: specificity, proximity and intensity. See:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/landing-page-optimization-research-topics/addressing-customer-anxiety.html

Learn about optimizing thought sequences:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/whitepapers/MEx-No-Unsupervised-Thinking.pdf#page=8
Zombie marketing.

It’s where lackluster marketing runs rampant as customers are swarmed by hordes of mediocre messages.

So how do you avoid it?

**Commit to breaking through the noise**

When you strip away all the fluff, marketing is a choice to communicate with the chance that someone might care enough to listen.

But when you’re in an industry where there’s not much excitement, saying something of interest to customers can be tough. Christine Nurnberger, Vice President of Marketing, SunGard Availability Services, revealed some of the challenges she faced in taking on zombie marketing at SunGard, both figuratively and literally.

“Let’s be honest. Selling managed services, business continuity, production resiliency at the surface level isn’t really all that sexy,” Christine explained. “I was challenged by the CEO when I took on this position last October to find a way to really break through the noise of all the B2B technology clutter that’s out there.”

**Focus on creating quality content for the channels that will help you break out**

SunGard’s overall efforts across email, direct mail and social media were influenced by the buzz zombies are enjoying in popular culture. But according to Christine, the focus on delivering something of value to your customers is vital to your marketing’s survival.

“There is no substitute for really focusing on quality creative content that breaks through the noise,” Christine said.

To learn more about how you can survive zombie marketing, check out the MarketingSherpa webinar, “How to Leverage the Zombie Apocalypse for an Award-winning Multichannel Campaign,” (http://www.marketingsherpa.com/video/webinar/multichannel-zombie-campaign-creative-b2b) where Christine revealed some key takeaways every marketer needs to stay ahead of the marketing undead.
Enter to Win a:

**ZOMBIE SURVIVAL KIT**
FOR THE INEVITABLE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE!

- Zombie Repellent (Gilly Sticks)
- Survival Guide
- Zombie Camo Backpack
- Survival Tool (Fits in 1)
- Envelopes including Survival Guide & Infographic
- Zombie URGENT
- Movie Gift Card

Fill out the form and enter...
Wait for a response from a Zombie Survival Expert

**First Name:**
chris[

**Last Name:**
mlas[

**Email Address:**
chris.mlas@sungard.com[

**Company:**
[\n
**Country:**
[United States][

**Business Phone:**
282-493-1394[

**Job Role:**
Please Select[

**Department:**
Please Select[

**Company Size:**
100-999 employees[

**Enter**

Please submit accurate information so we can contact you upon winning.
There will be 20 winners chosen. Submissions will be accepted until 9/25/13. This bit will not save you in the event of a Zombie attack.
I am at the earliest stages of developing a sequel to *Lead Generation for the Complex Sale*. It’s been a decade since the first draft and I’ve been contemplating how much business has changed since then.

Today’s sales and marketing environment is a paradox: There have never been more opportunities to reach customers; yet reaching them has never been more challenging.

We have more marketing channels than ever. We’ve moved from traditional advertising to social media, content marketing and beyond. But, I can’t help but wonder, as we have more ways to talk to our customers, are they really listening? Or are they shutting us out as we hurl more pitches at them from different angles?

I believe you can’t really answer that question unless you know precisely what your customers want. This requires letting go of our own assumptions of what we think they want and putting ourselves in their place.

This requires empathy, which according to Miriam-Webster, “is the ability to share someone else’s feeling.” To feel what they feel and think what they think.

Unfortunately, too many in corporate America believe sociopathic behavior – being laser-focused on getting what you want at the expense of everyone else – accelerates businesses and careers to success.

That’s so “Wolf of Wall Street.” What worked two decades ago won’t work today. Sociopathic behavior may be why too many businesses are struggling.

I believe to succeed in the new millennium, we must embrace empathy on every level with every customer – both internal and external. Our customers are more sophisticated than ever and have access to more information and more options. There’s no room for game-playing or guessing. We have to know what they want and give that to them.

Here’s an overview of what I believe can help achieve this. I plan on expanding on these points in future B2B Lead Roundtable Blog posts:
1. **Put the customer first.** Instead of worrying about being interesting, we need to first be interested. Understand the customer’s motivation (what they want) and make sure that’s aligned with what we can deliver.

2. **Listen and seek to understand.** Do we know why our customers say “yes”? Why are they buying from us? What are the steps they need to take to say “yes”? What difference have we made for our customers because they bought our product or service?

3. **Stop marketing, start conversing.** Focus on developing conversations, not campaigns. Don’t err on the side of pushing our agenda rather than extending an invitation to converse. To the customer, it feels like “somebody wants something from me” rather than “maybe they can help me get what I want.” We need to demonstrate that we’re interested in their world and their motivations. Invite, listen, engage and recommend.

4. **Help.** The best marketing and sales doesn’t feel like marketing and sales at all. It feels like helping because it is. Our lead nurturing needs to be built on this concept.

5. **Give them content they’ll want to share.** This organically emerges from the first four points of placing the customer first, understanding them, conversing with them and helping them.

6. **Remember that proximity is influence.** Empower those closest to our customer – the sales team, inside sales team, sales engineers and customer service people – to be able to achieve the points above.

7. **Practice empathy personally to set an example.** Our customers are everyone we serve – including our staff and our coworkers. Show them how it’s done by practicing empathy yourself.

This introduces another paradox: We’ve never been more advanced with ways to connect with prospects, but we’re still not communicating effectively with them. A good start to doing that effectively begins with empathy.

**What are your thoughts? Do you think empathetic marketing is achievable for your organization, why or why not?**
Calls-to-action (CTAs) are integral to every kind of marketing campaign, whether online or offline. It’s where the rubber meets the road at every stage of your funnel. Will the prospect take the next step? Oftentimes, their decision hinges on your CTA.

It comes as no surprise, then, that marketers from around the world ask us how they can create better CTAs. In this article, we explore whether there are fundamental principles you can use to create consistently higher-converting CTAs.

Of course, the answer begins with an experiment.

**An Experiment:**
**Which CTA Will Produce the Most Clicks?**

The experiment is Test Protocol (TP) 1785 in the MECLABS Research Library. The Research Partner is a large global media company selling premium software to businesses, and it wanted to find out which CTA would move the most prospects through to the next stage of the funnel. We employed a single-factorial experiment, testing only the copy of the CTA button. We tested these five treatments:

- **Treatment 1: Start Free Trial**
- **Treatment 2: Try Now**
- **Treatment 3: Start Here**
- **Treatment 4: Get Started**
- **Treatment 5: Get Started Now**

Figure 1.1
What did we find? Treatment 5 (Get Started Now) was the winner, beating the next closest treatment (Start Free Trial) by 12%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Button Text</th>
<th>Click Rate</th>
<th>% Rel. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start Free Trial</td>
<td>19.66%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try Now</td>
<td>14.45%</td>
<td>-26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Here</td>
<td>17.69%</td>
<td>-10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Started</td>
<td>18.22%</td>
<td>-7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Started Now</td>
<td>21.98%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be tempting to now say that all free trial CTAs should be “Get Started Now,” rather than any of the alternatives, but that is not what this test shows. This test shows that “Get Started Now” was the best CTA option for the page it was featured on. To discover what this means for CTAs in general, we must drill down and discover why “Get Started Now” was the top result.

Look at the full page in Figure 1.3 with the “Start Free Trial” CTA and compare it to the page in Figure 1.4, featuring the winning CTA. It is clear now that these pages create different expectations in the mind of the reader. “Free Trial” raises the possibility of eventual cost, but “Get Started Now” is all benefit and no cost.
CREATING CTAs THAT MAXIMIZE CONVERSION

Two fundamental ideas can help us craft CTAs that optimize clickthrough.

First, the CTA cannot be viewed in a vacuum; it must be viewed in context of the entire conversation that is occurring in the customer’s mind.

Much to the dismay of most, no one-size-fits-all answer exists for optimizing CTAs. Not only that, the CTA is not limited to just a button. It encompasses every element on a page that transfers customer conversation into customer action.

Even in that vastness, could a set of underlying principles aid us in creating and identifying high-performing CTAs? To answer this question, we started collecting and analyzing all case studies that isolated the CTA as key component from the MECLABS Research Library. While conducting our examination, we were, in fact, able to identify such principles.

Five key principles emerged from case studies that produced a significant increase in response:

1. The principle of alignment
2. The principle of timing
3. The principle of absorption
4. The principle of negation
5. The principle of redundancy

We will now review each of the five principles and illustrate how they connect to creative elements on your webpages.

**Key Principle #1. The principle of alignment**

Effective CTAs align with the needs and/or desires of the customer.

There is a story behind every purchase decision. Essentially, the principle of alignment states that to increase conversion, we need to connect to that story. What is the prospect looking for in this particular moment? What are they most interested in? If we can align our CTA with their current needs and/or desires, we will increase conversion.

For example, we have TP 1501 in Figure 2.1 where we increased clickthrough by 7% (and, more importantly, conversion by 125%) by changing the CTA from “Get Started Now” to “Estimate My Monthly Payment.” The first CTA assumed the customer would find value in a budget analysis that identified their problem. The second CTA offered a solution to the problem, which aligned more closely with the current needs of the customer.
In Figure 2.2, you again see TP 1637 where we increased conversion by 229% by adding a section that allowed prospects to jump immediately to pricing, bypassing the “Request More Information” CTA. This worked because the “Request More Information” CTA did not meet the current needs of a significant segment of the audience. The ability to jump straight into pricing aligned with their story.
**Key Principle #2. The principle of timing**

Effective CTAs are presented at the right time in the conversation with the customer.

Not only must a CTA align with the customer’s current needs, but it must also be presented at the right moment. Present the CTA too soon and the customer may not be ready yet. Present it too late and you may have missed your chance.

TP 1583 in Figure 3.1 demonstrates this. In this case, we had a page that presented the CTA immediately to the right of the main content, above the fold of the page. In our treatment, we moved the CTA to a separate tab within the page, which allowed the prospect to view the information before interacting with the CTA. The change resulted in a 120% increase in conversion, because the timing of “the ask” was appropriate.

![From this](image1)

![To this](image2)

*Figure 3.1*
However, we saw something different in TP 1901 (Figure 3.2). In this case, we used a similar approach, changing the CTA from being immediately visible to a delayed pop-under that allowed the prospect to interact with the page’s content. However, the result was a 29% decrease in conversion. Why? The timing was wrong. In this situation, the prospect was ready for the CTA right away, and by waiting, we missed the optimal moment of conversion.

![Figure 3.2 Example Image]

**From this**

![Image of Original CTA]

**To this**

![Image of Modified CTA]

**Figure 3.2**
Key Principle #3. The principle of absorption

Effective CTAs are easy to absorb for the customer as they are scanning the page.

If a visitor to your webpage cannot easily identify and digest your CTA(s), you have run afoul of the principle of absorption. However, this principle is not solely related to design tactics like color, shape and size. Though, these could come into play.

For example, in TP 1746 (Figure 4.1), a college was presenting potential students with the opportunity to peruse their degree programs. The control page had three separate columns with long lists of degrees to choose from, which are not easy to absorb. The prospect did not immediately understand what they would receive by clicking. In the treatment, the program lists were removed in favor of a “View Programs” button. This let readers easily absorb what each of the three CTAs offer, and what they will gain by clicking the button. It resulted in a 177% increase in conversion.

![Figure 4.1](image-url)
Similarly, the control page in Figure 4.2 (TP 1169) suffered from CTAs that were difficult to absorb. It is not immediately clear what separates the three premium offers. Since the CTA buttons all went to the same page anyway, we simply condensed them into one “Get Premium Access” button, which increased paid subscriptions by 36% because the CTA was clear and easy to absorb.

Figure 4.2
Key Principle #4. The principle of negation

Effective CTAs appear to be the only meaningful choice for your ideal customer.

Even when multiple CTAs are present, it is possible to construct a page in such a way that, for a given prospect, only one CTA is the clear choice. This is the principle of negation in action, because the fitting CTA effectively negates the competing options. Let us examine an example.

The control page of TP 1560 (Figure 5.1) presented three CTAs that were difficult for the prospect to separate in his or her mind. No single factor allowed one CTA to negate the other two. In our treatment, we wrote the CTA copy so customers could immediately see which path was right for them. Due to the specificity of the CTA copy, the customer could confidently know they had the right button, which negated the effect of the other CTA buttons. This simple change produced a 331% increase in conversion.

Figure 5.1
Again, in TP 1640 (Figure 5.2), the control CTAs did not do enough to separate themselves in the mind of the customer. The only immediate differences were the option name and the price. Our treatment, on the other hand, used a chart and checkmarks to let the customer immediately identify which option best suited their needs. The result was a 63% increase in revenue per visit.
Key Principle #5. The principle of redundancy

Effective CTAs re-emphasize the essential value of taking the action.

Any student of an introductory public communication course has likely been exposed to this useful axiom: Tell them what you’re going to tell them. Tell them. Then, tell them what you told them. The point is to continue driving home your main point so it does not become lost in the shuffle. The same applies to your CTAs. Although your page – and, ideally, your entire funnel process to that point – has built the value of your offer, your CTA must again drive home that value if you are to maximize conversion.

For example, in TP 1552 (Figure 6.1), we added a reminder of the money back guarantee to the shopping cart pop-up. This simple reaffirming of the value proposition resulted in a 37% increase in conversion. Likewise, in Figure 6.2 (TP 1305), you can see that we did nothing more than add a testimonial underneath the CTA button. However, the testimonial reaffirmed the value proposition and created a 35% boost in conversion.
INCREASING CUSTOMER RESPONSE WITH OPTIMAL CALLS-TO-ACTION

You asked how to create better CTAs, and the research has spoken. More than a decade of tests have provided us five principles on which to focus our CTA optimization efforts. Here are the key principles to maximizing conversion from your CTAs: alignment, timing, absorption, negation and redundancy.

However, you must also remember the CTA cannot be viewed in a vacuum. It must be viewed in context of the entire conversation that is occurring in the customer’s mind.

With these key principles in mind, ask yourself this question: How well does your entire CTA, not just the button itself, align with your customers’ motivation?

You can’t always follow rules, as every audience differs a little in their motivation and behavior, but we can use these principles to help us guide our customers and to produce significant increases in response.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

i  Learn five common call-to-action errors marketers make:
   http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/marketing-insights/call-to-action-errors.html

ii Discover the test-proven methodology MECLABS uses:
   www.meclabs.com/methodology

iii To learn about more experiments performed by MECLABS, download the MECLABS Research Catalog:
   http://www.meclabs.com/catalog

iv Learn how a MECLABS Research Partnerships can help your company:
   www.meclabs.com/partnerships
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i - f) - 2a \]

\[ \text{eme} = rv(o_f + i) - (f + a) \]
Customer Management
LEAD GENERATION: BALANCING LEAD QUALITY AND LEAD QUANTITY
- John Tackett, Manager of Editorial Content

Lead generation is somewhat like a tightrope act.

Generate too many leads, and the rope between Sales and Marketing breaks. If you don’t generate enough leads that turn into sales, your ROI plummets.

As Debbie Pryer, Program Manager, Siemens Healthcare, discovered, finding the right balance between lead quantity and quality takes trust, teamwork and planning.

WHEN THE ROPE BREAKS, YOU GET THE WILD WEST

In the health care segment of Siemens, field service engineers interact directly with customers to repair medical equipment. This interaction was a great opportunity to capitalize on generating prospects interested in Siemens products.

Service engineers were considered trusted advisers for customers, so having them submit leads to an external website seemed like a great approach to generate leads.

But something went wrong.

A monetary incentive for sales-qualified leads seemed to be working until the number of unqualified leads skyrocketed to 12,000 after the program was released to thousands of employees.

Ultimately, the expansion also led to 65% of those leads being rejected, so while the program was generating leads, they were not high-quality leads.

“It was totally the Wild West; anybody could submit any kind of lead they wanted for anything,” Debbie explained.

AUDIT THE SITUATION AND LOOK FOR PROBLEMS

Debbie’s initial challenge as she explained in her presentation at Lead Gen Summit 2013 in San Francisco was to realign Service and Sales after the program’s high rejection rate ultimately created a distrust between the two departments.
To accomplish this, Debbie shifted the lead generation approach from a linear model to a closed loop with a customer-centric focus.

She explained, “You learn from those mistakes and it’s what you take with that learning and what you do with it.”

REALIGNMENTS IN PROCESS ARE ALSO IMPORTANT

Getting all the moving pieces to work together is tough. There’s buy-in from all of the stakeholders and then gathering all of the resources you need to make it happen.

The key to making this massive shift work, according to Debbie, is in communicating those changes across the organization effectively.

“If you don’t put together some kind of communications plan of what you’re going to communicate to whom and when, you’re setting yourself up for a lot of heartache,” she said.

To learn more about Debbie’s approach to revitalizing Siemen’s lead generation program and the factors she identifies as keys to success, you can watch the on-demand Summit webinar replay of “Lead Generation: How to empower your program like Siemens Healthcare” (http://www.marketingsherpa.com/video/webinar/lead-generation-seimens-healthcare).
\[ e = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]

\[ e_{me} = rv(o + i) - (f + a) \]
In social media, if 2013 was the emergence of Vine, then 2014 will likely be the year of more Vine videos.

The creative potential that surrounds the app will be fun to watch this year as more brands adopt it into their marketing mix.

I personally like Vine, and consider it the equivalent of a living, breathing Pinterest; a mashup of all the goodies social media can offer in low calorie servings of six-second videos.

Vine’s success in social media is also no real surprise to me.

Considering its story as a company founded in June 2012, it was gobbled up by Twitter three months later only to skyrocket to the status of most downloaded free app in Apple’s iOS app store before blowing out the candle on its first birthday cake.

What’s also exciting is with any new technology, there are always those few early adopters who set the bar only high enough to be outdone in ways that are as exciting as they are unique.

In this MarketingSherpa Blog post, I wanted to highlight three trailblazing brands that are using Vine to reach their customers that you can use to help get your creative mojo going.

**Lowe’s “fix in six” tips help customers build know-how**

Lowe’s uses the app to create mini “tutorials” that are strung together to help customers keep home repair D.I.Y.
OREO COOKIE SHOWS ITS FOLLOWERS HOW TO “SNACK HACK”

I’m not too surprised by Oreo’s early adoption of Vine given its prior success with Twitter. Oreo’s use of the app serves as a great example of combining creativity, product and entertainment to engage an audience.

GENERAL ELECTRIC USES CONTESTS AND TECH MASHUPS TO ENGAGE CONSUMERS AND DRIVE NEW INNOVATION

In the last few years, GE has really made any excuses B2B marketers have for slow adoption of social media quite tough to accept.

The brand’s use of Vine for holding contests to redesign jet engine parts using 3D printing is truly setting a bar for creative uses of social media in B2B marketing.
After leaving the world of public relations, I dove head-first into the world of marketing. It didn’t take long for me to realize my skill set as a public relations professional made me a different breed of marketer.

For example, while marketing concentrates on product placement, public relations focuses on building relationships.

Using basic public relations tactics can strengthen your marketing campaigns by reinforcing brand identity, expanding your customer base and creating an integrated customer experience.

To do this, you must master social media and understand how to use it effectively.

For the late adopters, you no longer can afford to ignore social media.

Consider that an Infosys study recently found consumers are 38% more likely to interact with retailers’ Facebook pages than their websites. Smart marketers are creating brand consistency by putting as much thought into their social media campaigns as they do on their websites.

But before you start tweeting and posting updates, keep in mind that all social media was not created equal. Knowing how to use the different platforms is going to give you an edge over your competitors and strengthen your brand identity.

**Facebook is a place for conversations**

Facebook encourages interaction between users. Communication consists of comments, likes and shares. The feedback that you get on this platform creates an interactive conversation with your audience.

When you post content that isn’t generating feedback, you’re not creating conversations. Instead, you’re creating noise and this will make the content you post irrelevant in the eyes of your audience.

If your Facebook page has low interaction, take another look at the value of the content you’re posting and who your audience is. Also, keep demographics in mind to help keep content relevant.

Let’s not forget that in order to have a conversation, you need to respond to the feedback of your audience. The easiest way of doing this is by replying to their comments.
**Twitter allows you to network**

Because Twitter feeds are constantly updated with a mosaic of content ranging from information to entertainment, there’s something for everyone. Tweets are similar to a stream of consciousness.

Start by searching for content that interests you. The search results will include people who use those keywords in their handles and hashtags. Follow, favorite and retweet to start building an audience.

Twitter is a great tool for connecting with people and organizations in an open environment. If you want your tweets to be found by your audience, use strategic hashtags.

If enough people interact with a hashtag, it starts trending and gets displayed on the main Twitter page. Businesses also have the option to pay for promoted tweets.

The key to Twitter is personal interaction. It humanizes brands. An excellent example of this is @TacoBell. The sassy account has 1.1 million followers and constantly interacts with fans.

**Blogs put you in control**

The really fantastic aspect about blogs is that you don’t have to pitch your story to the media. By eliminating the middle man, you decide what gets published, when and how.

Because the featured content is your own, you’re in control. But with that control comes a whole new set of challenges and demands to successfully build an audience of advocates.

A strategic blog should include content that informs, entertains and reinforces your value proposition.

Blogging includes the ability to engage in storytelling. While websites sell products, your blog sells your brand. By brand, I mean the “perception” that your customers have of you.
You can do this by featuring content that personalizes experiences with your product or company. For example, Starbucks uses its blog to publish content ranging from event recaps to letters from CEO Howard Schultz.

Stay relevant by planning out your blog posts and publishing consistently. A blog that is not updated consistently is wasted potential. Followers want to regularly consume information and if you don’t provide it, another blog will.

**Putting it all together**

When Tampa’s Lowry Park Zoo rescued a panther cub, it did a fantastic job letting everyone know about it.
The picture the team at Tampa’s Lowry Park Zoo featured on their Facebook page received 1,313 likes and 137 shares, but they didn’t stop there. They also tweeted a video and posted mini press releases on their website.

This may not have been a full-blown campaign, but it’s a perfect example of how to disseminate information to your audience on a smaller scale by using an integrated approach to social media.

With a little creativity and your newfound knowledge of social media, you can reinforce your brand identity, expand your customer base and create an integrated customer experience. Don’t underestimate the value of building relationships with social media, my dear marketer!
CONTENT MARKETING
You have a great product to sell. So you pour time, creative ability and life’s energy into making sure customers know just how great that product or service is.

But, just between friends now, that product isn’t right for everyone, is it?

If you answer that question honestly, it naturally brings up another question.

**How do you give your customers what they want even if you don’t have it?**

Content marketing is about serving customers, not pushing product. Only once you serve those customers (and build up trust) can it become an effective vehicle for selling. And oh brother, can it ever be effective.

Here are two ideas for serving customers when your product isn’t right for them.

**Idea #1. Help customers decide not to buy your product**

“Limited shapes and designs: Because fiberglass pools are built from a mold, the consumer is limited to the shapes and sizes offered by the various fiberglass pool manufacturers.”

The above line is from a blog for a company that sells fiberglass pools.

What? Why?

“Fiberglass might be too skinny, but if you’re looking for that size, it can be good for you,” said Marcus Sheridan, Co-owner, River Pools and Spas. “We tell potential customers, ‘You know what, fiberglass might not be for you. And that’s OK, we’re going to figure it out together.’”

The results? The “problems post” garnered 176 comments, 396 inbound links and 43,867 page views. For a small pool company. In Virginia.
Idea #2. Help them get what they want

Sometimes customers can’t find what they want from you because it simply doesn’t exist yet.

Since the best marketing messaging is based on how the customer expresses what they want, hopefully you’ve been:

- Listening in on social media
- Engaging with customers service
- Learning from Sales
- Doing research in relevant target audience-focused newspapers, magazines and websites
- Testing value proposition expressions using A/B testing

In doing customer research, you will naturally come across these gaps of unfulfilled customer desire.

When you do, it’s a chance to work with product development and business strategy to test your company into new products and services to better serve your customers’ unmet needs.

But sometimes, you simply can’t produce that new product or service.

What to do? Check out this brilliant idea from Eventful, the Best in Show in the E-commerce category in MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2014, sponsored by ExactTarget.

Here’s how the event Web service handles an unfulfilled customer desire.

I’ll be the example. I go to Eventful.com to search for a Pearl Jam concert in Jacksonville. But Pearl Jam doesn’t have any concerts planned for Jacksonville (really, Eddie, really?), so I’m greeted with this pop-up that states, “Would you like to be notified when Pearl Jam comes to Jacksonville?”
The other option I have if I close the pop-up is:

“Bring Pearl Jam to Jacksonville! Demand it!”

How cool is that? As a customer, I can demand what I want.

To add some social pressure, I can also see how many people are demanding Pearl Jam concerts and where they live. Am I going to let Belgrade get a Pearl Jam concert before Jacksonville?
Of course, dear marketer, you don’t care about Pearl Jam concerts in Jacksonville. You care about marketing objectives like list building and social media engagement. If I click “Demand it!” the next screen is:

It captures some segmentation info, and then:

Boom! Email capture, or social account capture through Facebook. So seamless, so flawless. Doesn’t feel like I’ve signed up for a promo. This is some excellent content marketing.

The marketing benefits become clear:

- **Viral marketing** – Users are encouraged to spread the word on social networks to encourage more votes.
- **Highly relevant triggered email marketing** – Subscribers received alert emails when these performers visited their areas.

For more information, view the webinar “Email Marketing: Key takeaways from an award-winning campaign that increased online sales 66%” (http://www.marketingsherpa.com/video/webinar/email-marketing-award-winning-campaign).
It’s the start of a new year. We’ve made resolutions to fix mistakes we make in our diet, in our exercise frequency and in our relationships – put content marketing on your list as well.

**MISTAKE #1. TOEING THE COMPANY LINE**

Sure, your company is engaged in content marketing because it has a message to get out in the world.

But nobody, except maybe your agency and brand police, cares about that message.

They care about themselves. Content marketing is inherently permission-based and inbound. Your content marketing needs to focus on what the customer really cares about.

The headline for this blog post was (lovingly) ripped off a legendary, high-performing ad for Sherwin Cody’s English course.

Sherwin explained, “There is but one sane, salesmanlike way to begin a selling letter, and that is with the customer and his needs, his troubles, his fight for life and success.”

That rings even more true in content marketing.

*Overcome Mistake #1. How to use social media to help discover why customers buy from you:*
  
  http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/social-media-research-topics/social-media-value-prop.html

**MISTAKE #2. TEASING**

Local TV news promo commercials are the worst. They always hint at something of value, but only deliver if you tune in to the newscast.

Content marketing should, in and of itself, deliver value. It should help fulfill a customer need. It should help solve a customer’s trouble.
MISTAKE #2. Focus on value, not length:
http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/inbound-marketing/value-not-length/

MISTAKE #3. LONELY CONTENT

No content is an island.

How does the content you’re creating tie into every other way your company is communicating?

Ideally, you would have an overall structure for your content with logical paths for the reader to follow. Those paths aren’t always linear since human decision-making in a data-rich world is not linear.

However, they offer logical progressions and opportunities for further engagement through channels that your audience already uses.

MISTAKE #3. A process for evaluating content channels:
http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/inbound-marketing/evaluating-content-channels-process/

MISTAKE #4. TELLING CUSTOMERS HOW BRILLIANT YOUR COMPANY IS

The people in your company are likely brilliant at something. Your software engineers are brilliant at de-bugging Java. Your project managers are brilliant at scheduling. Your audio engineers are brilliant at sound mixing.

They’re just not brilliant at creating content.

Because of this, your company’s brilliance is hidden. By using content marketing to pull back the curtain and shine a little light while not being overly concerned with corporate secrecy, you show the world how the brilliant people in your company can help members of your audience overcome their challenges.

MISTAKE #4. How to get your subject matter experts on your corporate blog:
http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/online-marketing/subject-matter-experts/

MISTAKE #5. “FREE” CONTENT

Perhaps you think you’re producing free content because you don’t charge dollars or euros or bitcoins for it.
But you’re not – customers are paying for your content with their time, their attention, and sometimes, their information.

Therefore, you need to sell your free content. Sometimes with other content (this ties into Mistake #3), and sometimes with actual paid advertisements.

Even press releases can help.

*Overcome Mistake #5. Selling Free Content: Why Seth Godin never gives anything away for free:*
“You don’t optimize a landing page or an email. You optimize the thought sequence of the customer.”

This is one of my favorite aphorisms from Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS, parent company of MarketingSherpa.

That approach works well for the short time someone is engaging your landing page or other marketing medium, but what about longer time horizons common to complex B2B sales?

Let me illustrate the answer with a case study where I first learned about what I will refer to as the “domino theory” of content marketing. You’ve seen scenarios where one domino can knock over the next domino, creating a chain reaction. That’s a perfect metaphor for content marketing in B2B, not just within the buying cycle, but across the lifecycle of a customer.

Too often, marketers think of content marketing as only text and graphics; white papers, e-books or infographics. But, content marketing is the entire experience of your customer across your customer-facing brand touchpoints.

In that context, content marketing can include social, video, mobile, customer service, sales, event marketing and even the products and services customers buy from you. You should orchestrate any and all of these elements into a domino framework aligned to the growing relationship and expectations of your customers.

My client was, at the time of this case study, the world’s largest mergers and acquisitions (M&A) company serving the mid-market. The target was the CEO of a $3 million to $100 million company. This scenario presented one key challenge: CEOs of mid-market companies are the original do-it-yourselfers. They were totally disinclined to seek the services of an M&A firm.

To address this issue, the company had a highly structured four-step process:

- **Domino #1:** The company invited CEOs to opt-in to a by-invitation-only quarterly newsletter that shared proprietary information about selling mid-market companies. The newsletters went to the private residence of the CEO to keep such a sensitive topic from worrying existing employees.
• **Domino #2:** Those CEOs would then be invited to an exclusive one or two-day workshop at a five-star destination resort. The workshop was led by a former CEO who had sold his own company. Networking with other CEOs was part of the appeal, as was the opportunity to write-off a mini vacation. These workshops, which had an unconditional money-back guarantee of satisfaction, helped CEOs understand the complexity and danger of attempting to sell their own company and the legitimate advantages of using a third party.

• **Domino #3:** At the end of the workshop, seminar leaders would introduce a service for packaging the company for sell.

• **Domino #4:** By looking closely at the financials and other considerations, the M&A firm could then prioritize the most viable companies and market a deep portfolio of potential acquisition candidates to their own buyer community.

I have seen this domino theory of content marketing repeated many times. The key is always really digging in and understanding the motivations of your customers and then designing content – in its broadest sense – that takes them on a long journey through the lifecycle of your relationship with them.

In this case, the content was not just the direct mail, email, landing page or newsletter, but the nuance of making this a highly confidential matter that warranted gaining the home address of the CEO, the upscale resort, the opportunity to network with other CEOs in a similar situation and even the evaluation service.

More importantly, the M&A company sequenced this content to move the customer systematically through a complex decision.

In this sense, content marketing isn’t just words and images; it’s a set of experiences that occur in many months or years. To paraphrase Flint, you are not optimizing content; you are optimizing the lifetime of your relationship with each customer.
I don’t normally read press releases. Frankly, most are just spam that I’m constantly trying to remove my email addresses from. However, one recently written by Amanda Presley of MSR Communications caught my eye.

“February 12th is Abraham Lincoln’s birthday, and what better way to pay homage to ‘Honest Abe’ than by looking at all the ways marketers can be more upfront and transparent with customers?”

She went on to discuss how her client, Kentico, viewed content marketing.

“Transparent content marketing: It’s not enough to just sell anymore. You need to inform. [For example, Kentico customer] Corner Bakery makes it easy to get nutrition figures when ordering online.”

So in the spirit of Honest Abe, let’s take a look at a few examples of transparent marketing that Amanda dug up from around the Web, along with key takeaways I provided for each to help you put these lessons into practice.

**Lesson #1. Customer complaints on social media networks = visible business intelligence**

**Key Takeaway:** I feel for Verizon Wireless and other tech companies. Our expectations for always on, always working, always super quick technology must be hard to fulfill. Admittedly, I’m just as impatient and immediately blame the product instead of my own user error.

These complaints, even when unrealistic about technological capabilities, are business intelligence gold. Don’t hide your customer complaints. Do as Verizon Wireless does on its Twitter account – address them very publicly and show how you are using their feedback to improve your product.
We all make mistakes. Most customers are very forgiving if they feel they are being heard and their problems are being considered.

Lesson #2. Help customers help themselves

Customers want to eat healthier.

And take care of the environment.
**Key Takeaway:** There are no perfect choices in a free market. Life is a series of tradeoffs.

Help your customers make those tradeoffs to the betterment of themselves by showing the positives and negatives of the different products you offer, as Corner Bakery does with its nutrition calculator, Nike does with its Materials Sustainability Index and Patagonia does with The Footprint Chronicles.

“By being transparent with you, we can invite you into the conversation,” Rick Ridgeway, Vice President for Environmental Initiatives, Patagonia, told Fast Company’s Simon Mainwaring in an interview.

“Hyper-transparency is a must. It’s not something we should be afraid of; it’s something we welcome,” said Jim Hanna, Environmental Impact Director, Starbucks.

Bonus points when you let customers know why they should buy from a competitor instead of you, when it serves them better.

**Lesson #3. Employees are customers, too**

Marc Benioff, CEO, Salesforce.com, invited all company employees to the company’s annual management off-site meeting – virtually – using Chatter.

“Suddenly, the meeting went from a select group participating to the entire company participating,” Marc said.

Zappos.com embraced employees publicly tweeting about layoffs, even showing them on its TweetWall.

“We’ve generally found it to be beneficial to be public online about everything,” said Tony Hsieh, CEO, Zappos.com. “And we will continue to do our best to be as transparent as possible.”

**Key Takeaway:** Wikipedia defines a customer as the recipient of a good, service, product or idea. If your marketing is to be successful, you have a lot of ideas you need to share with employees. So transparent marketing goes beyond traditional marketing channels to all business communications – both within and outside your company.

**Lesson #4. Expose your industry**

Beauty advertising, like marketing for many other industries, has long focused on making people insecure. Dove took the opposite approach, pulled back the veil of advertising hype, and showed women what they really look like.
The result: 61,912,975 views on YouTube and 20 million likes on Facebook.

Key Takeaway: Zig where others zag. Many marketers are looking to break through the clutter and go viral on social media. One way to do that is by being transparent while others in your industry are focused on smoke and mirrors.

Lesson #5. Even better, expose your company

Domino’s launched a national campaign to tell everybody how bad their pizza tastes (before improving it, of course).

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AH5R56jILag
“What consumers were looking for was honesty and transparency because nobody was giving it to them at that point,” said Russell Weiner, Chief Marketing Officer, Domino’s Pizza.

The result: After two-and-a-half years of sales declines, same-store sales for Q1 2010 (after Domino’s launched the campaign) increased 14.3% year-over-year.

Last year, the company took transparency in a different direction by showing its work with the Domino’s Pizza Tracker.

Chipotle doesn’t only talk about the high quality of the ingredients in its food, it also notes where the foods’ ingredients fall short.
Key Takeaway: Many companies take a “Wizard of Oz” approach to marketing. “Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.” But by pulling back that curtain in two ways ...

- Being real about your products’ weaknesses as well as its strengths
- Showing your work and processes

... you win a customer’s trust, understanding and loyalty.

With the rise of push-button publishing and social media, if you’re not transparent, you will eventually be exposed

“With the Internet and social media, it’s easier than ever for customers to talk to each other about the products they’re looking to buy or the brands they already depend on,” said Thom Robbins, Chief Evangelist, Kentico. “They can compare prices, fact check a company’s claims and very publicly call companies out for bad service. That’s why transparency in marketing is so important today. It’s OK to make the occasional mistakes – people generally forgive them as long as there’s open and honest dialogue. The one thing they won’t forgive is dishonesty or the perception that the company is hiding something.”

I’ll give the final word on the subject to Bruno Pieters, Designer, Honest By, who cautioned:

“If a brand is proud about something, they’ll make sure we know about it; if they’re doing something they believe we won’t appreciate, they’ll keep us guessing. But actually, it is their silence that is already the answer we need in order to make a decision. This is where the danger lies for all companies that aren’t transparent. No customer just assumes [brands are doing their] best these days.”
Marketers, particularly B2B marketers, for the last couple of years have been hammered with the message that content is the key that unlocks all other marketing channels. Sharing quality content makes email messages more likely to be opened and clicked through, makes social media more engaging, and when done correctly, promotes both thought leadership and brand awareness.

Of course, to share great content, you need to have great content.

Here are three of the areas where marketers are commonly instructed to mine for content:

- White papers, blog posts, videos and podcasts created by the marketing team
- Third-party experts providing written, audio or visual information
- Internal expert resources within the company, such as engineers or developers, providing that information

The first is obvious, and creating this sort of content is most likely part of the job description for a marketing position. The second involves some legwork in tracking down those external experts in a particular business space or marketplace, but achieving that third-party validation as part of the content marketing strategy is powerful.

That third area – utilizing the knowledge of internal expert resources – is a resource that is often touted, but actually taking advantage of that resource can be easier said than done.

We’ve reached out to a wide range of content marketing sources who do just that and are sharing their tips for taking advantage of internal experts for content marketing with you in a series of MarketingSherpa Blog posts.

Although the tips cover a number of different tactics, for this post, the focus is on one of the most popular methods of turning that internal knowledge into sharable content – the interview process.

**Maureen Jann**, Senior Manager, Marketing, Intrepid Learning, offered several tips (you’ll find more in later blog posts), including one covering the interview process:

“The **You’re an Expert Now** Method – We have a ghostwriter interview someone based on their expertise and we write the content and send back to the **author** for approval.”
Erin Cushing, Social Media/Content Manager, inSegment, a Boston-based digital marketing and advertising agency, had this advice:

“The vast majority of our clients are in the B2B space, and while they understand the importance of blogging and content marketing, they feel that they are “unqualified” to create content.

One of my main jobs is to identify potential brand ambassadors and formulate strategies to involve them in the content marketing process.

For example, one of my software clients was addressing a severe gap in original content. I worked with the lead support specialist for the company and in a journalist manner “interviewed” him, asking him about the most frequent questions he fielded from clients, what features of his software product were his favorites, and what the clients he spoke with were most interested in when it comes to the type of software they sell.

This gold mine of information made for a wealth of blog posts, white papers and data sheets. This is just one example of helping internal resources zero in on essential information and craft useful content.

Finally, Lauren Licata, Content Marketing Manager, Base, added steps to take in the interview process:

“At most companies, there are many subject-matter experts who are not necessarily writers.

At Base, I work with sales managers, designers and product engineers, and it’s my job to use their expertise to create high-quality content for our customers and readers.

For example, instead of saying, “I need an 800-word blog post about sales insights by Monday,” I might approach a sales manager with some key questions about sales insights and then turn it into a blog post.

So you can see it in action, that’s exactly what I did here, “6 Revealing Questions Every Sales Manager Needs To Ask.”
To be successful with this technique, I would recommend the following tips:

- **Be specific:** As a content creator, know what you want out of the piece of content so you can ask the right questions to your subject-matter expert. Don’t go into the interview blind.

- **Respect the subject matter expert’s time and style:** Know if your interviewee prefers to answer questions through email or if they would rather rattle out answers to you in a meeting or over the phone. Adapt to their style.

- **Agree on a timeline:** Let the [interviewee] know when your publish date is and when you need your answers by.

- **Get them excited:** Once the piece is published, let them know how it did. For example, did it generate a lot of page views? Did it get a lot of comments? Did your company earn any new accounts because of it? If you let them know that their time with you was well spent, they will be more likely to contribute in the future.

These tips should get you started in utilizing internal experts in your content marketing strategy, and keep watch on the MarketingSherpa Blog for additional tactics from more of your content marketing peers.
A recent MarketingSherpa Blog post, “Content Marketing: Interviewing internal resources,” covered one technique for including internal resources in your content marketing. This post features sources who each discuss an array of quick-hit tips on the topic.

Content marketing is major piece of any digital marketing strategy, particularly for B2B marketers. This content – in the form of blog posts, white papers, e-books, infographics, videos, podcasts and more – can be created by the marketing team and can also come from third-party experts.

Utilizing the knowledge of experts, such as developers or engineers, within the enterprise is another resource for content marketing. The challenge is taking advantage of those internal resources.

Simply interviewing those resources is one way to tap into their knowledge, and we covered that tactic in the earlier blog post.

Here are three of your peers in content marketing sharing their lists of tips and ideas to kickstart the process of making use of your internal resources.

**Tricia Heinrich**, Senior Director of Strategic Communications, ON24, explained a number of tactics used at the webcasting technology company:

1. **The primary challenge faced when working with internal personnel to develop marketing content is getting needed information from colleagues who are already too busy with their own day-to-day responsibilities. They see the value in marketing, but it is not their primary focus. Overcoming this challenge requires a combination of incentive, persuasion and simplification across all levels and roles.**

2. **A top-down approach is helpful – if the CEO or CMO mandates that everyone (or certain people) take a more active role in marketing their company and asks to see results, employees will be more accountable and likely to take part.**

3. **Critical to the success of ON24’s marketing and communications program is customer involvement, and key to recruiting quotable, positive customers is enlisting the assistance of our sales reps.**
4. To encourage their participation in the program, we incentivize sales reps by providing a special bonus for customer media interviews, press releases and case studies.

5. Another strategy for successfully involving sales reps in ON24’s marketing and communications program is ON24’s annual customer awards program. Leveraging their relationships, sales reps publicize the program to their customers, recognizing that the program creates good will between ON24 and the customer. The customers who win an award are more likely to participate in the generation of marketing content.

6. To encourage blog posts and bylines by internal contributors, including the executive team, we try to minimize any extra work involved by repurposing content across channels.

7. For example, a presenter in one of our webinars will write a blog post based on his webinar presentation, and the blog post will then be promoted across social channels.

8. Bylined articles are also promoted socially when published — and are often posted on the blog or rewritten for the blog.

9. We also encourage colleagues to write about what they are passionate about. For example, our CEO Sharat Sharan sees the importance of communicating effectively in the workplace and emerging marketing trends. As a result, he has written pieces for The Economist and The Huffington Post on these topics.

Jeff Klingberg, President and CEO, Mountain Stream Group, offered tips with a focus on gaining knowledge from engineers:

“This topic was discussed at great length in LinkedIn’s B2B Technology Marketing Community.

**Issue #1. Time**

Small companies (50 employees) are typically working with a skeleton workforce and everyone is wearing multiple hats. Even larger companies are facing
downsized workforces since the “Great Recession.” Finding time in a busy workday to create content while fulfilling the day-to-day responsibilities to satisfy client needs can be challenging, especially in the engineering department.

**Issue #2. Subject-matter experts**

In manufacturing companies, the retirement of engineers has driven them to take a different track in meeting engineering department needs. Many companies are hiring CAD operators (designers) on a contract basis instead of hiring engineers. Therefore, they don’t have a lot of subject-matter experts available to create content.

**Issue #3. Fear**

Engineers, by nature, are not good communicators, so fear sets in when asked to create documents beyond the typical CAD drawing or manuals.

**Issue #4. What type of content to create**

Smaller companies typically don’t have a deep understanding of their customer personas, pain points and what customers’ purchasing influencers and specifiers are looking for in content. Also, you have to define what content is.

For example, 52% of engineers expect a supplier to have downloadable CAD drawings in order to consider doing business with that company, however, only about one-fourth of manufacturers have CAD drawings on their websites. And engineers are looking for 3D models to help them reduce time to market.

I know one company who has taken a novel approach to the 3D model issue. If their current suppliers don’t have 3D models, they have offered to create the 3D models for the supplier in return for product.

Ultimately, content creation is a team effort. Its importance has to start at the chief executive. Marketing personnel have to make it easy for subject-matter experts by providing research on subject and content needs, put questions together to help the SMEs create content or pull together information that Marketing can then [use to] create content.
Maureen Jann, Senior Marketing Manager, Intrepid Learning, already provided a tip in the blog post on interviewing internal experts. That tip is reprised here, along with two other methods for getting knowledge out of subject-matter experts:

I work for a company that does corporate training strategy and implementation. Content marketing is the core of the marketing strategy and key in our ability to generate millions of dollars of revenue for our company. I have had the pleasure of building the marketing department and turning people who considered themselves just instructional designers, client managers and project managers into personal brands that work to support larger company goals.

We generate things like blog articles, case studies, feature articles, e-books and webinars to help educate our customers and elevate our brand. Not only does this process fuel the business via the website, but offering a platform to these people has also improved employee engagement.

Although these people don’t consider themselves writers and are often extremely busy with billable work, I’ve managed to create a system that helps make content easy and convenient for people. I have three methods:

• **The “sketch-it-out” method:** Where a subject-matter expert provides a rough overview of the content and then my department smooths the language, adds a metaphor and sends it back for final approval.

• **The “talk into the microphone” method:** Where I ask the subject-matter experts to call in or join me in a room and I record the conversation and have it transcribed by a writer. Then we edit and smooth and send it back to the “author” for their approval.

• **The “you’re an expert now” method:** We have a ghostwriter interview someone based on their expertise and we write the content and send back to the “author” for approval.

The key I’ve found to success in this arena is taking the “homework” out of the process. People easily get tripped up by the looming blank slate and it’s much easier to critique and review for accuracy than it is to create something from scratch!
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]

\[ \text{eme} = rv(of + i) - (f + a) \]
APPENDIX A: MARKETING RESEARCH CHARTS OF THE WEEK
**Does email produce an ROI?**

Q: Which statement best describes your organization’s perception of email marketing’s ROI (return on investment) at budget time?

Week of January 7, 2014
From the *MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*

- Email marketing is producing a ROI: 60%
- Email marketing will eventually produce a ROI: 32%
- Email marketing is unlikely to produce a ROI: 4%
- Other - Write a response below: 3%

Source: © 2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=957
**63% Say Registration During Purchase Effective for List Building**

Q: *Please indicate the level of EFFECTIVENESS for each of the email list growth tactics your organization employs.*

Week of January 14, 2014
From the *MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*

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<th>Somewhat Effective</th>
<th>Somewhat Ineffective</th>
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<td>Website registration page</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media sharing buttons in email</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offline events</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration during purchase</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online events</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook registration page</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email to a friend</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid search</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog registration page</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-registration programs</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=45
**Appendix A: 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report**

**How do you know the most effective layout and images for your marketing sends?**

*Q: Which of the following email campaign elements do you routinely test to optimize performance? Please select all that apply.*

Week of January 28, 2014  
From the *MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email Campaign Element</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call-to-action</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message (e.g., greeting, body, closing)</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days of the week sent</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout and images</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of day sent</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landing page</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target audience</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalization</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From line</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout and images specifically for mobile viewing</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=264
**How organizations are segmenting subscribers**

*Q: Can you segment subscriber data into separate lists based on the following attributes?*

Week of February 4, 2014

From the *MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Don’t know (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email engagement behavior</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase history</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location in sales pipeline</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User-declared personal preferences</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email viewing device habits</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=115
### What Types of Triggered Emails Do B2C, B2B and B2G Companies Send?

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

Week of February 18, 2014  
From the *MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Email</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional (e.g. bills, receipts, order confirmations)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activation (e.g. How to use a product or service)</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post purchase (e.g. customer survey, product review)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upsell/Cross promotional (e.g. product recommendations)</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date triggered (e.g. renewals, reorder, birthday)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triggered based on website behavior (e.g. visits, browser history)</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event countdown</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Win-back/reengagement</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping cart abandonment</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=53
**Can you expand upon a single successful split test?**

**Q:** How routinely does your organization implement the following testing practices?

Week of February 25, 2014

From the *MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Testing Practice</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Very infrequently</th>
<th>Somewhat infrequently</th>
<th>Somewhat routinely</th>
<th>Very routinely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain internal benchmarks</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review test and decide on a follow-up test(s)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document findings at regularly scheduled times (opens, clicks, conversions)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define the research question, main objective and key metric before conducting a test</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorm challenges and opportunities for email optimization</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize a specific testing methodology</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track deliverability, open, clicks and conversion rates to document the entire impact of email on the marketing and sales funnel</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment lists to target a specific audience</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=259
## Only 26% of Marketers Track Branded vs. Non-Branded Keywords

**Q:** Which of the following SEO marketing metrics does your organization ROUTINELY track? Please check all that apply.

Week of January 21, 2014  
From the *MarketingSherpa 2013 Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>% of Total Traffic from Organic Search</th>
<th>Keyword Rankings</th>
<th>Top Website Referrers</th>
<th>Unique Search Terms Driving Traffic</th>
<th>Keyword Clicks</th>
<th>Clickthrough Rate</th>
<th>Inbound Links</th>
<th>Keywords Triggering Search Results</th>
<th>Keyword Movement (e.g., Month-Over-Month)</th>
<th>Conversion Rate by Key Term</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>Branded vs. Non-Branded Organic Traffic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of total traffic from organic</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>search</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Marketing Analytics Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded November 2012, N= 69
75% of strategic marketers use A/B testing to learn about customer behavior

Q: Does your organization use website optimization and/or testing to draw conclusions about your customer base?

Week of March 4, 2014
From the MarketingSherpa 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trial phase</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition phase</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic phase</td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2012, N=1,887
**How do CMOs make decisions?**

Q: For CMOs: In your organization, how do you make the final decision regarding which version of a page/process should be uploaded to your live site?

Week of February 11, 2014

From the *MarketingSherpa 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report*

---

[Diagram showing the decision-making process:
- 28% make the decision
- 29% decides collaboratively
- 15% validated test result determines the decision
- 11% CMO or business unit head makes the decision
- 9% marketing department decides based on published best practices
- 3% my business unit head makes the decision
- 5% other, please specify.

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2012, N=1,409]
HOW COMPANIES LEARN ABOUT CUSTOMERS

Q: Which of the following does your company employ to learn about customers? Check all that apply.

Week of March 11, 2014
From the MarketingSherpa 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report

- Internal metric analysis: 69%
- Single-factorial (A/B) testing: 59%
- Focus groups or customer surveys: 43%
- Sequential testing: 30%
- Multifactorial testing: 27%

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2012, N=705
Question your assumptions for true customer-centric marketing

Q: Of the assessment methods employed by your company, please rate each in terms of DIFFICULTY.

Week of March 18, 2014
From the MarketingSherpa 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Method</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Easy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups or customer surveys</td>
<td>-41%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal metric analysis</td>
<td>-32%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential testing</td>
<td>-42%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multifactorial testing</td>
<td>-68%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/B testing</td>
<td>-31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2012, N=390
### Critical Website Conversion Path Elements

**Q:** Please rate the importance of the following page elements that are included in your website’s primary conversion path.

Week of March 25, 2014

From the MarketingSherpa 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Element</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landing page</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping cart</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead generation form</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment page</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home page</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demo download page</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPC</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you page</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Account setup page</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation page</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Mail</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category page</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey

Methodology: Fielded April 2012, N=749
c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a

e_{me} = rv(of + i) – (f + a)
Appendix B: Content Directory
CONTENT DIRECTORY

The directory includes all of the latest, most useful content published by MECLABS through its brands, MarketingSherpa, MarketingExperiments and B2B Lead Roundtable. 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

To read through the content your peers found most valuable over the last year, download a complimentary copy of our past MECLABS Research Quarterly Digests. In total, the four 2013 editions of the Digest give you access to:

- 100 Case Studies
- 120 How-to Articles
- 49 Marketing Research Charts
- 117 MarketingExperiments Articles
- 22 Web Clinic Articles

URL: http://www.meclabs.com/digests

For a reference of selected content produced by MECLABS from 2008 through 2012, download the MECLABS Research Catalog. The catalog represents more than 80,000 hours of our MECLABS analysts’ and scientists’ thoughtful labor. For the serious practitioner or the interested scholar, it is a window into the work of our institution, and may prove helpful as a starting point for new work.

URL: http://www.meclabs.com/catalog

MARKETING SHERPA CASE STUDIES

B2B Email Marketing: How a publishing company used marketing automation to increase CTR 1,112%

Date: Wednesday, January 8, 2014

Summary: Read this MarketingSherpa B2B Marketing case study to see how the parent company of Jane’s Defence generated a tenfold increase in engagement over the legacy contact process with a campaign that netted the team the Best in Show in the Lead Generation category in MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2014.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0509
B2C Email Marketing: Mobile accessories company boosts revenue-per-email 152% via customer appreciation promotion
Date: Thursday, January 9, 2014
Summary: In this case study, we feature the customer appreciation email campaign of MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2014 honorable mention, ZAGG. Discover how this top mobile accessories company utilized gracious messaging in a promotion that lifted revenue-per-email 152% and increased the average conversion rate by 252%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0510

Email Marketing: Dell lifts revenue 109% via GIF-centric campaign
Date: Tuesday, January 14, 2014
Summary: In this case study, we dig into a GIF-focused email campaign that established Dell as an esteemed MarketingSherpa Email Award winner. Read on for an inside look into an animated effort around Dell’s convertible laptop-tablet, increasing revenue 109% for this tech company.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0511

Social Media Marketing: Sporting goods company increases Facebook reach 366% with content contest
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2014
Summary: With a goal of increasing the U.S. audience on Facebook, global sporting goods company Amer Sports created a social media contest for customers to submit photos and ambitions for the year. Along with expanding its U.S. audience, the results of this contest were 2,000 entries consisting of photos, stories and interactions within the Amer Sports social media sphere of Facebook, Twitter and a newly launched Instagram profile.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0512

Email Marketing: 133% ROI for B2B’s first-ever lead nurturing program
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2014
Summary: This case study featuring an accounting and consulting firm covers building a lead nurturing strategy from the ground up and hit 133% return on investment after only seven months. You’ll see how the team set topics, mapped content to the sales funnel, and navigated bumps in the road.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0513

How an Exhibit Manufacturer’s Product Launch Exceeded Aggressive Sales Forecasts by 38%
Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2014
Summary: Skyline, a trade show exhibit manufacturer, managed to perfect the balance between secrecy and promotion in the launch of an industry-transforming product. This B2B Marketing case study outlines the three critical steps that helped Skyline successfully walk the fine line between product confidentiality and promotion.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0514
Customer-centric Marketing: Survey program turned 30% of unsatisfied software customers into brand advocates
Date: Wednesday, January 29, 2014
Summary: Discover the process and programs Sage developed that led to a 275% increase in its Net Promoter Score and turned 30% of unsatisfied customers into brand advocates.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0515

Marketing Automation: IT company boosts leads 59%, generates $1.5 million with system implementation
Date: Thursday, February 5, 2014
Summary: his MarketingSherpa case study reveals how CentricsIT implemented marketing automation software to refine its email marketing strategy. The new technology increased leads 59% and generated $1.5 million in revenue for the company.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0516

Email Marketing: Whirlpool lifts clickthrough rate 42%, creates testing culture
Date: Thursday, February 6, 2014
Summary: Dive into this MarketingSherpa case study to discover how Whirlpool’s MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2014, presented by ExactTarget, honorable mention campaign boosted clickthrough rate 42% and helped to create a test-and-learn culture – all beginning with one minor change to an email campaign.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0517

Social Media Marketing: Aria Resort & Casino’s “storytelling” increases share rate 310%
Date: Thursday, February 13, 2014
Summary: Social media marketing thrives on great content. But what separates flat and boring posts from the ones that spark sharing? The Aria Resort & Casino worked storytelling into its updates on social networks and saw sharing jump 310%. Find out how the effort grew from the shadow of another less-than-stellar campaign.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0518

Web Optimization: How The Boston Globe used customer insight to test value proposition
Date: Friday, February 14, 2014
Summary: In a testing and optimization program, test plans seek to give you order, helping to communicate what you’re trying to accomplish and when you’re going to take action. Read on to learn how The Boston Globe used customer lifecycle insights to develop its testing program.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0519
B2B Web Optimization: 140% surge in mobile transactions through responsive design effort
Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2014
Summary: Consumers are browsing across differing devices including smartphones, desktops and tablets, so your website should be optimized for the whole spread. Voices.com changed its tune to ensure its site could be surfed on a slew of screens. Discover the responsive Web design effort that propelled this B2B to a 140% surge in mobile transactions and a 180% increase in revenue.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0520

Social Media Marketing: How a pharmaceutical company gained 107,000 Facebook likes in one month
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2014
Summary: When animal pharmaceutical company Zoetis spun off as a separate company from Pfizer Animal Health, it needed to establish brand equity and recognition, and do so quickly. Turning to Facebook, Zoetis set up company-wide rules for social media through a customer-focused strategy and was able to cultivate 107,000 Facebook page fans in one month for its EQStable brand.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0521

B2B Email Marketing: Behavior-based closeout campaign produces 808% ROI
Date: Thursday, March 4, 2014
Summary: When one season segues into the next, change ensues. Temperatures transform and a new set of colors, trends and fashions come out to play. Because of this, companies that market seasonal products must adapt inventories, swapping out the old for the new. This creates a dire need for these companies to move excess inventory in an economical way. This B2B case study zeroes in on how MarketingSherpa Email Award winner Creative Co-Op rose above this challenge by implementing a personalized email campaign to produce an 808% ROI in merely one month.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0522

Email Marketing: Nonprofit cleans list and lifts open rate 225%
Date: Tuesday, March 11, 2014
Summary: Every marketer wants a big email list, but is bigger always better? According to the marketers at this nonprofit, big results can come in small packages. This think tank doubled its clickthrough rate and tripled its open rate by cutting its big list more than 75%. See how the team cut names, grew the list and redesigned the email template to drive performance.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0523
Appendix B: Content Directory

Web Optimization: How AARP Services boosted renewals by increasing usability
Date: Tuesday, March 11, 2014
Summary: In this excerpt of the Optimization Summit 2013 presentation, “How AARP Services increased referrals and membership renewals,” we learn how focus groups helped fuel AARP’s goal of website optimization – make it easy to read and share.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0524

Lead Gen: 17% lift in lead capture by including more details in email [Email Summit 2014 live test]
Date: Wednesday, March 12, 2014
Summary: Best practice typically states that you should sell your products or services on the landing page, rather than in an email. But does that stand true for generating leads by giving away free content? The MECLABS live test team set out to answer that question, and to show email marketers how to use A/B testing, at MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2014. Read on to see how MECLABS and live test sponsor BlueHornet planned, designed and executed the email and landing page live test.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0525

Social Media Integration: Holiday campaign increases Kahlúa’s Pinterest followers 1,432%
Date: Thursday, March 13, 2014
Summary: To meet its customers at every possible touch point, Kahlúa launched a Pinterest page gearing up for the holiday season. Using a sweepstakes to garner attention and excitement around the “Taste the Spirit of the Holidays” campaign, Kahlúa promoted a series of Kahlúa-inspired drinks and recipes. By combining B2C tactics with social media content such as blogs, videos and Pinterest, Kahlúa was able to increase its Pinterest followers by 1,432% in a month.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0526

Email Marketing: How a creative throwback helped Dell boost revenue 109%
Date: Tuesday, March 18, 2014
Summary: Meeting customer expectations can be tough, but consistently exceeding them introduces a whole new set of challenges. How do you build fresh excitement around a new product launch when customers have become comfortably numb?
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0527

Mobile Retargeting: Deep linking effort increases revenue 10.6%, app open rate 8.8%
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2014
Summary: Discover how ticket search engine SeatGeek successfully re-engaged its app users by deep linking mobile ads, resulting in an 8.8% increase in app open rate and a 10.6% lift in revenue per targeted user.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0528
Persona Marketing: NetProspex increases website visit duration 900%, lifts marketing-generated revenue 171%
Date: Thursday, March 26, 2014
Summary: Learn how NetProspex molded its website on its buyer personas to create a customized experience for visitors, producing a 900% increase in visit duration and a 171% increase in marketing-generated revenue.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0529

Social Media: 3 brands that totally get using Vine
Date: Friday, January 3, 2014
Summary: If 2013 was the emergence of Vine, then 2014 will likely be the year of more Vine videos as the number of brands adopting the app into their marketing mix continues to grow. In this MarketingSherpa Blog post, see how three trailblazing brands are using Vine to reach customers to help get your creative mojo going for 2014.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0530

Blue Sky Content Marketing: Think outside the blog, social media and online video boxes
Date: Tuesday, January 7, 2014
Summary: Some of us are so focused on digital channels for content marketing that we overlook an entire universe outside this digital box. Discover three ways you can think outside the box in your approach to content marketing in this MarketingSherpa Blog post.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0531

Email Deliverability: Can you spot a scrub?
Date: Friday, January 10, 2014
Summary: Watch this video excerpt as Matt Byrd, Email Marketing Manager, WeddingWire, explained how a “scrub,” or disengaged email subscriber, not only affects the quality of your list, but also your email deliverability.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0532

Content Marketing: How to serve customers when they shouldn’t buy from you
Date: Tuesday, January 14, 2014
Summary: Content marketing is about serving customers, not pushing product. Only once you serve those customers (and build up trust) can it become an effective vehicle for selling. Read this MarketingSherpa Blog post for two ideas for serving customers when your product isn’t right for them.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0533
Email Marketing: The benefits email campaigns can have for your business
Date: Friday, January 17, 2014
Summary: One of the biggest challenges marketers face is teaching clients and business leaders about the impact email campaigns can have on business. Read this MarketingSherpa Blog post to learn how some of the perks of email can aid your marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0534

Do You Make These 5 Mistakes in Content Marketing?
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2014
Summary: It’s the start of a new year. We’ve made (and perhaps already broken) resolutions to fix mistakes we make in our diet, our exercise frequency and in our relationships. Here are five reasons to put content marketing on your list of resolutions as well.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0535

Copywriting: 7 more copy editing tactics to improve your content
Date: Friday, January 24, 2014
Summary: There are lots of writing tips out there to help authors improve their content. But for busy marketers, there simply aren’t enough hours in the day to sift through hundreds of tactics. In this MarketingSherpa Blog post, learn seven copy editing tips to improve your content right now.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0536

Mobile Commerce: 4 creative approaches for using Flipboard
Date: Tuesday, January 28, 2014
Summary: Creating an awesome experience that engages users across desktop, tablet and mobile devices is tough. Mobile apps are a powerful tool to help bridge the gap in connecting with mobile users, but the trick is in taking a creative approach to using them.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0537

Web Optimization: 3 considerations for testing personalized webpage content
Date: Friday, January 31, 2014
Summary: Content personalization is perhaps one of the fastest-growing optimization tools, enabling formerly static websites to segment visitors and deliver a more personalized message to optimize conversion. Read on for three considerations for testing personalized webpage content.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0538

Multichannel Campaigns: How do you avoid zombie marketing?
Date: Tuesday, February 4, 2014
Summary: Zombie marketing. It’s where lackluster marketing runs rampant as customers are swarmed by hordes of mediocre messages. Read on for two insights you can use to avoid sending your customer lifeless marketing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0539
Email Marketing Analytics: Fight for your right to not be bored
Date: Friday, February 7, 2014
Summary: At MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013, Matt Bailey, President and Founder, SiteLogic, shared why analytics by themselves don’t mean anything unless you can apply a meaning to the numbers. Watch this video excerpt from Matt’s session to learn three questions marketers should ask about their analytics.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0540

E-commerce: 2 tactics to increase relevance in your email sends
Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2014
Summary: Relevance is the biggest reason why a customer opens your emails amid the flurry of messages they don’t open. But true relevance is elusive, tough to achieve and even harder to maintain.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0541

Email Summit 2014: Finding your email voice
Date: Tuesday, February 18, 2014
Summary: Sometimes marketers might feel as though they are stuck in a permanent promotional cycle. Promo email after promo email goes out, and there are high expectations for each one. It may make sense to the bottom line, but what is the cost to the relationship with your customers? Read on for two important lessons shared by brand-side marketers at MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2014.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0542

Content Marketing: 9 examples of transparent marketing
Date: Friday, February 21, 2014
Summary: The power of content marketing lies in its ability to rip back the corporate curtains of traditional hype-based advertising and marketing, and teach customers how to make better decisions about your products and services. Unsure of how to do that? Here are nine examples to get you started.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0543

Content Marketing: Interviewing internal resources
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2014
Summary: Marketers, particularly B2B marketers, for the last couple of years have been hammered with the message that content is the key that unlocks all other marketing channels. Of course, to share great content, you need to have great content.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0544

Project Management: Communication is the lost currency of business
Date: Friday, February 28, 2014
Summary: Communication has become the lost currency of business. Consequently, when effective communication is not present in business, everything else seems a little off.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0545
Email Marketing: Genuine mistake or evil genius email tactic?
Date: Tuesday, March 4, 2014
Summary: Building your list requires proactive engagement and innovative tactics. There is, however, a line between genuine mistakes and spammy tactics. Read on to learn about a recent email experience that you can use to aid your email marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0546

E-commerce: Does your website appeal to hunter-gatherer instincts?
Date: Friday, March 7, 2014
Summary: For thousands of years, our ancestors survived as hunter-gatherers. When you stop and consider some of our shopping behaviors, the idea of a hunter-gatherer as customer becomes really interesting.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0547

Marketing Management: Are agency creative reviews killing customer response?
Date: Friday, March 14, 2014
Summary: How you see your marketing and advertising during creative reviews is often a far cry from the realities of customer perception. Read on to learn more about how your media review can impact overall customer response.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0548

Social Media 101: Branding for the PR-impaired marketer
Date: Friday, March 21, 2014
Summary: Using basic public relations tactics can strengthen your marketing campaigns by reinforcing brand identity, expanding your customer base and creating an integrated customer experience. Read this MarketingSherpa Blog post to discover how using social media effectively can aid your marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0549

Content Marketing: Tips from your peers on making use of internal resources
Date: Tuesday, March 25, 2014
Summary: Content marketing is major piece of any digital marketing strategy, particularly for B2B marketers. White papers, e-books, infographics, videos and podcasts can be created by the marketing team or come from experts inside your organization.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0550

Why You Should Thank Your Competitors
Date: Friday, March 28, 2014
Summary: In an ideal world, you would have no competitors. No big fish, no small fish, just you. It’s easy to feel this way when engaged in price wars, RFPs and comparative advertising. But the competition you fight against the hardest has a surprising upside for your company.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0551
Marketing Sherpa Research Charts of the Week

Marketing Research Chart: Does email produce an ROI?
Date: Tuesday, January 7, 2014
Summary: While everyone who writes about the marketing industry gets giddy about what could be, in this chart, we wanted to focus on what already is. Let’s take a look at the tried-and-true tactic of email marketing. Is it producing an ROI?
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0552

Marketing Research Chart: 63% say registration during purchase effective for list building
Date: Tuesday, January 14, 2014
Summary: Only 17% of email marketers report a very positive list growth trend – rapidly growing email lists. If you’re not one of them, don’t feel bad. You’re in good (and, unfortunately, large) company. But if you want to be among the rapidly growing in 2014, read on to learn ideas about one of the most effective list growth tactics.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0553

Marketing Research Chart: Only 26% of marketers track branded vs. non-branded keywords
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2014
Summary: In this chart from the MarketingSherpa Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report survey, we’ll examine the SEO key performance indicators that e-commerce marketers track. Read on to see if there are any you have overlooked.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0554

Marketing Research Chart: How do you know the most effective layout and images for your marketing sends?
Date: Tuesday, January 28, 2014
Summary: How many marketers routinely test email layout and images to learn what really works for their audience? Read on to see the data for yourself and learn which email campaign elements are most (and least) frequently tested by your peers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0555

Marketing Research Chart: How organizations are segmenting subscribers
Date: Tuesday, February 4, 2014
Summary: Take a look around you in the office. Is everybody exactly the same? Unless you are a penguin, the answer is likely no. As an email marketer, the question then becomes how do I treat different groups of people differently? Read this chart to see which attributes your peers use to segment subscribers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0556
Marketing Research Chart: How do CMOs make decisions?
**Date:** Tuesday, February 11, 2014  
**Summary:** In this never-before-published chart, we’ll take a MarketingSherpa look at how CMOs are deciding what changes to make to their websites.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0557](http://mecla.bs/digest0557)

**Date:** Tuesday, February 18, 2014  
**Summary:** In this Chart of the Week, we take a look at three MarketingSherpa charts that identify the types of triggered emails sent by your peers.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0558](http://mecla.bs/digest0558)

Marketing Research Chart: Can you expand upon a single successful split test?
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2014  
**Summary:** An A/B test can be exciting. You might discover a new headline that generates 10% more leads or even 100% more sales. But what then? How do you achieve sustainable, successful results? This chart takes a MarketingSherpa look at your peers’ testing practices.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0559](http://mecla.bs/digest0559)

Marketing Research Chart: 75% of strategic marketers use A/B testing to learn about customer behavior
**Date:** Tuesday, March 4, 2014  
**Summary:** In this chart, we’ll take a look at the data to see which types of marketers are using A/B testing and website optimization tactics to answer questions like these and learn more about customer behavior.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0560](http://mecla.bs/digest0560)

Marketing Research Chart: How companies learn about customers
**Date:** Tuesday, March 11, 2014  
**Summary:** To earn and keep a customer, you must look beyond your own products and services to the fundamental question underlying all marketing – what do customers want? In this chart, we’ll take a MarketingSherpa look at how companies try to answer that question.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0561](http://mecla.bs/digest0561)

Marketing Research Chart: Question your assumptions for true customer-centric marketing
**Date:** Tuesday, March 18, 2014  
**Summary:** “We discovered that ...” are three of the most powerful words in customer-centric marketing, especially when you learn something counterintuitive. In this MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week, we discovered the difficulty of customer intelligence assessment methods.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0562](http://mecla.bs/digest0562)
Marketing Research Chart: Critical website conversion path elements

Date: Tuesday, March 25, 2014
Summary: Sometimes less is more. But which elements of your sales or lead generation path are critical for conversion? Which ones are just getting in the way? In this MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week, we’ll take a look at data from the Website Optimization Benchmark Report survey to help optimize your website’s funnel.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0563

MARKETING SHERPA WEBINARS

Marketing Mashup: Top takeaways of 2013

Date: Thursday, January 2, 2014
Summary: In 2013, MarketingSherpa interviewed more than 200 marketers to find what is, and is not, working in marketing and has disseminated that valuable information through case studies, how-to articles, Summit presentations and webinars. Watch Pamela Markey, Senior Director of Marketing, and Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, both of MECLABS, discuss the most insightful lessons and discoveries from brand-side marketers from 2013.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0564

Email Marketing: Key takeaways from an award-winning campaign that increased online sales 66%

Date: Tuesday, January 28, 2014
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar you’ll learn how an e-commerce company implemented a creative and audience-centric approach to increase online ticket sales by 66%. Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, sat down with Paul Ramirez, Vice President of Operations, and Ryan Blomberg, Director of Engineering, both of Eventful, and discussed what made a data-driven campaign into something great.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0565

How to Leverage the Zombie Apocalypse for an Award-winning Multichannel Campaign

Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2014
Summary: In this recent MarketingSherpa webinar, Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, sat down with Christine Nurnberger, Vice President of Marketing, SunGard Availability Services, and discussed the story behind SunGard’s award-winning campaign that brought zombies to the B2B sphere. Watch this video replay of the entire webinar to learn how Nurnberger and her team incorporated email marketing, direct mail and social media all coinciding with the release of the zombie-themed movie “World War Z” to achieve a 1.2% higher click-to-open rate among the director level, a 3% increase in CTO among president and owner titles and a 2% reactivation of inactive contacts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0566
Marketing Automation: Key challenges a global information company overcame to transform from batch and blast to persona-driven email marketing
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2014
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar replay, watch Byron O’Dell, Senior Director of Demand Management, IHS, explain how his organization transformed from batch and blast email sends to persona-driven email campaigns. Recorded at MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2014, O’Dell and Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, discussed how IHS overcame three major challenges to provide relevant content to email subscribers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0567

Email Summit 2014: Top takeaways from award-winning campaigns
Date: Tuesday, March 18, 2014
Summary: Drawing from more than 10 hours and 20 sessions at MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2014, Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, and Courtney Eckerle, Manager of Editorial Content, both of MECLABS, distilled the top takeaways from the event in this MarketingSherpa webinar.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0568

Social Media Marketing: How a sporting goods company increased Facebook reach 366%
Date: Thursday, March 27, 2014
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar replay, learn how Evin Catlett, Digital Marketing Manager, Amer Sports, increased her company’s Facebook reach 366% through an Instagram, Facebook and Twitter campaign featuring Suunto watch products.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0569

MarketingExperiments

Value Proposition: 3 steps for laying your value prop testing groundwork
Date: Thursday, January 2, 2014
Summary: One of the best ways to figure out which aspects of your products or services are perceived as most valuable is to test them on the open market. Learn the first three steps to take toward testing your value proposition to help uncover exactly what it is about your current offerings that your customers really want.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0570

Email Marketing: What elements of your offer get people to click? [Subject line contest winner announced]
Date: Monday, January 6, 2014
Summary: In December 2013, MECLABS launched a subject line writing contest on the MarketingExperiments Blog using a product from its sister company, MarketingSherpa: Email Summit 2014 in Las Vegas. The point of this contest was to gather possible subject lines to test in a value testing experiment. Read this blog post to discover the winning subject line and lessons you can apply to your own marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0571
Marketing Experiment: Learn from our split testing mistakes
Date: Thursday, January 9, 2014
Summary: MECLABS held a subject line experiment contest with the fine folks at Copyblogger. Although it was nice to have a little fun, we wanted to offer a few caveats gleaned from the experience. Learn more about some of the (intentional) mistakes we made that you can hopefully avoid in your testing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0572

Landing Page Optimization: Does your product page have buyability?
Date: Monday, January 13, 2014
Summary: One of the most critical elements to test on your product page is “buyability.” What is buyability? In essence, buyability is a perceived ease of use that exists within the customer’s thought sequence. Buyability is how a customer cognitively determines that they are finding the products and services they want on your landing pages quickly and easily.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0573

Testing and Analytics: What’s stopping you from testing?
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2014
Summary: Online testing platforms and analytics tools can be fairly expensive, depending on your goals and objectives. But don’t let that stop you from getting started. Read on for three free resources you can use to aid your testing and analytics efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0574

A/B Testing: 3 steps to help you test smarter, not harder
Date: Monday, January 20, 2014
Summary: 2014 is here and with it opens a new year full of many opportunities to test. Read on for three simple steps for A/B testing that you can use to help put you on the path to testing smarter, not harder, in the year ahead.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0575

Less is More: Maximize conversion by removing website distractions
Date: Thursday, January 23, 2014
Summary: The old adage “less is more” holds true when it comes to website optimization. To optimize your website, you need to remember to stick to the goal of your site and not distract your visitors with links and other elements that can stop users from reaching that goal. Read on to learn more about how removing distractions can aid your efforts to increase conversion.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0576

Copywriting: Call-to-action testing and optimization
Date: Monday, January 27, 2014
Summary: For Michael Aagaard, Copywriter, ContentVerve.com, optimizing call-to-action copy is one of the most fascinating aspects of improving conversion rates. Watch this video excerpt from his Email Summit 2013 presentation, “How to Optimize and Test Calls-to-action for Maximum Conversions,” in which he explained the importance of CTA copy.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0577
Online Testing: Defining type I and type II testing errors
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2014
Summary: When it comes to website testing, maybe you’ve heard of the terms type I and type II errors, but never really understood what they mean. In the context of testing, what we are really referring to is the ever-present risk that exists in all data analysis. Read on to learn about the difference between type I and II errors to understand your test results better.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0578

A/B Testing: Is responsive design worth the investment?
Date: Monday, February 3, 2014
Summary: According to the experts, users should be able to view your website on their various devices with minimal effort. But is responsive design worth the investment? Read on to learn more about the results of a recent responsive design test that you can use to aid your online and mobile marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0579

LPO: How many columns should you use on a landing page?
Date: Thursday, February 6, 2014
Summary: What is the highest performing number of columns for your webpages? The question is deceptively simple and difficult to determine unless you test your way into the optimal layout for your needs.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0580

Customer Theory: What do you blame when prospects do not buy?
Date: Monday, February 10, 2014
Summary: The effort and money invested in your marketing is predicated on understanding your customers all of the time. If you don’t deliver a message that alleviates their pain or helps them achieve a goal, then what good is it?
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0581

Conversion Rate Optimization: Why is split testing so powerful?
Date: Thursday, February 13, 2014
Summary: Although you can’t split test your way through the trials faced in everyday life, you can use testing and Web optimization to make better marketing decisions. Read on to learn more about why A/B split testing is a helpful tool you can use to aid your marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0582

Online Testing: 3 test options, 3 possible discoveries, 1 live test from Email Summit 2014
Date: Monday, February 18, 2014
Summary: At MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2014 in Las Vegas, the MECLABS live test team shook things up along with the test’s sponsor, BlueHornet. Typically, the team picks one research question and then creates multiple treatments and/or variables for the audience to pick from to run against the control. This year, we put the research question at the hands of the audience. See which customer gap they wanted to fill.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0583
Email Marketing: 3 letters to drive subject line success  
**Date:** Thursday, February 20, 2014  
**Summary:** Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS, kicked off Day 2 of Email Summit with his session, “Interactive Quick-Win Clinic: 3 simple email tactics to achieve personalization without the need for complex technology.” He set out to shed light on how to achieve the highest possible yield with the least amount of energy. Read on for the three letters to keep in mind when crafting successful subject lines.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0584](http://mecla.bs/digest0584)

Prominence: Design and layout lessons from Windows 8  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2014  
**Summary:** The size and location of an object on your landing page can impact how customers interact with your goals. So read on to learn the importance of prominence from the perspective of a consumer with the help of Windows 8.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0585](http://mecla.bs/digest0585)

Copywriting: Do you take your prospects on a journey?  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2014  
**Summary:** One of your goals as a marketer is to take customers on a buyer’s journey. Read on to learn how story connects to the conversion process to aid your marketing efforts.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0586](http://mecla.bs/digest0586)

Value Proposition: 4 considerations to identify the ideal channel for testing  
**Date:** Monday, March 3, 2014  
**Summary:** Developing a strategy for a solid value proposition test can be tough in the age of complex multichannel marketing campaigns, so read on to learn more about four things you should consider to help you find the ideal marketing channel to aid your value proposition optimization efforts.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0587](http://mecla.bs/digest0587)

Radical Redesigns: Lifts vs. building customer theory  
**Date:** Thursday, March 6, 2014  
**Summary:** Radical redesigns can make it difficult to isolate specific elements contributing to the results of a test. Inherently, you just don’t know what you did to the radically redesigned page that made it any better and that insight may be lost as to what to test next.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0588](http://mecla.bs/digest0588)

Email Marketing: How A/B testing raised $500 million for Obama for America  
**Date:** Monday, March 10, 2014  
**Summary:** At Optimization Summit 2013, attendees had a chance to gain a behind-the-scenes look at the one of the biggest marketing efforts ever. The result of this effort alone generated $500 million in donations, just from the email campaign. In this MarketingExperiments Blog post, watch a video excerpt from the Obama for America team’s presentation on email A/B testing.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0589](http://mecla.bs/digest0589)
Landing Page Optimization: Radio buttons vs. dropdowns
Date: Thursday, March 13, 2014
Summary: Determining which form layout options are ideal for customer data collection when building form fields can be a little tricky given their low priority in a marketer’s daily deadlines. Read on to learn about a recent Web clinic that put button options to the test.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0590

Analytics: How metrics can help your inner marketing detective
Date: Monday, March 17, 2014
Summary: Tracking different metrics effectively can help you yield deeper customer insights. These insights, however, are only the beginning of your investigation to better understand user interactions. Read on to learn about how metrics, testing and optimization can help your inner marketing detective.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0591

Web Optimization: Simple CTA change increases conversion 77%
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2014
Summary: Small changes can make a big difference in the user experience. Read on to learn more about a simple call-to-action change that increased conversion 77%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0592

Email Marketing: Change in CTA copy increases clickthrough 13%
Date: Monday, March 24, 2014
Summary: When you strip marketing down to its core, your call-to-action is arguably the most important element in your email marketing. Learn more about a recent experiment on call-to-action testing that can help you understand how the copy impacts customer response.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0593

Digital Marketing: Stop ignoring data and start learning
Date: Thursday, March 26, 2014
Summary: Marketers recognize the importance of data, but continue to use it reluctantly to make informed decisions. Read on to learn more about why you should build a marketing team of lifelong learners and stop ignoring the valuable insights from your data.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0594

Call-to-Action Button Copy: How to reduce clickthrough rate by 26%
Date: Monday, March 31, 2014
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments Blog post, discover the call-to-action button copy that reduced clickthrough rate 26% and how to improve your own CTA button copy to avoid this overlooked area of optimization.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0595
MarketingExperiments Web Clinics

Responsive Design Tested - What a recent experiment reveals about the potential ROI of mobile design

Date: Thursday, January 16, 2014
Summary: Most usability and design experts would agree that responsive design is an ideal solution for rendering webpages across multiple devices as users transition between desktops, tablets and mobile devices. But has responsive design truly been put to the test as a viable tablet and mobile-friendly investment? Watch this Web clinic replay to learn about a recent experiment with a large news media organization and how responsive design impacts reducing user friction.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0596

How Many Columns Should I Use? - How using the best page layout led to a 681% relative increase

Date: Thursday, January 30, 2014
Summary: When given a choice for a column layout on your pages, what’s really the best for marketing your products or services effectively? Is there an underlying theory for selecting a layout that will perform better than others? Watch this Web clinic replay to learn more about a recent experiment with a large technology company involving column layouts that you can use to aid your landing page optimization efforts.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0597

Email Messaging Tested - A recent experiment reveals the two words that increased email clickthrough by 13%

Date: Thursday, February 20, 2014
Summary: At the heart of every email marketing message is an implied psychological cost in the mind of the recipient. If that cost is too great, customers will delete your email and likely move on to the next message in the slush pile. So how do you write effective email copy that delivers just the right amount of value to delight your customers into action? Watch this Web clinic replay for the results from a recent experiment with an audio technology company that you can use to aid your copywriting efforts.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0598

Radio Buttons vs. Dropdowns - How knowing the right way to collect customer information led to a 15% lift in orders

Date: Thursday, March 6, 2014
Summary: Most of us decide quickly between a radio or dropdown format as we’re creating forms, often leaving them as an afterthought of design. But what if choosing the right format for a single question in those forms meant seeing a conversion difference of 15%? Watch this Web clinic replay for the results from a recent experiment that put these form options to the test.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0599
The Most Effective Calls-to-Action - 5 principles discovered for increasing customer response
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2014
Summary: What if there were some slight modifications you could make to your CTA copy, placement, size and color to experience a significant increase in response? Watch this Web clinic replay for the results from a recent experiment where calls-to-action were put to the test.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0600

B2B Lead Roundtable

The Domino Theory of B2B Content Marketing
Date: Monday, January 6, 2014
Summary: Too often, marketers think of content marketing as only text and graphics. But, content marketing is the entire customer experience across your customer-facing brand touch points. In this blog post, learn about how the “domino theory” of content marketing is a perfect metaphor for engaging prospects, not just within the buying cycle, but across the lifecycle of a customer.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0601

B2B Social Media: How do you measure the ROI of a LinkedIn InMail campaign?
Date: Monday, January 13, 2014
Summary: Measuring InMail ROI is becoming a fairly common question, and it’s understandable given the increasing adoption of targeted campaigns to engage prospects on LinkedIn. So how do you approach measuring ROI? One approach in tackling the challenge is to look at your big picture goals and drill down from there. Read on to learn more about how Meagen Eisenberg, Vice President of Demand Generation, Docusign, approaches measuring ROI on LinkedIn InMail campaigns.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0602

Email Marketing: Writing powerful email copy boosts CTR 400%
Date: Monday, January 20, 2014
Summary: Creating email copy that engages your customers is vital to success in any email campaign. So read on to learn how Donna Krizik, Director, Client Communications, Crestwood Associates, used the idea of “serving the customer rather than pushing the sale” to increase clickthrough rate 400%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0603

Value Proposition: What motivates prospects to buy from you?
Date: Monday, January 27, 2014
Summary: It isn’t always easy to tap into a prospect’s motivation as it often ends at purchasing our products or services. Learn how my informal social experiment with a “money wall” showed me how changes in message can impact changes in motivation.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0604
Lead Generation: Balancing lead quality and lead quantity
Date: Monday, February 3, 2014
Summary: Lead generation is somewhat like a tightrope act. Generate too many leads, and the rope between Sales and Marketing breaks. If you don’t generate enough that turn into sales, your ROI plummets.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0605

Email Marketing: 2 campaigns that used innovative creative to generate leads
Date: Monday, February 10, 2014
Summary: It’s tough in B2B marketing to create excitement around products or services that don’t seem to have an ounce of sexy on their surface. Read on to learn more about two campaigns that used innovative approaches to creative to generate leads that you can use to aid your B2B marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0606

Email Copywriting: 3 tactics for delivering value over perceived cost
Date: Monday, February 17, 2014
Summary: Optimizing your email copy is a big key to tipping the value exchange fulcrum with your prospects. In sum, good copywriting is about recognizing perceived costs in the mind of a prospect and delivering enough value to overcome those costs.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0607

Email Marketing: Do you test your legacy marketing?
Date: Monday, February 24, 2014
Summary: Change can be tough if your organization is entrenched in a legacy approach to marketing. Read on to learn more about how testing and optimization can help you challenge your legacy assumptions by putting them on trial to determine if those practices are still truly the “best” for your organization.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0608

Why Empathetic Marketing Matters and 7 Steps to Achieve It
Date: Monday, March 3, 2014
Summary: Today’s sales and marketing environment is a paradox: There have never been more opportunities to reach customers; yet reaching them has never been more challenging. Read on to learn more about why empathetic marketing matters and seven steps you can use to achieve it.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0609

Email Marketing: 3 simple steps for building customer personas
Date: Monday, March 10, 2014
Summary: Getting the right content to the right people continues to be a challenge in B2B email marketing. One key to overcoming the challenge is utilizing buyer personas to help you deliver relevance to your customers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0610
Marketing 101: How to get started in lead generation
Date: Monday, March 17, 2014
Summary: The challenge for anyone in B2B content marketing is to not only to create content that would impress the most experienced reader, but also to have some content that appeals to someone new to the industry.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0611

Marketing Strategy: 3 steps to help optimize website user experience
Date: Monday, March 24, 2014
Summary: Prospect feedback on your website is some of the most valuable insight you’ll ever receive because it gives you a direct window into how you serve your customers. Read this B2B Lead Roundtable Blog post for three steps to optimize your Web experience.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0612

Lead Generation: Does your teleprospecting deliver value to prospects?
Date: Monday, March 31, 2014
Summary: Lead generation teleprospecting is the art of acquiring sales-ready leads for a sales staff. But when it comes to communicating an organization’s value and credibility, asking the right questions and relieving any anxiety those potential leads may have are key to a campaign’s success.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0613

Video Presentations

Proactive List Hygiene: How a software company overcame a 23% soft bounce rate
Date: Tuesday, January 7, 2014
Summary: In this video replay of a full session at Email Summit 2013, watch as Byrd engaged the crowd while describing how he discussed inactive user issues on his lists with his co-workers and his sponsors.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0614

Email Copywriting: How one company generated a 400% increase in CTR
Date: Wednesday, January 15, 2014
Summary: In this Email Summit 2013 video replay, see Donna Krizik, Director, Client Communications, Crestwood Associates, and Justin Bridegan, Senior Marketing Manager, MECLABS, discuss the importance of marketing as a conversation and meeting the needs of the customer, not pushing the sale.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0615

A/B Testing: Optimizing calls-to-action for maximum conversions
Date: Thursday, January 23, 2014
Summary: Michael Aagaard, Copywriter, ContentVerve.com, presented, “How to Optimize and Test: Calls-to action for maximum conversions,” at MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013. In his session, Aagaard discussed the importance of calls-to-action in a conversion funnel, examples of positive and negative results from his optimization efforts, and ideas for any marketer to test and improve their CTAs.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0616
Email Marketing: Using analytics and data to foster conversations with customers  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 4, 2014  
**Summary:** In this full video replay from Email Summit 2013, watch Matt Bailey, President and Founder, SiteLogic, explain how using analytics to understand your customer through email is a powerful way to direct your campaigns. It determines where your visitors are coming from and how they reacted once they read your message or arrived at your landing page.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0617](http://mecla.bs/digest0617)

Conversion Optimization: How A/B testing email content generated $500 million  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2014  
**Summary:** At Optimization Summit 2013, two marketers took the stage to tell the story of how digital marketing efforts led to $500 million in donations. Toby Fallsgraff, Email Director, and Amelia Showalter, Director of Digital Analytics, came to the audience at Summit to give a behind-the-scenes look at how Obama for America implemented A/B testing in President Barack Obama’s re-election campaign, and reveal the dramatic results and customer insights gained from their efforts. While this case study is based in politics, the lessons learned are transferable to any email marketing and testing effort.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0618](http://mecla.bs/digest0618)

Digital Optimization: How AARP Services increased referrals and membership renewals  
**Date:** Thursday, March 6, 2014  
**Summary:** In this transferable case study from Optimization Summit 2013, discover how the AARP team conducted six tests to optimize its website resulting in increased website referrals and decreased page bounce rates.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0619](http://mecla.bs/digest0619)

How a Long-term Optimization Strategy Led to a 6,031% Increase in Leads  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 19, 2014  
**Summary:** “The ultimate question I wanted to answer was, “Where can I have the greatest impact on revenue?” said James Coulter, Marketing Optimization Specialist, Sophos, from the stage at Optimization Summit 2013. Coulter sought small, yet impactful, changes that would change the way that customers thought about the site as they filled out forms. He recruited his team to tailor best practices for Web optimization for the small B2B IT security company’s site.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0620](http://mecla.bs/digest0620)

Content Optimization: Reduce redundancy, improve relevance and increase engagement  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 25, 2014  
**Summary:** Diana Primeau, Director of Member Services, CNET, was tasked with increasing engagement with CNET’s portfolio of editorial newsletters. When her team assessed the program, they discovered issues with redundancy, relevance and engagement in the 26 editorial newsletters. Watch Primeau’s Optimization Summit 2013 presentation to learn her four-step process for revamping and improving the content marketing effort.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0621](http://mecla.bs/digest0621)
ABOUT MARKETINGSHERPA LLC

MarketingSherpa is a firm, wholly owned by MECLABS, specializing in reporting on what works in all aspects of marketing.

Praised by The Economist, Harvard Business School’s Working Knowledge forum and Entrepreneur.com, MarketingSherpa is recognized throughout the marketing industry for offering practical, results-based marketing information researched and written by a staff of in-house reporters.

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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
- 5 million telephone calls
- 500,000 decision-maker conversations

MECLABS has consulted with companies like Cisco Systems, Johnson & Johnson, The New York Times, 1-800-FLOWERS and NetSuite to optimize sales and marketing processes and achieve triple-digit ROI gains.

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The MECLABS Quarterly Research Digest features a selection of our most useful discoveries from MECLABS’ family of brands. The goal of the Research Digest is to provide a simple reference to our latest experiments and case studies from marketers like you.

“Even a relatively small change in the physical email copy can have an oversized impact on conversion if it has a drastic impact on the prospect’s thought sequence.”

See more on page 32

“The less we know about what the visitor wants, the more we should enable them to self-select.”

See more on page 9

“Responsive design can certainly be effective, but only if it succeeds in reducing friction in the mind of the customer.”

See more on page 63