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EDITORIAL STAFF

Executive Editor
Flint McGlaughlin

Editors
Selena Blue
Daniel Burstein

Content Writers
Austin McCraw
Jon Powell

Copy Writer
Shaun Metzger

Designer
Leah Kilgore

CONTRIBUTORS

Allison Banko
Selena Blue
Beata Bordas
Justin Bridegan
Daniel Burstein
Brian Carroll
Tony Doty
Courtney Eckerle
Benjamin Filip
Gina Greco
J. David Green
Jonathan Greene

Michael Groszek
Maria Hendricks
Erin Hogg
Andrea Johnson
Rachel Katz
Taylor Kennedy
David Kirkpatrick
Taylor Lightfoot
Brittany Long
Jessica Lorenz
Pamela Markey
Emily Munns

John Nye
Lauren Pitchford
Jon Powell
Michael Powers
Emily Rogers
Anuj Shrestha
Diana Sindicich
Alex Smith
Rebecca Strally
Adam Sutton
John Tackett
Spencer Whiting

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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 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
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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 a Summit video presentation 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
Reporter, MECLABS
Selena.Blue@MECLABS.com

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*. 
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]

\[ \text{eme} = rv(cf + i) - (f + a) \]
New research reveals 3 high-performing webpage templates that consistently improve conversion

- Content created by Jon Powell, Austin McCraw, Shaun Metzger
- Highlighted research conducted by Chris Rochester, Jon Powell, Adam Lapp, Boris Grinkot, Martha Faulk, Paul Clowe, Erin Fagin

Many digital marketers spend the bulk of their time optimizing the messaging of their webpages. This focus is warranted as messaging is critical to the success of any marketing campaign. However, when it comes to webpages, there is something more foundational that exists underneath the messaging – the page template.

Many marketers wonder, “What is the optimal page template?”

The importance of this question is subtle. Simply assuming a page template by way of intuition can be dangerous. It is true an optimized page template can make up for many messaging errors. But, it is also conversely true that the wrong page template can mitigate conversion no matter how much time the marketer spends on the page’s messaging. This leaves us with some key questions:

- What makes a page template effective?
- Is there a way to evaluate page templates?
- Are there any page templates that are more effective than others?
- Can one template be used for different scenarios?

These are all questions we have set out to answer in this short article, starting with a recent experiment conducted in the MECLABS research laboratory.

An Experiment:
How discovering the right page structure generated an 87% increase in conversion

The experiment that can help us make sense of radical redesigns, in terms of changing the actual format of the page, is Test Protocol (TP) 1568 from the MECLABS research library. It was a test we conducted for an online printing company that specialized in printed marketing materials and delivering the finished product with minimal turnaround time.

In Figure 1.1, you can see the control page the company presented us with for optimization. For comparison, you can see the treatment page we designed in Figure 1.2. The first aspect of the redesign that is vital to understand is the actual content of the page remained unchanged. We simply presented
Figure 1.2
that content in a way we hypothesized would make it clearer and more helpful to the prospect. A truly radical redesign would likely include a change in content as well, but this test focused exclusively on the template of the page.

In this case, we thought there was a disconnect between what the prospect needed from the page and the page’s layout. The company promoted the value proposition of fast turnaround time, yet the page required some serious mental work before a purchase decision could be made. We put the form and call-to-action closer to the top to allow hurried visitors to start the process right away. We kept the informational content, but moved it down the page.

What was the result? An 87% increase in conversion, which in this case is a sale, sometimes two or three steps further down the line (see Figure 1.3). That is a massive lift for this company, and it has important consequences for anyone doing business online. Additionally, because the change was simple to implement into other parts of the site, the company was able to achieve lifts all across its website, as outlined in Figure 1.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Conversion Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version A</td>
<td>4.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version B</td>
<td>7.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Difference</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.3

![Figure 1.3](image1.png)

![Figure 1.4](image2.png)
OPTIMIZING WEBPAGE TEMPLATES

This experiment, as well as many others, leads us to some essential principles as it deals with the nature of websites and their page templates.

**Key Principle #1:** Philosophically, the marketer should be able to distinguish between two essential parts of any marketing creative:

1. **The Form:** The elements of marketing collateral that transcend the specific instance of the marketing message (e.g., page templates, copy-length, forms fields, etc.).
2. **The Substance:** The elements of marketing collateral that are instance-specific. Generally, they are tied closely to the specific expression of the offer’s value proposition.

For the purposes of this article, we are dealing much more with the form of your webpages rather than the substance. In other words, we are interested in discovering principles we can use to build a page template that allows us to communicate most effectively with prospects. In this article, you will not find tips like, “Use this headline instead of this headline.” Rather, we are going even deeper, and seeking to find out whether a headline is needed at all and if so, where it should go on a page.

**Key Principle #2:** When done properly, testing the “form” elements of a webpage creates a significant opportunity for compounding results.

![Figure 2.1](image-url)
Look at Figure 2.1. This chart highlights the importance of form testing. The results learned from one page can easily be implemented on other pages for compounded results.\(^VI\)

**Key Principle #3:** For page templates specifically, there are no absolute rules when it comes to best practices, however a meta-analysis of our experimentation reveals common patterns across industry for successful page templates.

The page templates we will discuss in this article are not one-size-fits-all. Rather, these templates are like the shadows in Plato’s cave – flat, broad-stroke representations of a specific, detailed item in the real world.\(^VII\) They are not meant to be plug-and-play solutions, but guides to help get your pages on the right track with efficiency.

*In our research of this topic, we have identified three webpage templates you can use to increase conversion. These templates are for your offer pages, transactional pages and directory pages. We will go over them in detail below.*

**The 3 Webpage Templates That Increase Conversion**

**Template #1: The Main Offer Page**

A main offer page is a webpage that contains specific product, service or offer information, and is designed to have the prospect come to a primary decision (e.g., sign-up, buy, read more, etc.). Product pages fall into this category. As you can see in the chart in Figure 3.1, the offer page is where the cognitive momentum of your prospect, the velocity at which they are moving toward a purchase decision, will be at its highest. This means they are the most motivated to purchase at this time.
Before we get to the template, take a moment to study these pages that fall into this category (Figures 3.2-3.5). The control page is on the left and the treatment is on the right. The results are in the center. Look for patterns that can help us build a template for successful offer pages.

**Figure 3.2**

**Figure 3.3**
**From This**

![Figure 3.4](image1)

**To This**

![Figure 3.4](image2)

**Increase in Conversions**

87.4%

**Figure 3.4**

**From This**

![Figure 3.5](image3)

**To This**

![Figure 3.5](image4)

**Increase in Clickthrough**

324%

**Figure 3.5**
Now in Figure 3.6, you can see the template we have created for offer pages. We will walk through each of the elements to gain a full understanding.

**Figure 3.6**

### Headline and Sub-Headline
An online interaction with a prospect is like a conversation with a potential love interest. You hopefully do not begin the conversation with, “I am available for dates. Here is my number. Call me.” That is too vague and offers no reason to actually call – also it is rude. You need a pick-up line that clearly communicates your value proposition and a sub-headline that further delineates that value proposition and how this page helps the prospect obtain that value.

### Image
If your page is going to include an image, which is worth a test, the image must be instantly recognizable and reinforce the value proposition raised in the headline and sub-headline. It must not tax the prospect’s mental faculties trying to make sense of the image. You do not want to slow down their cognitive momentum.

### Primary Information Column
This is where your main body copy goes, including some easy-to-scan bullet points. You want the reader to be able to skim through this copy and pick out the main details they need to come to an informed purchase decision. It is one column because multiple columns of vital information disperses...
attention and confuses. One column creates simplicity and velocity toward the call-to-action.

**One Emphasized Call-to-Action**
The call-to-action should emphasize in the actual wording the value proposition of the offer. In other words, “Get Instant Access Now” is preferable to, “Click Here.” There should not be multiple equally weighted calls-to-action because this forces the prospect to consider and weight the options, which decreases momentum and often stalls purchase intent.

**Supporting Content**
The Primary Information Column will not suffice for some prospects. They will want more information before coming to a decision. For these prospects, you can include additional information below the call-to-action. Supporting content can also include elements like testimonials, trust logos and additional copy and images.

Again, this is not one-size-fits-all. You may find that prospects prefer to read a lot of copy before making a decision about your product, but they don’t particularly care about images. In this case, you can try a long-copy page that emphasizes copy and de-emphasizes images, like in Figure 3.7.
Or if you need to accommodate both prospects who know the process and want to place an order right away and prospects who are new to the process, you can try a call-to-action that integrates the first step of the purchase process, like in Figure 3.8. There are many variations, but the elements above are excellent constants with which to start.

![Figure 3.8](image)

**Template #2: The Transaction Page**

The transaction page is a page or series of pages dedicated to collecting the information from a customer that is required to complete a value exchange (i.e., purchase, consultation, etc.). This is where the cognitive momentum of your prospect begins to curb because the cost of the transaction is beginning to become more real to them. You can see this reflected in the chart we referenced earlier (Figure 4.1). Steps must be taken to ensure the momentum built up on the product page carries the prospect through to the end of the transaction.
Before we get to the template, take a moment to study these transaction pages we have worked on (Figures 4.2 - 4.5). Look for patterns that can help us build a template for successful transaction pages.

---

*Figure 4.1*

---

*Figure 4.2*
Figure 4.3

From This

To This

12% Increase in Completions

Figure 4.4

From This

To This

97% Increase in Completions
Now, let’s dig into the template we have built based on our research of what makes a transaction page successful. The template can be seen in **Figure 4.6**, and we will elaborate on the elements below.
Headline and Sub-Headline
Again, a headline is crucial to a page that communicates clearly. Just because a prospect has reached a transaction page, we cannot assume they are completely sold. We must continue to build on the value proposition at every step of the process.

Minimum Necessary (Grouped) Field Forms
Asking for more information than you truly need to complete a transaction will cause the prospect to stop and consider why you are asking for this information. If it is truly necessary, you can explain why it is necessary. If it is not necessary, leave it out. To further reduce friction of a transaction page, group fields into logical sections. Examples would be groups like personal contact information, business information or comments.

Supporting Copy
This is additional copy or pop-over links that help justify each form field relative to the immediate value exchange. This allows the prospect to understand why a field is necessary, and reduces fear and anxiety.

Testimonials and Credibility Indicators
The transaction page is where anxiety is at its highest, and since anxiety is often irrational, we must overcorrect for it. Testimonials and other credibility indicators like guarantees and awards should be placed in a sidebar where the information is accessible to help ease the prospect’s anxiety.

One Clear Call-to-Action
Same as above, the call-to-action should emphasize the value proposition.

Additional Credibility Indicators
Near the call-to-action is valuable real estate that should be populated with even more credibility indicators to ease anxiety. Often, anxiety is localized in that region and must be addressed.

The above elements will help you get your transaction pages in the right ballpark, and from there, you can run tests to refine your results and improve them even more.

Template #3: The Directory Page
Directory pages are the pages on your site where a visitor goes to find their way to what they are really looking for. Most homepages and category pages fall under the umbrella of “directory pages.” In terms of our cognitive momentum chart (Figure 5.1), the directory page is where we really get the ball rolling. Anticipation builds as the prospect gets closer to obtaining the desired information.
Before we get to our directory page template, take a moment to study these directory pages and see if you can identify patterns in the following two experiments that produced better results (Figures 5.2 - 5.5).

![Figure 5.1](image)

**Figure 5.1**

![From This](image)

![To This](image)

**19% Increase in Clickthrough**

**Figure 5.2**

For permissions: research@meclabs.com
The template for successful directory pages can be seen in Figure 5.6, and we will elaborate on the elements below.
Headline and Sub-Headline
Beginning to see a pattern here? A clear headline that explains the value proposition of the page is essential to all pages, and directory pages are no exception. We often see marketers simply forget to put a headline on directory pages, thinking they are simply a utility to direct visitors. But, we must take every opportunity to build value and maintain clarity in our sites.

Image
As outlined in the offer page section, an image that reinforces the value proposition of the page has proven to be beneficial to directory pages as well.

Easy-to-Scan Body Copy
Easily scannable body copy helps orientate the visitor and lets you present any vital information to the prospect regarding the page. Use bullet points to make it copy friendly to visitors who simply want to skim through text, which is most people.

Content Sections
You want to break the options the visitor has into easy-to-understand content sections so they can quickly decide which one is the one they need. You may have read other articles on this site where we rail against equally weighted, competing options. In fact, we did it earlier in this article. It is a massive problem for an offer or transaction page, but it seems unavoidable on a directory page because the purpose of the page is to house multiple options. What is the solution?

You want your content sections to provide clarity as to what that section is about so the appropriate section seems to jump off the page to the prospect looking for that section. If this is achieved, the options so not appear to be equally weighted because the user can find what they need immediately. This is the most important aspect of a directory page.

Supporting Content
Below the content sections, you can include more content that helps the user figure out exactly which section they need, if they are unsure. Detail-oriented or confused visitors will appreciate this.

Now you have an idea of how you can structure your directory pages to increase their effectiveness. However, it is important for us to reiterate these templates are simply guides to point you in the right direction. Perhaps you only have two options on a directory page? Then you would want something more along the lines of the page in Figure 5.7. Maybe testing has proven short-copy pages perform better for you than longer-copy pages. In this case, you might try something closer to the page in Figure 5.8.
Figure 5.7

Point-first headline that clearly communicates the common primary value proposition

Sub-headline that explains, adds to, or intensifies the above statement

Header that explains what to do (optional)

Prospect 1 Header

Prospect 2 Header

Prospect 3 Header

Figure 5.8

Point-first headline that clearly communicates the common primary value proposition

Sub-headline that explains, adds to, or intensifies the above statement

Header that explains what to do (optional)

Prospect 1 Header

Prospect 2 Header

Prospect 3 Header
**Using Templates to Get in the Zone**

In baseball, you can’t hit a home run if you do not first arrive at the ballpark. In marketing, you can’t fully optimize a page if the page isn’t the right kind of page to begin with. Using the templates above you can make sure all of your pages are in the right ballpark, and then go about completing optimization by testing. No, you cannot get around testing. If you want optimized pages, you must test.

The chart in Figure 6.1 will help you visualize this process. What we have discussed in this article is finding the right template. We also call this a radical redesign, since you are usually changing multiple variables to get the page to a more suitable layout for the audience. Once this is accomplished, you can move on to the next stage of optimization: focused variable testing. You can whittle down the focus of your testing to the highest performing variables based on hypotheses you create by putting yourself in your prospects’ shoes. When that is finished, you can finish up the optimization by isolating specific variables to discover the prime motivating factors.

Oftentimes, we fall into the trap of trying to skip the first two steps and simply isolate variables. Every now and again, it is vital to step back and question whether your page is in the right ballpark. If it is not, you simply have no hope of home run quality marketing. If it is, you can test your way to a fully optimized page.
Messaging is essential to all online marketing. It is the substance and the core expression of the value proposition of the offer. For more on messaging, see “Discovering Your Value Proposition: 6 ways to stand out in a crowded marketplace.”
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/discovering-your-value-proposition.html

MECLABS has conducted more than 15,000 online marketing conversion path tests:
http://www.meclabs.com

A radical redesign is a treatment version of a webpage that tests the overall category of the page in question. For more on radical redesigns see “Rapidly Maximizing Conversion: How one company quickly achieved a 58.1% lift with a radical redesign.”
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/radical-redesign.html

All of our tests are statistically validated at a 95% or greater level of statistical confidence. For more on our testing methodology, see http://www.meclabs.com/methodology

If you would like more information about optimizing the substance of a page, see “Email Copywriting Clinic: Live, on-the-spot analysis of how to improve real-world email campaigns.”

For more information on the impact of compounding results, see “The Compounding ROI of Sequential Conversion Increases: How one company took a small gain and multiplied it tenfold.”
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/compounding-roi-sequential-conversion-increases.html

Plato’s Analogy of the Cave: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegory_of_the_Cave

For more on optimizing the messaging of headlines, see “Headline Optimization: How testing 10 headlines revealed a 3-letter word that improved conversion more than major changes.”
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/optimizing-headlines.html

For more on the use of images, see “Images vs. Copy: How getting the right balance increased conversion by 29%.”

For more on optimizing CTAs, see “Minor Changes, Major Lifts: How headline and call-to-action optimization increased conversion 45%.”

We recently wrote about the nature of cognitive momentum in this article, “Reducing Cart Abandonment: 4 main reasons why customers leave your shopping cart and how a few tweaks can stop the leak.”

For more on optimizing form fields, see “Do Optional Form Fields Help (or Hurt) Conversion? How one required form field was hindering a 275% lift in conversion.”

To learn more about radical redesigns and the overall testing process, see “Double the Value of Your Online Testing: Don’t just get a result, get the maximum customer insights.”
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/double-your-testing-value.html

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What are some common characteristics successful people share in common?

Is it having a natural curiosity fused with a creative wild spark?

Or perhaps, it’s the end result of dialing into just the right mix of leadership and perseverance to see things through when the going gets tough?

It’s difficult to point to one particular trait that determines success; however, you can look for some patterns.

For example, in a recent Web clinic, Jon Powell, Senior Manager of Research and Strategy, MECLABS, asked the audience to look at these before and after screenshots of control and treatment pages from a few experiments to see if they could find any patterns.
“What are the patterns you’re seeing across all these different experiments?” Jon asked.

**From pattern to framework**

Jon also explained if he were to try to capture the patterns displayed across the experiments and place them into a wireframe based on their commonalities, that wireframe would have the following traits:

**Trait #1: A clear headline and sub-headline**

The first trait Jon mentioned is a clearly visible headline and sub-headline communicating the value of continuing to the next step.
Trait #2: Supporting image

A primary supporting image that’s instantly recognizable and supports the value on the page is also be present.
Trait #3: Primary information column

Jon also suggested including a primary information column to “help create linear flow through the page and minimize confusion.”
Trait #4: Scannable body copy

He recommended using easy-to-scan body copy to propel the force of the value proposition for the primary offer.
Trait #5: An emphasized call-to-action

The fifth trait is a call-to-action that appears clickable and communicates exactly what the customer will receive by clicking.

“It doesn’t mean you can’t have multiple calls-to-action, but you want to have one that’s emphasized,” Jon explained.
Trait #6: Supporting content

Jon also recommended placing supporting content further down the page: “This type of content could be more copy, supporting images, testimonials or reviews to reassure hesitant visitors or educate detail-oriented visitors.”
But at the end of the day ...

Although these traits have been found among high-performing templates, Jon emphasized you still have to test your way to discover what works for your customers.

You can watch the full free Web Clinic, “Page Templates that Work,” (http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/page-templates-that-work.html) to see Jon reveal three high-performing site templates that consistently increase conversion across multiple industries.
Microsites Tested
Recent experiments reveal 2 common design mistakes that can kill microsite conversion rates

- Content created by Jon Powell, Austin McCraw, Shaun Metzger
- Highlighted research conducted by Taylor Kennedy, Tony Doty, Jon Powell, Adam Lapp, Martha Faulk

A microsite is, in essence, a website within a website. The entire purpose and benefit of a microsite is the added focus that can be achieved by creating a page or group of pages solely dedicated to a given topic, as compared to a webpage that is part of the larger website.

Why then do marketers find microsites to be less effective than normal webpages, the very entities they are meant to improve upon? According to a survey conducted by MarketingSherpa, 48% of marketers estimate regular webpages to be “very effective,” with another 47% saying they are “somewhat effective.” On the other hand, only 38% of those polled found microsites to be “very effective,” with 54% saying they are “somewhat effective.”

As you can see in Figure 1.1, the microsite numbers are middling when compared to other common marketing strategies. But, the results beg two questions:

1. Why is the perceived efficacy of microsites significantly lower than their standard webpage counterparts?
2. What can be done to take our microsites from “adequate” to “excellent”?

As always, we want to ground our answers in more than just opinion. To that end, we conducted two experiments that helped shed light on this issue. Each experiment revealed a crucial mistake being made with microsites, which when remedied, would improve conversion. The overall improvement in production should separate microsites from the rest of the marketing pack and vault it toward the top of our effectiveness chart.

Experiment #1: B2C Golf Community Microsite

The experiment, Test Protocol (TP) 1431 in the MECLABS Research Library, was conducted in partnership with a national land and home sales company. It wanted to increase the number of leads it received from
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Type</th>
<th>Very effective</th>
<th>Somewhat effective</th>
<th>Not effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Webinars/Webcasts</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webpages</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Reviews</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-books</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitepapers</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Apps</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsites</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-newsletters</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Video</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Web Content</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Releases</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Magazines</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcasts</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa
SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=67
its community microsites, including the one we will be focusing on: The microsite for one of its golfing communities. In our testing, we wanted to identify which section of content in the microsite would produce the highest lead rate. On the page you can see in Figure 2.1, we were testing the call-to-action (CTA).

In Version A (Figure 2.2), the offer was for a hole-by-hole description of the golf course. In Version B (Figure 2.3), the offer was for a free course scorecard. As it turned out, Version B produced a 69% decrease in conversions (see Figure 2.4).
Figure 2.2 - Version A

Figure 2.3 - Version B
A change to a single element of the page caused leads to significantly dry up. What went wrong? We must understand three key mistakes.

**MISTAKE #1: MACRO DISTORTION**

**Key Principle #1:** First, one of the most common mistakes with microsites is the tendency of marketers to ask for too much too soon. When you ask for too much too soon, this is called macro distortion.

The CTA that performs poorly in the experiment above assumes the prospect already wants to play the course, since a scorecard is useless to someone who does not plan to play. However, this assumption is not valid. Nothing the prospect has done to this point has indicated an explicit decision to play the course, though their presence on the site perhaps implies a desire to play the course. By skipping over the step of convincing the prospect to test out the course, the Version B CTA significantly underperformed Version A.

**Key Principle #2:** Next, the marketer must understand (as we have taught elsewhere), CTAs should be value-positive. However, this is not enough. CTAs must be synchronized to the prospect’s thought sequence.

This builds on the point above. It is not enough for a CTA to be valuable to the prospect, it must also come at the right time in their thought sequence. In marketing, we do not optimize microsites or webpages or email funnels, we optimize thought sequences. This means we must be keenly aware of where prospects are in their thinking about a purchase decision at every step of the process. We gain this understanding by testing. In our test above, we found prospects were not convinced to play the course – they simply had interest.

**Key Principle #3:** Finally, our research findings suggest most microsites should focus on progressing customers at “process-level value,” specifically as it relates to:
1. The next, most immediate unanswered question in their mind
2. Something they believe will help them address that question

By “process-level value,” we mean an offer that meets the prospect where they are in the sales process. For example, for a prospect on a product page that does not include pricing, a process-level CTA would be “See Pricing,” rather than, “Buy Now.” By understanding where the prospect is in the process, and presenting the prospect with a lower threshold CTA, you reduce macro distortion, increase conversion and improve the effectiveness of your microsite.

**Experiment #2: B2B Medical Research Microsite**

The second of our key insights into microsite optimization came via a similar experiment for a different industry. This experiment, TP 1483, was conducted for an online physician-only social network. The social network provided a safe place for physicians to connect, but it also provided an excellent testing ground for medical product companies to conduct research on potential purchasers. Our objective was to test content approaches for the microsite aimed at medical product companies.

In Figure 3.1, you can see Version A of our test. This was the original page. Figure 3a shows the homepage of the microsite, while Figure 3b shows the many different pages accessible from that homepage. All of the information a prospect needs can be found in the microsite, but it requires diligence and investigation to find it. These qualities are not often found in online searchers.
In our treatment, Version B (Figure 3.2), we opted for a more copy-dense design for the homepage. This allowed us to present most of the relevant information in one page (Figure 3c), which asks less of the prospect in terms of both diligence and investigation. Figure 3d shows the information we could not fit into the entry page was consolidated again into one additional page, accessible from the bottom of the entry page.

Which page would win? The results point to Version B producing a 155% increase in conversion (see Figure 3.3).
By rearranging the way content was presented in this microsite, we were able to achieve a significant lift *without negatively impacting SEO*. It was basically the same content, but the presentation was easier to digest. But why? There are three key principles to guide us.

**MISTAKE #2: CONVERSATIONAL VOID**

**Key Principle #1:** First, marketers must understand the fundamental principle that people do not buy from microsites; people buy from people.

Simply because your products or services are available online, even exclusively so, it does not change this basic tenet of marketing: People buy from other people. Hence, if your website is not structured in a way that carries on a coherent, personal conversation with the prospect, you will not succeed in achieving maximum conversion rates.

**Key Principle #2:** Further, one of the most common mistakes with microsites is the tendency of marketers to design an aesthetic site that provides little-to-no personal conversation.

This is not just an arbitrary statement. This is from our findings working closely with many Research Partners and studying their microsites. Oftentimes, we simply forget that a website, or a microsite, is nothing more than a medium of communication between people. Rather, we end up focusing so intently on the aesthetic design of our website that the actual conversation is lost or becomes confused.

Common mistakes in microsite design include poor functionality for the sake of aesthetics, too much emphasis on the wrong elements, and presenting too many equally weighted options for the user to choose from. The last of these is what we see hindering the production of Version A in the experiment above. Upon reaching the entry page, the prospect is bombarded with a number of “voices” vying for attention. None of those voices could be considered “the” voice of the page. As a result, the prospect has nowhere to look to carry on the conversation that brought them to the page in the first place.
Key Principle #3: Finally, for microsites, our findings suggest the most effective amount of content is the balance necessary for ideal prospects to perceive enough:

1. Clarity on the offer and its ask
2. Credibility of its claims and its provider

The meta-analysis of our research on microsites yielded the two responses you want to elicit from prospects: I understand what you are offering me, and I believe you can deliver. If you achieve these goals, and your offer has a real value proposition, you will see conversion significantly increase. After all, the two main reasons someone who needs what you offer doesn’t buy from you are that they don’t know you offer it or they don’t trust you to deliver.\textsuperscript{vi}

In Version B of our experiment, the treatment page presents a single clear conversation for the prospect to join. The information is presented in a vertical structure that encourages increased mental velocity as the reader proceeds down the page. Finally, additional information, which in Version A is detracting from the clarity of the conversation, is presented at the end of the page, the appropriate time to make a “continue reading” decision.

**But Is Less Always More?**

In the test we just looked at, a surplus of information was condensed down to create a single straightforward conversation to better communicate to prospects. But is this always the best course of action? **Are there times when more information is better?** We conducted a fascinating study dealing with this question.

TP 1901, which can be found in the MECLABS Research Library, was conducted in partnership with PR Newswire, a company offering a low-cost do-it-yourself (DIY) product for small businesses to distribute content across thousands of websites. We wanted to find out what kind of content configuration would create the most orders from its microsite.

The control configuration (**Figure 4.1**) was simple. Relevant information was condensed into one page. The CTA moved the prospect directly into the shopping cart. We wanted to see what would happen if we introduced more content before the prospect reached the shopping cart. You can see in **Figure 4.2** how we accomplished this with the treatment. The content for these additional pages was aimed at answering common questions and concerns prospects could have when coming to a purchasing decision.
What was the result? The treatment outperformed the control by 31% (Figure 4.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microsite Content</th>
<th>Order Conv. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original</td>
<td>8.0%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>10.5%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Difference</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conversion rates anonymized for the Partner’s protection

In this particular case, prospects were not receiving enough information to comfortably arrive at a purchase decision. To carry on the appropriate conversation with them, we needed to give them more, not less. Note that this doesn’t mean loading the entry page with equally weighted options like the second test we reviewed. Rather, we had to create a single conversation that allowed prospects to divert for more information when they wanted it. vii

**Two Microsite Mistakes That Kill Conversion**

The perception among marketers is microsites are simply adequate – neither useless, nor exceptional. But, adequacy is the enemy of excellence. viii Due to their adequacy, they do not garner the attention that top-performing mediums do. Neither do they require the constant oversight of an underperforming marketing component. However, if we are to optimize our marketing processes, the middling strategies matter as much as those at the extreme poles.

If we are to optimize our microsites, two conversion-killing mistakes must be remedied:

1. **Mistake #1. Macro Distortion**
2. **Mistake #2. Conversational Void**

Don’t ask for too much too soon. Don’t focus on topics prospects don’t care about. Don’t have too many voices speaking at once. Rather, understand where you are in the sales process, and form a single clear conversation to explain what you offer and why you are qualified to offer it. With these principles, perhaps we can transform our “adequate” microsites into high-performing “excellent” microsites.
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**ACCORDION-STYLE CHECKOUTS TESTED**

**HOW ONE COMPANY UNCOVERED 26% MORE CONVERSIONS BY PUTTING ITS CHECKOUT PROCESS TO THE TEST**

- Content created by Jon Powell, Austin McCraw, Shaun Metzger
- Highlighted research conducted by Zuzia Soldenhoff-Thorpe, Gaby Paez

Shopping carts are the direct link between decision and the transaction. They form the essential bridge between the psychological (the mental exchange) and reality (the physical transaction). It is here that the marketer has the challenging job of maintaining the cognitive momentum created on the offer page all the way to the close.¹

### Table: Importance of Various Pages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Category</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shopping cart or subscription</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product, solution, or offer page</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFP/other lead gen activity</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homepage</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment page</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other page</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free download, webinar, etc.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category, listing, etc.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free account setup</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Us, About Us</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping info page</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you page</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2012, N=749

Figure 1.1
It is no surprise marketers not only rate shopping carts as the most important aspect of the marketing funnel to optimize (see Figure 1.1), but also as the most difficult aspect of the funnel to optimize (see Figure 1.2).

There is a high perceived reward for optimizing the shopping cart, yet the task itself is somewhat perplexing to marketers. Intuitively, many of us attempt to resolve this issue by seeking technology that optimizes the user experience. The accordion-style checkout is one such technology. This form of checkout has sections that expand and contract as the user moves through the process.
You can see an example of an accordion-style checkout in Figure 1.3.

In our minds, new experience-oriented technology often equates to higher conversion. But, does this actually play out in reality? Do accordion-style checkouts improve conversion over standard checkouts? Do accordion-style checkouts really work?

In this article, we will walk through a series of three recent tests conducted by one of our Research Partners that reveal the true impact of accordion-style checkout processes.

**Experiment #1: Will an Accordion-Style Checkout Increase Conversion?**

Test Protocol (TP) 1666 endeavored to go straight to the heart of the matter by testing an accordion-style checkout in classic A/B style against the original page. The Partner we were working with is a national news publication with the goal of increasing subscriptions.

The control checkout process (Figure 2.1) is in the standard linear form, split up over three pages. In our treatment (Figure 2.2), we created an accordion-style checkout page where all of the necessary forms were available on one page. Additionally, we added two credibility and satisfaction symbols to help alleviate any anxiety.
What was the result? A 29% relative decrease in conversion (see Figure 2.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version A</td>
<td>3.81%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version B</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>-29.1%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.3

So, this begs the question, **“WHY do the test results run contrary to common marketing intuition?”** After all, the accordion-style checkout is a popular move for marketers to make when attempting to increase conversion. Therefore, we went back through our research library to discover how the accordion-style checkout fared in previous experiments. What we found are the experiments in Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.
What you need to understand is there is nothing in our test results to justify the expense it requires to implement an accordion-style checkout in place of the standard linear-style layout.

What is our course of action, then? Let us examine the next test we ran for the news publication.
Experiment #2: Will Small Communication Tweaks Increase Conversion?

With TP 1740, we wanted to try a different tack in our optimization of the publication’s checkout process. Rather than change the form of the page, as we did in the previous test, we decided to work within the classic linear format while making small communication tweaks to reinforce the value of the subscription.

The control page was the same as the control in the previous test (Figure 4.1). In the treatment (Figure 4.2), we made a number of tweaks:

- We changed the image and headline to reinforce the subscription’s value proposition.
- We reminded the buyer of the money they save with the subscription.
- We removed lines and increased header fonts to make the page flow more quickly and with greater clarity.
- We edited the color, alignment and copy of the call-to-action button.
- We added credibility and satisfaction logos to decrease anxiety.

Figure 4.1

Figure 4.2
Would these changes impact conversion? Yes – the treatment produced a 24% relative increase in conversion (see Figure 4.3). But why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version A</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version B (small changes)</td>
<td>2.34%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.3

The copy and image changes provide a reminder of value that weighs directly against the immediate cost the prospect is processing in their mind. The line removal and font changes allowed us to minimize mental stops in the mind that might stimulate overthinking. Additionally, the call-to-action change propels the prospect’s momentum by directing them to a page they believe will help them make a fully informed final decision.

These small communication tweaks have proved themselves useful on a number of occasions, including those you see in Figures 5.1 and 5.2. But, could we further improve on this design by splitting the page into a number of smaller pages, effectively imitating the format of the control while adding in the communication tweaks that improved conversion? We had to test.
EXPERIMENT #3: WILL ADDING MORE PAGES INCREASE CONVERSION?

TP 1789 was an attempt to build on the previous success achieved in the experiment above. We had generated a lift, now we wanted to see if the format we had (two pages) would still hold up against a new treatment in the style of the original process (many pages).

The control (Figure 6.1) was the winner of the previous test.
The treatment (Figure 6.2) simply took the elements of those two pages and split them into four smaller pages. We also added a step indicator to help the buyer immediately understand where they were in the checkout process.

How did this affect conversion? According to the test results, it didn’t. There was no statistically significant difference between the two checkouts. (see Figure 6.3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version A (2 pages)</td>
<td>6.72%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version B (4 pages)</td>
<td>7.68%</td>
<td><strong>14.3%</strong></td>
<td><strong>54%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So, what does this teach us about how we should approach our checkout systems in regard to the popular accordion-style format? There are three key principles to guide our thinking.
THREE CONCLUDING PRINCIPLES FOR UNDERSTANDING ACCORDION-STYLE CHECKOUTS

Principle #1: The goal is not to impress the customer; the goal is to enable the customer.

First, when investigating the motivation behind an accordion-style checkout, we find it is mainly an aesthetic change. In general, the information presented is the same. We hope the sleek presentation of the information impresses the prospect with how easy it is to complete the sale. In reality, it doesn’t enable the customer to continue to make the purchasing decision. It simply fosters the decision they made previously.

Principle #2: A significant improvement in your checkout process doesn’t guarantee a significant improvement in the mind of the visitor.

Next, we must realize a particular design style or marketing approach does not become more effective simply because it costs more. We can be tempted to believe that because we invest capital in a redesign, and because that redesign looks like a significant improvement over the previous page, it is in fact a better page. That is not how optimization works, and it is a blind spot that affects everyone. The only cure is to test and trust the results.

Principle #3: An investment in cart technology should yield a new flexibility that enables the marketer to better appeal to a customer’s thought sequence.

Finally, rather than investing in a redesign that simply “looks” like an improvement, we ought to invest in a redesign that enables us to truly address the thought sequences of the customer. As we have said many times before, we are not in the business of optimizing webpages or shopping carts; we optimize thought sequences.

In the end, the ultimate secret to improving the performance of a shopping cart is not found in some clever tactic or new technology. It is found in one essential skill of the marketer: empathy. All of our marketing efforts hinge on our ability to hear the marketer and engage them in conversation. People do not buy from shopping carts, people buy from people. People do not buy from technology, people buy from people. Unless our checkout technology serves this personal conversation, it will not do anything more than waste time and money.

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i The marketer is not optimizing webpages or shopping carts, but rather thought sequences. The goal of the shopping cart process is to maintain cognitive momentum created in the order page. We discuss key strategies for accomplishing this in the following article:
For permissions: research@meclabs.com

ii MarketingSherpa 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report
http://www.meclabs.com/training/publications/benchmark-report/website-optimization/overview

iii MarketingSherpa 2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Report

iv See http://store.apple.com/us

v This test, as with all our experiments, has been validated with a 95% level of statistical confidence unless otherwise stated. To learn more about our scientific approach, see http://www.meclabs.com/methodology

vi For a more in-depth conversation about empathy, see http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-optimization/letter-style-emails-effective.html
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]
\[ eme = rv(of + i) - (f + a) \]
Email Marketing
As we search for brand-side marketers to speak at MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2014 in Las Vegas, one of the top questions on our mind is — what are marketers trying to achieve with their email marketing?

To answer that question, let’s dive into the 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report, where we asked marketers ...

Q: Which goals does your organization want to achieve through email marketing in the next 12 months? Please select all that apply.

![Chart showing the top email marketing goals](chart.jpg)

Source: © 2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=832
Not surprisingly, “increase sales conversion and/or revenue” was a top choice, chosen by two-thirds of marketers. How does one increase sales?

“Drive additional traffic to our website,” which was also chosen by marketers as an organizational goal for email marketing in the next 12 months.

How do you get more traffic from your email marketing?

“Deliver highly relevant content,” which, likewise, 67% of marketers are trying to do.

As you can see, the top three objectives from email marketers, all chosen by 67% of those surveyed, are tightly aligned.

**Email marketers have a lot on their plate**

If we step back and look at the chart as a whole, we see more than half of marketers chose nine of the 16 options as an organizational goal. This is a significant challenge to email marketing effectiveness.

If we prioritize everything, we prioritize nothing.

My biggest takeaway from this chart is this — if you are seriously looking to optimize your email marketing program over the next 12 months, choose just three or four goals.

As the above example indicates, those three or four goals may be tightly interrelated. We want to increase sales. How will we do that? Drive more traffic to our site. How will we do that? Deliver content that is more relevant.

I’m not suggesting you totally ignore any aspect of email marketing, but I do believe you must choose not to do some things in order to do other things better.

And, once you’ve optimized, say, your nurturing program to a certain level, feel free to drop that goal in favor of, say, database hygiene.

Just don’t do it all at once. Email marketing, like life, is about choices. Hopefully this chart, which shows the email marketing goals of your peers, can help you make those choices.
MORE ALIKE THAN DIFFERENT: WHY EMAIL IS MADONNA, AND FACEBOOK IS LADY GAGA

- Presentation by Jay Baer

Video link: http://mecla.bs/digest0367

“All of us in email have heard social media is going to kill email, and people don’t need emails because they can use messaging. But, do not panic — email is not going anywhere, ever.”

At Email Summit 2013, Jay Baer, President, Convince and Convert, gave his presentation “More Alike than Different: Why email is Madonna, and Facebook is Lady Gaga,” in which he discussed why integrating email and social media programs at companies is becoming more essential every day.

“Facebook is a tool we use to help people keep our company at the top of their minds, which is exactly what email does,” Baer said.

In this Summit presentation replay, you will also learn:

- The three areas of integration of email and Facebook
- How to discover what a Facebook fan is worth to your company using similar metrics as email
- Why email people and Facebook people in your company should be the same people
- How to surround your audience with connection options
- Ideas for message integration testing with email and Facebook
- And much more
Today, there are many more methods other than just email to capture a prospect’s interest and communicate with them.

However, unlike social media, with email, prospects are forced to a decision point — open or delete, click or delete, etc. (assuming you’ve mastered deliverability).

Which brings us to today’s chart. How can marketers best capture that interest and build their email lists? We asked marketers that very question in the MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Research Chart: Most Effective Email List Building Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whitepaper or other premium content</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Webinar</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusive access/offer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discount or coupon</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sweepstakes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gift Card</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not applicable or don’t know</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=161
Valuable Content Drives List Growth

The goal of every element listed on this chart is to provide an extra incentive to encourage people to register for the email list.

If you look at the above responses, you can see that the top performing list building activities tend to be focused around content, which makes sense when you think about it. After all, the best way to have people register for your email list is to send out really good emails that people want.

One way to give them a preview of the valuable content they will receive is with a piece of content — according to respondents, 29% found white papers or other premium content to be the most effective.

It’s interesting to note content was even more effective for B2B and B2G marketers, with 43% ranking white papers or premium content as the most effective tactic to register new email subscribers.

Incentives Can Drive List Growth As Well

As I mentioned above, while each of these elements are essentially extra incentives to encourage a decision to subscribe, some are, for lack of better wording, more incentive based than others.

While content can tie directly to the value received from subscribing to the email list, sweepstakes and gift cards often, but not always, have their own unique value, which is why marketers may have rated them as less effective.

An important element to consider when offering sweepstakes or gift cards is how well the value in the incentive ties into the value we offer in the email list and the value proposition of our company in general.

For example, if you are a security company, a sweepstakes for a $5,000 security system may be more effective than a $5,000 trip to Bermuda.

After all, your real goal isn’t just building any email list. Your goal is as one survey respondent put it...

“Building a responsive list. These will be subscribers truly interested in my services.”
“Deliverability has been a huge challenge in the past year, especially with the lack of visibility into [for example] Gmail’s standards.”

That quote is from an email marketer who shared her experiences in the MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report, where we asked marketers ...

Q: Which of the following tactics is your organization using to improve email deliverability rates?

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=593
If you love something, set it free

The top tactic marketers use to improve deliverability rates is not surprising — “provide an easy unsubscribe process,” which 62% of marketers are currently doing. After all, the CAN-SPAM Act requires “a visible and operable unsubscribe mechanism is present in all emails,” to quote from Wikipedia.

What is surprising is 38% of marketers are not using this tactic. Yes, there is the law to consider. But in addition, email recipients are much more powerful than direct mail recipients. While frustrated prospects who receive physical junk mail can do little more than toss it in the recycle bin, pestered email recipients can hit that spam button.

If the spam button is easier than your unsubscribe option, which choice do you think they will make?

If it comes back, it’s yours

A minority of marketers don’t wait to see if recipients want to leave their email list, they actively kick them off, like the 39% of email marketers who remove inactive subscribers.

About half of them (17%) launch reactivation campaigns to try one last attempt to re-engage those prospects before removing them from the list.

This is a practice that has shown to be effective in case study after case study. Of course, it is a very challenging tactic for many marketers to execute. After all, in business we tend to like numbers that go up, and an email list with a downward trend because you are choosing to remove recipients can be hard to face.

If it doesn’t, it never was

While 39% of respondents maintain an opt-in only subscriber list, the flip side is 61% of marketers send emails to people who were never on their list to begin with. One respondent shared his concern that “though we shouldn’t be doing it any way, senior management is not above using unvetted lists to secure new clients.”

That is my biggest takeaway from this chart. What email marketers should and shouldn’t be doing isn’t necessarily reflected in what they are or aren’t doing.

So what should email marketers be doing? I asked Dennis Dayman, Chief Privacy and Security Officer, Oracle Eloqua, for his take on this data.

He said, “The focus should always be about obtaining correct permission from users and even working in an opt-in environment. What marketers need to be doing is quality over quantity. Quality [targeted messaging] over quantity [broadcast messaging].”
“Access to data for personalizing content.”

That was the response from one marketer when we asked what new developments will affect their email marketing programs over the coming year.

There are many ways to find data about potential customers. There’s transactional data. Behavioral data. Data appending.

Marketers may also simply ask them. One major way to collect this data is when prospective customers first register for your list. In the MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report, we asked marketers …

**Q: Which form data do you collect in the registration process for your email program?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email address</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZIP code</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone Number</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<td>29%</td>
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<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salutation</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax Number</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=347

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THE BASICS

If you’ve been a reader of MarketingSherpa’s Chart of the Week for any length of time, you’ll see how rarely, if ever, every marketer responding will report being engaged in a tactic. For example, in the chart What marketers are doing ... and what they should be doing, we learned more than one-third of marketers surveyed do not engage in an elementary deliverability tactic — providing an easy unsubscribe process.

So, with tongue firmly planted in cheek, it’s nice to see all marketers agreeing on something — asking for an email address on an email registration form.

A STEEP DROP-OFF

The drop-off is steep from there. The only other field requested by a majority of marketers is name.

Admittedly, some of these fields are mutually exclusive. For example, if you request ZIP code, you do not need to ask for state or country.

Some fields simply don’t apply to certain products. While a marketer that sells both male and female clothes may find the gender field essential, if you sell a B2B cloud computing solution, for example, gender is meaningless.

Nor am I necessarily suggesting you should be asking for more information on your email list registration forms. While the increased amount of data can help you personalize and segment your email sends to deliver more relevant content to your audience, the more info you ask for, the less list sign-ups you are likely to receive.

NOT ALL INFORMATION REQUESTS ARE CREATED EQUALLY

Of course, it’s not only the number of fields you have in your registration forms, but the friction and anxiety associated with those forms.

For example, most customers are much less likely to want to share their telephone number early in the funnel (or will share the ever popular 999-999-9999) because, while they may be ready to receive emails from you, they may not be deep enough in the funnel to want a sales call.

When we break out the data, it is interesting to note that only 22% of B2C marketers, who usually have a simpler sales process, ask for telephone numbers while 37% of B2B and/or B2G marketers and 38% of those who market to both a B2B and B2C audience ask for telephone numbers.
THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

Keep in mind, when you decide how much information to ask for on your forms, the telephone changes everything.

In this sense, I’m not talking about a telephone number per se, but rather the smartphone computing platform, where simplicity is paramount.

As one survey respondent noted, “It will change the way we deliver content. Completing forms on smartphones is challenging and designing content for smartphone users means making engagement easier.”
As I wrote previously on the MarketingSherpa Blog, there is an inherent paradox in the marketing and media industries when it comes to creative talent.

We need them to come up with ideas that are wild and outside of the box, and they’re expected to fit within corporate structure.

**Let’s take a closer look at one of those boxes today — email marketing**

According to the MarketingSherpa 2013 *Email Marketing Benchmark Report*, companies have identified a 119% overall ROI from email marketing.

This means more email marketing writing and design assignments for agency copywriters, art directors, graphic designers and marketing managers.

Now, anyone who has any writing or design ability at all probably did not grow up hoping to write email marketing. I wanted to write screenplays myself, and now my goal is to write the great American e-book. You might have originally started in the agency business or a marketing department with the hope of focusing on broadcast spots.

But, we all know the dog assignments are what separate the true professional writers from the hacks. For that reason, one of my favorite pieces in my portfolio is a postcard for a realtor incentive program. No joke.

**Creative, effective email**

So, with MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2014 now accepting entries until September 8, let’s take a quick look at a few examples of really creative email campaigns. Since results are a major focus of the Email Awards, this is creative that really works.

I call this bottled lightning – taking a run-of-the-mill creative brief in a restrictive medium and adding a creative jolt. It goes back to the basics you learned when you first built your portfolio. Sure, anyone can make an amazing 60-second for Porsche or Harley.

But, you can’t do these in broadcast ...
1. Get Interactive in Real Time

The Best in Show winner from MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2013 (sponsored by Responsys), NFL.com, added some really innovative features to its newsletters, like “Countdown to the Game” countdown clocks and a “Who Will Win? Vote Today!” dynamically updated poll.
Results: 121% increase in open rate, 26% increase in clickthrough rate, and a 9% increase in mobile opens.

Kudos to ...

- Christine Hua and Aidan Lyons of the NFL (client)
- David Hubai, Andrey Semenov, Ray Bovenzi, Robert Ragusa, Kellie Mixon, Greg Zolotas, Colin Petruno, Anne Koskey-Wagoner and Lilia Arsenault of e-Dialog (agency)

Steal this idea ...

Admittedly, I’m starting with a brand that must be as fun to work with, or more fun than Harley and Porsche. What’s impressive here is how these marketers took the Marshall McLuhan approach. One huge advantage email has over broadcast is that it’s interactive and you can update your creative in real time.

2. Win back that old flame

Travelocity won a Gold in MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2012 (sponsored by Responsys), for its win-back campaign. The designers created an email so beautiful you just want to jump into it like the girl in the “Take on Me” music video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djV11Xbc914).

Results: Travelocity increased ROI more than 100% from previous efforts.

Kudos to ...

- Doug Purcell of Travelocity (client)
- Tonya Gordon, Doug Steinberg and Aaron Wilson of StrongMail (agency)

Steal this idea ...

Broadcast is a mass media because you must talk to a mass audience. You don’t know who has bought recently, or bought a long time ago and hasn’t come back.

With email, you can find that old flame and target a message specifically to them. However, many win-back campaigns are solely discount focused. In this case, the team produced an email that appealed to the rational by including the discount, but didn’t overlook the emotional reasons to travel with the beautiful imagery.
Save 15% on your next hotel booking

Dear Kimberly,

We noticed it’s been some time since you booked with Travelocity. As one of our valued customers we wanted to extend you this exclusive offer:

GET AN ADDITIONAL 15% OFF
our already discounted rates
on your next hotel or vacation package booking!

Use your unique discount code to save an additional 15% on our already great deals like:

SAVE 30%
ON SPRING VACATIONS
SAFE ENDS 3/7

For permissions: research@meclabs.com
3. **Spread like a (fun-to-catch) virus**

A Silver winner from MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2011, Avis Germany and ATOUT FRANCE (the French Tourism Development Agency), had participants compete on a virtual road trip from Germany to France. To move from town to town, you had to recruit new players to help you. The competition prizes included trips to all five destination towns.

**Results:** Avis grew its list by 2% and ATOUT FRANCE by 4%.

**Kudos to ...**

- Anna Kraher and Klaus Tusche of Avis Autovermietung GmbH & Co KG (client)
- Karine Lober of ATOUT FRANCE (client)
- Katrin Forster, Alexander Kobler and Torsten Burgmaier of rabbit eMarketing Sinn von Graeve GmbH (agency)

**Steal this idea ...**

A broadcast ad is tough to share beyond “Hey, come here; check out ... ah, you missed it. You see, there was this dog, and he was dancing gangnam-style in the Old West and ...”

Email, by its very nature, is shareable. Before Zuckerberg invented the “Like” button, there was the forward button. By coming up with wildly creative games, contests and other compelling content people want to share with their friends, you’re reaching beyond your own list to their friends ... and their friends’ friends.

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i [http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/marketing-careers/media-professionals-wild-spar](http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/marketing-careers/media-professionals-wild-spar)
Es geht nach Nizza und Sie sehen nichts? Dann klicken Sie hier.

**Großer AVIS Gewinnaktion!**

**Von Oberursel nach Nizza und dann gewinnen!**

Jeder neue Teilnehmer bringt Sie Ihrem **TRAUMWOCHENENDE in Nizza 1 km näher!**

Guten Tag Frau Förster,

begleiten Sie Avis und ATOUT FRANCE – Französische Zentrale für Tourismus auf eine 2.420 km lange Reise quer durch Frankreich bis an die Côte d’Azur. Sichern Sie sich mit Ihrer kostenlosen Teilnahme am WAY TO-Gewinnspiel die Chance auf attraktive Reisen nach Frankreich, z.B. ein unvergessliches Wochenende für 2 Personen in Nizza. Einfach anmelden, Freunde via E-Mail oder Facebook zur Teilnahme einladen und mit etwas Glück gewinnen!

Wir wünschen Ihnen eine gute Reise!

**Nur noch 2420 km! Kommen Sie Ihrem Traumgewinn mit jedem neuen Teilnehmer 1 km näher!**

**Jeder Neue zählt!**

**Der Hauptpreis:**


Mit freundlicher Unterstützung von Avis und ATOUT FRANCE - Französische Zentrale für Tourismus, Ihrem Partner für gelungene Reisen nach Frankreich.
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i - f) - 2a \]

\[ \text{emc} = rv(\sigma f + i) - (f + \cdots) \]
MARKETING OPTIMIZATION
Major Experiment Briefing

**Does Brand Really Matter?**

A recent experiment reveals how brand impacts the conversion process

- Content created by Flint McGlaughlin, Austin McCraw, Jon Powell, Shaun Metzger

In the realm of marketing, there is hardly a more debated topic than that of branding. At MECLABS, we have done a lot of work that relates to branding over the last 20 years, but we have rarely spoken about it or taught on the topic in an intentional way. Rather, we have focused the bulk of our research and teaching on the concept of value proposition – what it is and how it impacts the force of an offer and influences a prospect to say “yes.”

In this article, we will undertake the weighty and important task of drawing from our research and experiments and relating what we have learned about value propositions to brands. As “branding” is a poorly defined term and not fully understood even within the marketing industry, we will be careful and deliberate in the defining of our terms and the explanation of our conclusions.

Even though this is a slight departure from the standard content we are used to proliferating regarding our findings, you will find the conclusions are no less solid. As with all research at MECLABS, we begin with a philosophical question and proceed to craft scientific tests allowing us to arrive at a “learning” that is trustworthy and actionable. Such is the case with this research’s fundamental experiment.

**An Experiment: Does Brand Matter?**

The Research Partner for Test Protocol (TP) 1651 was an old, well-respected brand – *The Boston Globe*. We have worked with *The Boston Globe* for many years, and have great respect for its leadership and marketing teams. In this particular experiment, we were testing a landing page with a goal of converting prospects to online subscribers. The goal was to increase the conversion rate of the page.

The original page (Figure 1.1) used a template CMS structure that did very little to leverage the brand. For us, it raised some interesting questions: When should we use brand? How powerful is brand? What is the brand’s impact on conversion? As you can see from Figure 1.2, the whole process for a complete registration uses the “Subscriber” logo in the top-left corner of the pages. We wanted to see what would happen if we replaced that logo with *The Boston Globe* logo. Would the inclusion of a prominent brand symbol impact conversion?
Figure 1.1

Exclusive Benefits for our Subscribers

BostonGlobe.com – You’re entitled to complimentary access to BostonGlobe.com – our new paid website with all the news from the Globe plus exclusive features, more-in-depth coverage and the ability to save articles for offline reading. You can easily access the site on any digital device with a browser (e.g. laptop, tablet, smartphone), and there’s never a need to convert settings or download an app. For more information about BostonGlobe.com, click here.

Money-saving coupons and deals from the area’s best retailers.

BG Insider Loyalty Program – Become a Boston Globe Insider and enjoy VIP access to exclusive content and special events with editorial staff as well as offers and invitations from Globe partners and advertisers.

Figure 1.2

The unbranded template is used throughout the entire conversion process.
So, we created a treatment integrating *The Boston Globe* brand (see Figure 1.3). The inclusion of the brand symbol was the most significant change to the page and the complete process. **What was the result? A 40% increase in conversion.** This finding proves the power of brand, but it raises additional questions for us as marketers and specifically a key question on which we want to focus.

**Key Question: How Should Marketers Conceive of Brand?**

This question encompasses many of the swirling issues surrounding branding as a legitimate sub-section of marketing. How should we, as marketers, interact with the idea of our brand on a daily basis? How should we make decisions regarding our brand? How can we leverage it to increase conversions and sales?

We like to use the analogy of dating when explaining marketing concepts. When you meet a new person, there is no stored equity in regard to the relationship, so all of the equity has to be created in the unfolding of the relationship over time. However, if you could tap into **something that already exists, a reserve of**
mental value or experiences you could appeal to, there is much more opportunity to quickly develop the relationship. If the other person has heard positive stories and reviews of your character and personality before meeting you, you already have a reserve of mental value to leverage in your initial meeting.

In the case of *The Boston Globe*, we wanted to tap into a similar sort of thought reserve. It is an equity position that doesn’t occur on a balance sheet; it occurs in the mind. **When we talk about brand, we are talking about this mental reserve of value. We are talking about this equity that exists in the mind of prospects and customers regarding your business.**

Brand is not a logo. Brand is not a slogan. Brand is not a spokesperson. Brand is not a color palette (see Figures 2.1 - 2.4). All of these serve to underscore, intensify or emphasize the brand, but they are not enough. **As marketers, our problem is usually not that we have brand confusion, but that we are confused about brand** – what it is and how to use it. We hope to end that confusion with the following insight.

---

**Figure 2.1**

**Figure 2.2**

**Figure 2.3**

**Figure 2.4**
Unifying Insight: Brand is the Aggregate Experience of the Value Proposition

The elucidation of this claim, which is meant to be a shift in thinking rather than a strict definition, will compose the balance of this article. We will dig deeper into the two main parts of this claim (i.e., what is meant by “aggregate experience” and “value proposition” in relation to branding), so at the end of this reading you will understand the function of brand in regard to marketing and how to leverage it to increase conversion. We will begin with the phrase “aggregate experience.”

1. Understanding Brand: “Aggregate Experience”

There are three key principles to guide our thinking about brand as aggregate experience.

Key Principle #1: Brand represents the sum total of experiences in the marketplace, particularly those that connect to you.

As we have established, brand is not a logo or a marketing campaign. Brand is actually created by everyone interacting with a company. The total experiences, both good and bad, factor into your brand. A collection of seemingly innocuous experiences can impact a brand as strongly as a high profile success or failure.

Key Principle #2: Brand exists in the mind. It represents a form of mental shorthand. It stands for a decision collective and represents the default choice. As such, it implies expectation.

This is vital to understand. Brand exists in the mind – you don’t own your brand. Rather, your brand is created and owned by every single individual with a conception or impression of your business. Your brand is essentially a mental shorthand – a way for a customer or prospect to quickly recall their impression of your business – and it becomes extremely important at a time when people are increasingly overwhelmed with information. Brand is like a handle you can pick up with your mind. The greater the amount of information coming at us, the more we need these mental shortcuts to help us make sense of the world.

Look at the logo in Figure 3.1. That well-known logo is a mental cue that calls to mind certain feelings and expectations. We already have these expectations tucked away in our minds. They may be associated with words like “revolutionary” or “quality” or “sleek,” but along with these descriptive terms about what Apple is, we also have an inherent expectation regarding the company and its products. All of this already exists within us. This is the Apple brand. The logo simply taps into that mental reserve of value Apple has already built.

Figure 3.1
Key Principle #3: Brand does not make a promise; it creates an expectation. The strength of the brand is derived not from declaration, but through expectation.

The phrase “brand promise” is often used in marketing circles, and it is extremely misleading. Brands do not make promises. A promise is a claim built on nothing. An expectation is built on repeated experience. As a brand is the sum total of experiences regarding a business (or person, movie, product, etc.), a better way to think about branding is fostering expectations.

Rather than try to force a claim past a prospect’s defenses, try to create within them an expectation. A promise or claim originates with you. You are then burdened with persuading the prospect of the truthfulness or desirability or importance of the claim. This is not where you want to be. An expectation, on the other hand, originates inside of the prospect. They are automatically and necessarily convinced of the strength and force of the expectation. All you need to do is meet or exceed it. As marketers, we aren’t in the business of making claims – we’re in the business of fostering expectations.

This occurs on a macro scale, but it also occurs on a micro scale. In Figure 3.2, you see a line of people in New York City. You may easily mistake this for a line of people waiting to obtain the latest Apple release. However, this is a line of people desperately waiting to get inside of a little restaurant in Harlem called “Sylvia’s” after the founder and owner. Sylvia’s has built a ravenous expectation for a quality dining experience and authentic food. This brand has transcended its location so people all over the world come to visit it. Famous politicians, movie stars and celebrities all wait in this line to get into Sylvia’s.
It doesn’t matter whether you’re a global enterprise, a local restaurant or an individual. Brand stores equity in the mind, and can have a massive impact on the force of your offers. The individuals standing in line for Sylvia’s are not there because of a logo or a slogan. They are there because there is an expectation built up in their minds regarding the restaurant and the food. That is Sylvia’s brand.

2. Understanding Brand: “Value Proposition”

There are two key principles to guide our thinking about brand as the experience of a value proposition.

Key Principle #1: All brand should influence choice. More specifically, brands should be built around the answer to a single question: “Why should I buy from you rather than any other competitor?”

We’ve spent 20 years researching the concept of value proposition, and one question essentially crystallizes the entire framework of complicated heuristics we have built to get to the heart of value proposition. The phrase itself is so simple that the true complexity and impact of the principles it encompasses can sometimes be missed. However, if you are to build your brand on your value proposition, and this must be your goal, you must fully understand the weight of this critical question:

“If I am your ideal customer, why should I buy from you rather than any of your competitors?”

There are four main parts of this question, and they help us develop a fuller picture of what a value proposition is and how we are to use it.

1. “If I …”
   You are fundamentally answering a first-person question posed in the mind of your customers. It always implies a “because” answer. You cannot understand your value proposition when you think about it in an abstract way. You must step into the skin of your customers and see through their eyes.

2. “… your ideal customer …”
   A value proposition focuses on a specific customer segment. This requires you to consider whom you will not serve and the associated trade-offs.

3. “… why should I buy from you …”
   A value proposition is an ultimate reason – the reason why. It is the culmination of a careful argument supported by evidence. If you are asked for your value proposition and you cannot insert the word “because” in front of your answer, it is probably not a value proposition at all.

4. “… rather than any of your competitors?”
   A value proposition must differentiate you from your competitors in at least one way. You must have an “only” factor. A truly authentic value proposition does not resort to specialized, nuanced language. The goal is to clearly articulate a benefit you offer that no other competitor offers. Clarity trumps persuasion.
David Oglivy, often hailed as the “Father of Advertising,” had strong words for those who put creativity before results: “You generalists pride yourselves on being creative – whatever that awful word means. You cultivate the mystique of creativity. You regard advertising as an art form – and expect your clients to finance expressions of your genius.”

Rather than trying to come up with ever more creative ways to market ourselves, we must first take the time to isolate and understand exactly what it is we want to build our brand on. A simple, powerful value proposition is the only foundation upon which to build a brand that will result in the maximum number of sales. No advertising, however creative, can make up for the lack of a value proposition.

**Key Principle #2:** Every Web design element (logo, color scheme, imagery, slogan, etc.) should either state or support the essence of your primary value proposition.

All of those elements we traditionally associate with branding, they are in fact meaningless if they are not in service to your value proposition. They are not themselves your brand. They are consistent mental cues you can use to access your brand in the mind of the customer or prospect. To highlight the importance of the value proposition to conversion, specifically in this case Web conversions, we turn to a final case study.

Encyclopedia Britannica, a large and successful company that has built up significant brand equity in the minds of customers over the years, partnered with us to see if we could improve the conversion rate of its free trial page. You can see the control (original) page in **Figure 4.1**.
Using a MECLABS heuristic, we analyzed the page and realized that many of the elements of the page were not in service to the value proposition of the offer. Namely, the user would get access to the entirety of Encyclopedia Britannica, instantly, for free. The headline did not communicate that message. The images did not reinforce that message.

In our treatment of the page (Figure 4.2), we addressed these disparate elements and focused them all on clearly communicating the value proposition of the page. The new headline communicates it. The image and caption communicate it. The vertical structure of the page eliminates confusion and generates momentum toward the call-to-action, which itself communicates the value proposition.

What is the result of the changes? A 103% increase in conversion.

A brand that is built on anything other than the value proposition of your business is investment in the wrong place. Your brand must influence the prospect to choose you and the customer to choose you again. There is no point building up an expectation in peoples’ minds if the expectation is for something that is not desired or can be purchased elsewhere with an interchangeable result.
THE 5 MOST COMMON BRANDING ERRORS

In this article, we have wholeheartedly delved into the murky waters surrounding the topic of branding, and hopefully we brought a certain amount of clarity in regard to how we must think about this subject. As marketers, we must understand what a brand is, and what it isn’t, before we can hope to leverage it to increase sales. In summary, here are the five most common errors we see marketers make in their thinking about branding.

MISTAKE #1: Confusing brand essence with brand cues.

MISTAKE #2: Assuming the brand is a promise rather than expectation.

MISTAKE #3: Believing the brand is owned by the organization rather than the individual prospect. Brand exists in the mind.

MISTAKE #4: Divorcing the brand messaging from the company value proposition.

MISTAKE #5: Thinking the work of the brand begins and ends with the first part of the messaging.

These mistakes roughly summarize the main points touched on in our discussion of branding. They can be used as a checklist to ensure you are on the right path when it comes to investing in your business’ brand. They can also be used as a framework to revisit the content of this article, and solidify in your own mind the concepts covered.

You do not own your brand, but you can direct it, invest in it, and methodically build it into a powerful mental reserve of positive expectations. Then, you can watch as those positive expectations create an internal momentum that drives more prospects, conversions and sales to your business.

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i For more on the impact a value proposition has on optimization, see http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-optimization/essence-value-proposition.html

ii MECLABS research spans nearly two decades and includes more than 15,000 conversion page tests. For access to our research library, see http://www.marketingexperiments.com/research-topics/research_archive.html

iii All of our experiments are statistically validated at a 95% level of confidence. For more on our testing methodology, see http://www.marketingexperiments.com/methodology-marketingexperiments.html

iv This is the fundamental question underlying our understanding of the term “value proposition.” If you would like to learn more about how to identify, craft and express a value proposition, see http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/value-proposition-development/overview

v Excerpts taken from a speech given by David Ogilvy in Paris to a group of direct marketers. For more of the speech, see http://www.msileads.com/uncategorized/david-ogilvy-speech/
Want to know the secret to always running successful tests?

The answer is to formulate a hypothesis.

Now when I say it’s always successful, I’m not talking about always increasing your Key Performance Indicator (KPI). You can “lose” a test, but still be successful.

That sounds like an oxymoron, but it’s not. If you set up your test strategically, even if the test decreases your KPI, you gain a learning, which is a success! And, if you win, you simultaneously achieve a lift and a learning. Double win!

The way you ensure you have a strategic test that will produce a learning is by centering it around a strong hypothesis.

**SO, WHAT IS A HYPOTHESIS?**

By definition, a hypothesis is a proposed statement made on the basis of limited evidence that can be proved or disproved and is used as a starting point for further investigation.

Let’s break that down:

It is a *proposed* statement.

- A hypothesis is not fact, and should not be argued as right or wrong until it is tested and proven one way or the other.

It is made on the basis of limited (but hopefully *some*) evidence.

- Your hypothesis should be informed by as much knowledge as you have. This should include data that you have gathered, any research you have done, and the analysis of the current problems you have performed.
It can be proved or disproved.

- A hypothesis pretty much says, “I think by making *this change*, it will cause *this effect*.” So, based on your results, you should be able to say “this is true” or “this is false.”

It is used as a starting point for further investigation.

- The key word here is *starting point*. Your hypothesis should be formed and agreed upon before you make any wireframes or designs as it is what guides the design of your test. It helps you focus on what elements to change, how to change them, and which to leave alone.

**How do I write a hypothesis?**

The structure of your basic hypothesis follows a CHANGE: EFFECT framework.

```
Changing _________________ into _________________

will _________________.
```

While this is a truly scientific and testable template, it is very open-ended. Even though this hypothesis, “Changing an English headline into a Spanish headline will increase clickthrough rate,” is perfectly valid and testable, if your visitors are English-speaking, it probably doesn’t make much sense.

So now the question is …

**How do I write a GOOD hypothesis?**

To quote my boss Tony Doty, “This isn’t Mad Libs.”

We can’t just start plugging in nouns and verbs and conclude that we have a good hypothesis. Your hypothesis needs to be backed by a strategy. And, your strategy needs to be rooted in a solution to a problem.
So, a more complete version of the above template would be something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changing</th>
<th>What your analysis indicates is the problem</th>
<th>into</th>
<th>What change you think will solve that problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will</td>
<td>The effect it will have on your key performance indicator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to have a good hypothesis, you don’t necessarily have to follow this exact sentence structure, as long as it is centered around three main things:

1. Presumed problem
2. Proposed solution
3. Anticipated result

**Presumed Problem**

After you’ve completed your analysis and research, identify the problem that you will address. While we need to be very clear about what we think the problem is, you should leave it out of the hypothesis since it is harder to prove or disprove. You may want to come up with both a problem statement and a hypothesis.

For example:

Problem Statement: “The lead generation form is too long, causing unnecessary friction.”

Hypothesis: “By changing the amount of form fields from 20 to 10, we will increase number of leads.”

**Proposed Solution**

When you are thinking about the solution you want to implement, you need to think about the psychology of the customer. What psychological impact is your proposed problem causing in the mind of the customer?

For example, if your proposed problem is “There is a lack of clarity in the sign-up process,” the psychological impact may be that the user is confused.

Now think about what solution is going to address the problem in the customer’s mind. If they are confused, we need to explain something better, or provide them with more information. For this example, we will
say our proposed solution is to “Add a progress bar to the sign-up process.” This leads straight into the anticipated result.

**ANTICIPATED RESULT**

If we reduce the confusion in the visitor’s mind (psychological impact) by adding the progress bar, what do we foresee to be the result? We are anticipating that it would be more people completing the sign-up process. Your proposed solution and your KPI need to be directly correlated.

**Note:** Some people will include the psychological impact in their hypothesis. This isn’t necessarily wrong, but we do have to be careful with assumptions. If we say that the effect will be “Reduced confusion and therefore increase in conversion rate,” we are assuming the reduced confusion is what made the impact. While this may be correct, it is not measureable and it is hard to prove or disprove.

To summarize, your hypothesis should follow a structure of: “If I change this, it will have this effect,” but should always be informed by an analysis of the problems and rooted in the solution you deemed appropriate.
“It is a struggle to get budget allocated.”

The above quote was from a marketing director in our 2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey. While it was specifically in response to a question about SEO, the frustration so evident in that answer is faced by many marketers when trying to get budget allocations for a variety of tactics.

Let’s take a closer look at one of the charts from that benchmark survey to help you understand where your peers are allocating their budgets.

Q: How will budgets for the following marketing line items change in the next 12 months?

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=235
Content is King … at Attracting Budget

According to the surveyed marketers, content is king with 64% of marketers indicating their budget for content marketing will increase.

Interestingly enough, if we break out the data and take a look at how marketing agencies and consultancies reported their clients’ budget changes, we see an only slightly higher 66% indicating content marketing budgets will increase.

That raises the question — are marketers mostly generating that content in-house? As we saw in a previous MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week, 64% of marketers run all SEO campaigns in-house.

The two tactics can be intertwined, as indicated by the response from this CTO, “SEO is central to online marketing strategy. With the improvements in search, legitimate businesses are ranking higher and cheaters are disappearing from results. Content, content, content.”

Inbound Marketing Attracting Budget Dollars

Overlap is clearly part of this budget story. In fact, if we look at the top five tactics attracting budget, the only tactics where a majority of marketers indicate budget will increase, they are all elements of inbound marketing. It should be noted, however, that landing page optimization and website upgrades are not exclusive to inbound.

In fairness, part of those results could be due to the fact that this is an increase over a smaller base than a traditional and well-established practice, such as print advertising.

Many marketers are still relatively new at using inbound tactics, as indicated by this director of marketing, online and continuing education, “Just at the beginning stage of understanding how SEO works, and the importance of content [inbound marketing] as an extremely effective means of generating leads with a desirable ROI.”

Whose Budget is It Anyway?

Another factor to consider with some of these new and emerging inbound tactics is the budget does not always come from the marketing department, at least not yet. For example, if you look at the quote about content, SEO and online marketing above, you’ll see it actually comes from a CTO, not a marketer.

Perhaps this partner communications coordinator sums it up best by saying, “As a quickly growing company, I have often found that budget for SEO marketing is limited and contained not within the marketing department, but within our Web development team in e-business.”
ZIG WHEN OTHERS ZAG

Let’s not only focus on the top of the chart. The bottom of the chart can be enlightening as well.

I was impressed at a previous B2B Summit when a marketer pulled up a MarketingSherpa budget chart and said, “We saw all of our competitors were spending money up here, so we invested down here where there was less competition for our customers.”

So while others are swinging for the fences, there is an argument to be made to, as baseball player Willie Keeler said, “Keep your eye clear, and hit ‘em where they ain’t.”

Less competitors are investing in print advertising? That means less competition for eyeballs and conversions in magazines and newspapers.

Another factor to consider is combining these tactics. For example, many marketers struggle with content marketing, especially when they first launch the initiative. They build valuable content, and then nobody comes.

Instead of looking at print advertising as solely branding or promoting product sales, could you use print advertising to promote online or offline content? In this way, you’re purchasing access to a relevant audience for your content. But, you’re also purchasing an asset that print still has in spades compared to online content — credibility.

ROI

At the end of the day, where you decide to invest your budget comes down to the return you will see on that investment.

Take SEO for example. Some are skeptical, like a company president who said, “It’s a house of cards that effectively steals away critical time from legitimate marketing efforts such as blogging and social content curation that provide real value to the customer and strengthen the brand reputations of the companies we manage.”

Others add some value to that skepticism, like the company founder who said, “99% of SEO is a giant scam. The 1% that isn’t is incredibly valuable.”

If the amount of any tactic that produces value is high enough, that investment is justified. So I’ll leave you on an up note, with the words of an SEO administrator, “SEO has earned the right to be considered a top ROI player. Once the subject of office jokes, our reports continually show a positive impact of SEO to our bottom line.”
Major Experiment Briefing

Converting Free Trials to Paid Customers
How the Right Message at the Right Time Generated a 68% Lift in Free Trial Conversion

- Content created by Flint McGlaughlin, Austin McCraw, Jon Powell, Shaun Metzger
- Highlighted research conducted by Zuzia Soldenhoff-Thorpe, Gaby Paez

From the earliest days of sales and advertising, one of the most effective ways to generate interest around an offer was to give potential customers the ability to try a product for free. This has only become more common with the growth of the Internet and digital offers. Today, many companies offer limited-time, risk-free trials of products.

The challenge for many marketers is converting these free trials. It is not difficult getting customers interested in a free trial. The real challenge is convincing them to actually make a purchase decision.

Now, the underlying problem could be the product. This may be true for some marketers reading this article. However, most free trials do not suffer from a product problem, but rather a presentation problem. Most free trials produce little long-term results today because of poorly sequenced messaging.

In this article, we will walk through a recent series of experiments in which a marketer generated a 68% increase in free trial conversions by simply adjusting the in-product messaging of the free trial.

An Experiment:
Which Free Trial Process Increases Conversion and Revenue?

The experiment serving as the main focus of this article is in fact three experiments: Test Protocols (TP) 1420, 1508-09 and 1512 in the MECLABS Research Library. These three experiments were all part of our attempt to optimize one particular free trial process for an online do-it-yourself website creation and team management software product designed for sports coaches, parents and league administrators. We wanted to not only increase the number of free trials, but also increase the revenue created through post-free trial upgrades.
In Figure 1.1, you can see a visual representation of the three stages of the free trial process we tested. All of these pages were aimed at converting the user of a free trial into a paying subscriber to the service. The first attempt comes during the free trial (TP 1420), the second at the expiration of the trial (TP 1508-09), and after the trial has expired (TP 1512).

In the first experiment, TP 1420, we wanted to increase the percentage of users who converted into paying subscribers before the expiration of the free trial. The control page (as seen in Figure 1.2) was long and potentially confusing for prospects. In our treatment (Figure 1.3), we shortened the page and attempted to bring clarity to the points of value offered with the upgrade.

These changes resulted in a 68% increase in revenue per visit to this page, due to an 18% increase in upgrade conversion (see Figure 1.4).
### Figure 1.2 - Version A

Upgrade your plan features.

- **Upgrade to Plus**
  - **Yes, I want to upgrade to PLUS!** $61.95/yr

- **Customize your domain name**
  - **Yes, I want to create my own domain name** $14.95/yr

- **Customize your email address**
  - **Yes, I want a custom email address and online mailbox** $22.95/yr

- **Increase storage space**
  - **Yes, I want to increase storage space** $18.95/yr

- **Control Advertising**
  - **Yes, I want to control advertising** $69.84/yr

**Your Total:** $0

Continue To Billing

### Figure 1.3 - Version B

Quick Upgrade Page

- **Get 100+ More Site Templates, 25+ More Features Only when you Upgrade to PLUS**
  - Full site customization & professionally designed website templates
  - Track keyword/score
  - ImportReferral tools to build your master & more
  - Create up to 15 additional web pages
  - Track and analyze your site visits

**Select an option below to get these features and more**

- $4.99 per month (pay for the whole season in advance)
- $10.90 per month (pay it for one month, remain monthly)

**No, thanks. I’ll stick with a Basic template site**

### Figure 1.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Conv. Rate</th>
<th>Revenue/Visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version A</td>
<td>6.37%</td>
<td>$2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version B</td>
<td>7.55%</td>
<td>$4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Difference</td>
<td>18.43%</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We then moved on to the actual expiration of the free trial (TP 1508-09) to see if we could improve the upgrade conversion rate at that juncture. The control (Figure 1.5) was a fairly simple page, consisting of a call-to-action to upgrade and six boxes displaying the features that come with upgrading.

As you can see from Figure 1.6, our treatment actually increased the length of the page with additional copy and increased the difficulty of moving through the page by forcing the user to check a box at the bottom to continue. As a marketer, these tactics may seem counterintuitive to you. Yet, our treatment outperformed the control page by 43% in terms of upgrade conversions, and 15% in revenue per page visit (see Figure 1.7).
Lastly, we tackled the final aspect of the free trial process – an attempt to convince the user to upgrade after the free trial has ended. The control page, visible in Figure 1.8 (along with the treatment), was nothing more than text with a few hyperlinks as calls-to-action. In our treatment (Figure 1.9), we added design elements to help the user immediately identify the value of upgrading to a PLUS subscription. The treatment produced a 203% increase in revenue per page visit, due to a 112% increase in upgrade conversions (see Figure 1.10).

In sum, the complete test series increased total free trial conversion revenue by 63% and average order value by 27%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Conv. Rate</th>
<th>Revenue/Visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version A</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
<td>$1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version B</td>
<td>3.69%</td>
<td>$3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Difference</td>
<td>112.1%</td>
<td>202.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clearly, there were leaks in the previous free trial conversion process we were able to plug. But, where were these leaks coming from? How can we identify them? Once identified, what must we do to plug them and increase our conversions and revenue? First, we must have a clear understanding of why free trials are effective in the first place. There are two key principles to grasp.

**Key Question: Why do free trials work?**

First, as we have said elsewhere, the marketer must understand that our goal is to “build” cognitive momentum. We are not simply building marketing campaigns, but rather mental velocity.

When we talk about “cognitive momentum” and “mental velocity” at MECLABS and in our educational materials, we are talking about the speed in which a prospect is moving through the sales process, and the ease of which they are saying “yes” to the various micro-yes(s) that lead up to the ultimate macro-yes (e.g., a sale, upgrade, etc.). If you are building this velocity appropriately, the momentum of the prospect’s thought sequence will be enough to carry them through the friction inherent in the sales process. All sales involve friction, so it is necessary to have enough momentum to overcome it.

Next, we must understand that there are certain offers in which the potential cognitive momentum built in the marketing channels and/or website is limited. In these cases, it takes an experience of the product to clearly understand the value of the product enough to overcome the inherent resistance.

Free trials come into play on products/services for which you simply cannot generate enough cognitive momentum to carry prospects through the friction in the sales process. For reference, look at Figure 2.1. The blue line represents a situation of this type. The momentum generated never reaches the level of velocity needed to complete the transaction. Therefore, a free trial is needed. When the free trial is introduced, the velocity increases and lifts the prospect to the level that is needed.

![Figure 2.1](image-url)
So, now that we understand why a free trial works and when it is necessary, we can begin to investigate how to best use this strategy. As we saw in the previous case study, **simply having a free trial is not sufficient to generate the necessary momentum** – a quality messaging strategy is required to turn the free trial into a tool that creates mental velocity and improves overall sales. **There are four key principles you can use to guide your free trial messaging strategy and prevent leaks in the process.**

**4 Key Principles for Free Trial Messaging**

**Principle #1: Sustain Value**

As we look at these free trial messaging principles, we will use examples from the previous case studies to help you flesh them out in your mind and understand how they can be implemented in your own free trial processes. For this principle, we will further examine TP 1512, the after-trial messaging.

You can see in the control (Figure 3.1), the expired features are only given a single-line text description, and a text call-to-action link is used. The only element driving the prospect forward through the process is a rather unassuming hyperlink. **Very little value is built in this page.** Rather, it **relies on the value built during the trial** to continue to push the prospect forward.

![Figure 3.1](image-url)
In the treatment (Figure 3.2), we built in a new window (interstitial) with more space to sell, and it includes the existing text and inserts additional bullets to clarify the value. The control page headline is, “Get this feature with PLUS!” In the treatment, it is, “Get 100 plus more site templates, 25 plus more features only when you upgrade to PLUS.” That replacement text is **specific about the value of upgrading**, and specificity is vital for conversion. This sort of specificity increases credibility, which increases trust, which increases conversions.

![Figure 3.2](image-url)

**Remember: Clarity trumps persuasion.** In the end, if you have an authentic value proposition, the best way to leverage that value proposition is to state it in the clearest, most immediate terms.\* Anything that helps clarify the value proposition is positive, and anything that detracts from the value proposition should be done away with.

In the case of the above experiment, the new window, the clarifying text, the images and the call-to-action all build on the value of upgrading. Therefore, we no longer need to rely on previous value to build momentum; we can do it directly from this page.\*

**Principle #2: Leverage Urgency**

For someone to make a decision, you need to not only demonstrate the value of making that decision, you
must also make it evident why that decision must be made now rather than later. This is the urgency of the offer, and you want to use it like a lever to propel the prospect toward a buying decision.

The copy and call-to-action in Figure 4.1 do not clearly communicate the immediate loss the prospect will experience if they do not take action regarding the expiration of the trial. By failing to communicate this loss, the copy actually encourages the prospect to choose the basic plan.

So, how do we handle this in the treatment (Figure 4.2)? The new copy says, “Get all of your favorite PLUS features back when you upgrade.” We imply the loss the user will experience, but then we turn the negative into a positive by saying they can receive all of the features back by upgrading. For the call-to-action, we use a checkbox to bring clarity to the situation. The user must consciously decide they are willing to give up the features they are going to lose. In the control, they are not faced with that decision.
When a prospect is faced with the urgency of making the decision you want them to make, and this urgency is real, not contrived, it fundamentally changes how they perceive the value of the offer and the need to say “yes.”

Principle #3: Anticipate Concerns

In one instance of the free trial case study we have been studying, users whose free trials had expired were treated to the messaging in Figure 5.1 when attempting to navigate to a feature of which they no longer had access. The page increases the user’s anxiety because it does nothing to address the fact that the user’s data is not lost forever. Rather, the page simply informs the user they can receive access to the feature again with a PLUS subscription, without addressing the data situation.

In our treatment of this page (Figure 5.2), in addition to the standard design changes we implemented sitewide regarding the free trial, we also introduced a bit of copy at the bottom assuring users their data is safe, but they cannot access it without a PLUS subscription. Now, their anxiety is relieved and they have incentive to pursue a PLUS subscription.

In this case, frustration can be used to propel the user toward a buying decision. However, anxiety will only muddle the process. It is always worthwhile to alleviate anxiety by anticipating concerns users will have regarding continuation of the trial. By doing so, you bring clarity to your value proposition and increase the urgency of continuing the service.

Principle #4: Layer Incentive

To illustrate our final principle, we will refer to the call-to-action examples in Figures 6.1. The control presents no additional reason to upgrade. This is directly after the expiration of the trial, so the designer of the page was relying on that built up value to push the user to a buying decision. However, we want to add additional value, a new layer of value on top of the incentive of continuing the trial.
Figure 5.2

Get Page Ordering by upgrading today!

Add up to 16 custom pages!
- Add individual links for important News items
- Customize the name of each new page
- Select different access levels for each page to ensure privacy

Choose the order of your site menu
- Rearrange the order of your site menu links
- Order all pages, including news categories
- The order will be reflected on your consumer facing site

Rest Assured
We've already saved your work prior to PLUS expiration and it will be immediately available upon your completing the upgrade process

Figure 6.1

Control

Yes, upgrade to PLUS

No Thanks, I'd prefer a Basic site

Treatment

Trial Expiration Upgrade
Special Limited-Time Offer

As a thank you for trying we are offering you a special upgrade price. Keep your existing data and continue building a dynamic web site by upgrading to PLUS now!

View Special Upgrade Price Now
In the treatment, a special one-time price incentive is presented as a “thank you.” Now, we have presented the prospect with a reason to upgrade and added a layer of incentive to make it even more attractive. They already have the reason inherent with the upgrade: They can get their data back and continue using the PLUS features. Now, on top of that, they have an extra reason.

Layering incentives throughout the process allows you to really increase the value of your offer and generate the mental velocity necessary to carry the prospect through any friction to a purchase decision.

**The Future of Free Trials**

Free trials are often the only way to have your customers see the true value of your offer. They are effective in generating interest, but unless the marketer learns to see through the tactic and into the mind of the customer, they will never be as effective as they could be.

Take this experiment and the key principles we have shared in this article. Consider how they might be implemented in your own free trials. Never assume the product is enough messaging on its own. To truly maximize the potential of a free trial, make sure you are following the principles explained above:

1. **Sustain the value** of your offer throughout your free trial messaging.
2. **Leverage the urgency** inherent in end of your free trial.
3. **Anticipate and alleviate the concerns** of your users regarding the continuation of your free trial.
4. **Layer incentives** throughout the free trial process to increase the likelihood of a positive response when the trial runs out, or before.

In the end, these changes have proven to be effective in many free trials. When applied contextually, they have the potential to significantly improve not just the number of people trying products, but also the number of people buying products.

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i By “Product,” we mean the fundamental essence of the offer. In other places, we have referred to this as the Value Proposition.

ii MECLABS has built the world’s largest library of scientifically validated experiments of the sales and marketing funnel. To learn more about the research, see [http://www.meclabs.com/primary_research](http://www.meclabs.com/primary_research)

iii This series, as with all our experiments, are validated with a 95% level of statistical confidence unless otherwise stated. To learn more about our scientific approach, see [http://www.meclabs.com/methodology](http://www.meclabs.com/methodology)


v Friction is psychological resistance generated by the conversion process. It exists in the mind of the customer. To learn more about Friction, see [http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/landing-page-optimization/overview](http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/landing-page-optimization/overview)
vi To learn more about value proposition, see http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/value-proposition-development/overview

vii One of the most common mistakes made in a conversion process that take multiple steps is what we call “Assumed Value.” To see more concrete examples of assumed value, see http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-optimization/web-as-a-living-laboratory.html

viii Anxiety is often irrational and requires an overcorrection. For more strategies on how to correct anxiety, see http://www.marketingexperiments.com/landing-page-optimization/reduce-customer-anxiety.html
Can I Test More Than One Variable at a Time?  
Statisticians answer some of the most commonly asked A/B testing questions

- Content created by Jon Powell, Bob Kemper, Benjamin Filip, Austin McCraw, Paul Cheney, Shaun Metzger
- Highlighted research conducted by Geoff Margol, Spencer Whiting

Running an online test can often seem complicated and overwhelming when getting started. At MarketingExperiments, many of the questions we receive from our readers deal with online testing and experiment design. Our publications generally focus on recent discoveries we have made in our testing, but in this article, we decided to take a slightly different approach.

We sat down with three of our most seasoned testing experts and statisticians, and posed to them the seven most common questions we receive when it comes to online testing:

Q1: Can I test more than one variable at once?
Q2: What is multivariate testing and when should I use it?
Q3: How do I test if I have low traffic?
Q4: How do I determine what to test?
Q5: How do I know my test is valid?
Q6: When should I stop a test?
Q7: What is the best testing tool?

Our goal in this article is to give you front-row access to the researchers here at MECLABS who deal with these exact questions day in and day out. What follows is a concise overview of the answers that emerged from a candid and unscripted conversation between:

1. Bob Kemper – Senior Director, Sciences  
2. Benjamin Filip – Manager, Data Sciences  
3. Paul Cheney – Editorial Analyst

Now, let’s begin with the first and probably most common question.
Question #1: Can I test more than one variable at a time?

If you are familiar with our research briefings at MarketingExperiments, you have seen us use the format in Figure 1.1 to present our findings. We have the control page on the left, the treatment on the right, and we display the results so you can see the impact of the changes. When presenting results like this, we are asked, “How do you know which of the changes you made is responsible for the lift?”

The answer to this question requires a grasp of four key principles.

Principle #1: We should design tests so they are useful.

As marketers, we aren’t simply testing to learn something disconnected from the business context. There are very real goals for optimizing our websites: to generate more leads, convert more sales, and create more revenue. These goals cannot be detached from the testing process. Marketers must always enforce a “usefulness” in their experimentation, and this often starts with what we call a “variable cluster.”
“Before you begin a test,” Filip said, “you should start looking at your business objectives. Your website is leaking revenue right now, so to run a campaign testing single variables over six months might not be the best initial strategy. You probably are better served by testing a radical redesign, where you change a lot of different elements on the test at the same time.”

**Principle #2: A variable can be anything the test designer defines.**

As the designer of your test, you get to decide what your variable is.

Filip continued, “In a case where you test two very different pages against each other, the pages themselves are the variables. You are comparing one page to the other page to see which is better, and that is perfectly legal to do from a scientific standpoint.”

Additionally, it is crucial to establish a research question for every test you run. This will enable you to define your variables based on the research question. For example, if your research question is, “Which page will produce a higher conversion rate?” it is OK to define the pages as variables. However, if your research question is, “Which headline will produce a higher conversion rate?” you would need to limit the variables to the headline in order to have a valid test.

**Principle #3: In terms of process, we must first define variables that test the category to “get in the zone.”**

When beginning the optimization process for a particular marketing piece (e.g., a webpage, an email, a direct mail letter, etc.), you want to construct your initial tests so they help you identify the general form that will produce the best results. You can see a chart that clarifies this process in Figure 1.2. Let us elucidate this idea with an example.
Assume you are designing a test to optimize a webpage. Rather than begin your tests by focusing on specific elements of the page, like the headline, images or call-to-action, you want to test entire pages that are radically different. This is what we call a “radical redesign,” and the purpose is to help you identify what type of page will get you the best results.

The goal of a radical redesign, as with every test, is to gain insights about your prospects. What kind of page motivates them to take action? Once you know the general direction you need to move, you can fine-tune your results with further tests.

**Principle #4: From there, focus on the relative impact of individual page elements.**

After your radical redesign has shown you the appropriate direction to travel in terms of your optimization, it is time to begin optimizing further upon that design. At MECLABS, the next step is called “focused variable clusters.” This is testing a group of variables within the winning page. This helps you develop a clearer picture of what variables are impacting conversion the most. From there, we can wrap up the optimization process by testing single variables to get the optimum design.

**Question #2: What is multivariate testing and when should I use it?**

Another question we are asked often is about multivariate testing. Marketers often hear about its potential, but really don’t know what it is or how it is different from A/B testing.

In elementary school, we are taught the basics of scientific experimentation. To test the impact of one particular variable, we must observe it in a controlled environment where everything is identical to a second environment and the only difference is the presence of the variable. This process makes perfect sense, and it is correct. However, it is the most basic form of experimentation. There are more advanced testing techniques we can use to speed up the testing process.

This is of particular interest to those of us in the business world, as time truly is money. The quicker you can get an optimized page live, the more money you stand to make. There are two key principles to help us understand what multivariate testing is and how we can use it.

**Principle #1: Multivariate testing (in marketing) is simply an automated way to run many A/B tests at once.**

When we talk about the experimental method we learned in grade school, we are talking about A/B tests. You compare “A” to “B” and measure the difference. Multivariate testing is most simply explained as a way for us to run many of these tests at the same time.
According to Kemper, multivariate testing is an extremely useful tool for marketers. “Multivariate testing is a method that uses large sample sizes and mathematical techniques to allow us to simultaneously change multiple variables and measure the impact of them independently,” he said. “For example, we might change a headline and a marquee banner and an image. With single factor [A/B] testing, that would be unwise. But with multivariate testing techniques, we can test three different headlines with four different images and interpret the results as though we ran 12 different A/B tests. This is highly valuable to the marketer.”

**So multivariate testing is possible, but when is it an option?**

As useful as multivariate testing is, it is not always an option for marketers. To obtain valid results from a multivariate test, you need to have three things: high traffic, enough time to run the full test, and the know-how to interpret multivariate results.

“There are many single factor A/B testing tools out there,” Kemper said. “There are fewer that are capable of doing multivariate techniques. And, it requires some additional sophistication in testing. You need some more skills in order to interpret a multivariate test, and designing a multivariate test is different in some ways from single factor testing.”

Finally, if you have the necessary traffic, time and skills for multivariate testing, you only want to begin multivariate tests after you have already tested your way into the right category. As we discussed above, this is done by testing radical redesigns.

**Question #3: How do I test if I have low traffic?**

“It is all well and good for The New York Times to run these tests, but what if I am not quite at that level of traffic yet?”

Low traffic is a very real testing concern for many marketers, and we can turn to two key principles for guidance in this area.

**Principle #1: Testing lower traffic levels will always require a trade-off between time, budget or certainty.**

The first thing to note is that it is certainly possible to test with low traffic. However, due to that particular circumstance, you must be willing to make some trade-offs, according to Cheney.

“I’ve seen a lot of tests on some lower traffic sites,” he noted. “Essentially, there is going to be a trade-off in time, budget or a certainty of the test results. So, one of those is probably going to have to get sacrificed a little more so that you can have two of the others.”
Ultimately, where you decide to sacrifice is based upon your value system for the particular test you are running. If certainty is of the utmost importance to you, your test will require more time and money, and vice versa.

“You can think about it like, ‘What are you willing to bet on?’” Filip said. “Are you willing to take the chance that 10 times out of 100, you were actually wrong? Or, are you willing to take five? I’ve seen people who refuse anything less than 99%. I’ve seen people who are willing to take 80%. So, it’s really up to you and how you define your success and what you’re willing to accept.”

Luckily, there are ways minimize the sacrifice you are required to make.

**Principle #2: There are a few potential ways you can solve the low traffic problem:**

- Test in the channel.
- Lower your desired level of confidence.
- Design more radical treatments.

Even though trade-offs are necessary with low traffic tests, Cheney assured us there is no need to despair. There are ways to minimize the impact of the trade-off.

First, test in the channel.

“The channel is where you first make contact with the prospect. For instance, if you are driving PPC traffic, you’re going to have more samples in the search engine than you will on the actual landing page. So, you test on the search engine where you have a bigger sample size,” he said.

Additionally, you can simply lower the level of confidence you require for a successful test. As Filip mentioned, this is all about your business objective. **If you can come to terms with a lower level of confidence, you can complete more tests in a timely and cost-efficient manner.**

Lastly, you can design more radical treatments. When the treatments are radically different, less traffic is required to validate the supremacy of one over the other. The more similar treatments are, the more data you need to get statistically valid results.

**Question #4: How do I determine what to test?**

Any marketer who attempts to test is faced with the inevitable question, “OK, where do I start?” Without a systematic methodology, it can be overwhelming to begin the testing process. You want to put your efforts where they will do the most good, but you are not sure where that is.
We have developed two heuristics to help marketers with this exact question.

**Optimization Sequence: Opr > Oprn > Ocnn**

“My background is in statistics, so of course I’m going to go and say that it’s all about the data,” Filip said. “You’ve got to look at your data; you got to see what’s happening. But, in reality, there are other factors that come into play. **You want to optimize the product offer first.** You want to make sure what you are offering the customer is not only what they need and want, but also that the offer is exclusive in some way.”

At MECLABS, we use the Optimization Sequence to explain the general impact of optimization at a given point in the funnel, and you can see this explained visually in **Figure 2.1**. Opr is “Optimization of the product offer;” and this is the most valuable place to optimize. This is followed by optimization in the presentation of the product offer (Oprn) and the marketing channel (Ocnn), respectively.
When deciding where to begin testing, you can use this formula to identify the most valuable place to test. An improvement in the actual product offer is more valuable than an improvement in the presentation of the product offer. Lastly, an improvement in the marketing channel offers the least value of the three, though, it is not unimportant.

**Conversion Sequence Heuristic:** \[ C = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]

Once you know where to begin testing, you must decide what to test. This also requires a disciplined approach. At MECLABS, we have developed the Conversion Sequence Heuristic you see above, and teach on it often.

Within the equation, the variables are defined as:

- \( C \) = Probability of conversion
- \( m \) = Motivation of user (when)
- \( v \) = Clarity of the value proposition (why)
- \( i \) = Incentive to take action
- \( f \) = Friction elements of process
- \( a \) = Anxiety about entering information

In short, the Conversion Sequence Heuristic captures the optimization philosophy MECLABS has developed over 15 years of testing more than 15,000 webpages and 1 billion emails. As you can see, the two largest contributors to a likely conversion are the prospect’s motivation and the clarity of the value proposition. This heuristic has been helping marketers determine the most impactful elements of a page to test for more than a decade now. Though we cannot explain this heuristic in its entirety in this article, you can learn more about the Conversion Sequence Heuristic in our Landing Page Optimization Certification Course (http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/landing-page-optimization/overview).

**Question #5. How do I know my test is valid?**

What does it mean to have a “valid” test? Many marketers have a general idea of what validity is, but have trouble putting an actual definition to the word when it comes down to it. In fact, according to a MarketingSherpa survey, 85% of marketers freely admit they do not regularly monitor for validity threats when conducting tests. So, what is validity and why is it important?

Kemper defined it this way: “A valid test in broad terms is one that is designed and conducted free of validity threats.” That sounds simple enough. But, how is this accomplished?

**Principle #1: Use a standardized statistical method for determining validity.**
There are standardized methods for determining validity. One used by MECLABS is the “Student’s t-test,” which was developed in 1908 by an Oxford graduate as a way to create representative samples of Guinness beer for quality assurance purposes. The method allows you to determine whether a difference in results is due to the variable or simply random fluctuations.

**Principle #2:** There are four main validity threats marketers should be conscious of when testing:

- Sample distortion
- Selection effect
- History effect
- Instrumentation effect

Kemper outlined four possible validity threats you must watch for while conducting your tests.

“You need to be able to rule out sample distortion and all the things that go into the statistical portion of having any valid test. But, I would say there are equally large and probably greater threats to validity, if only because of lack of awareness,” he said.

**Selection effect can invalidate your test if the way subjects are chosen impacts the results.** For example, if you are testing two pages and sending one PPC traffic and the other direct mail traffic, your test is not valid because the two sets of prospects could have very different motivation levels when arriving at the page, which could skew results.

**History effect becomes an issue when an outside force due to the passage of time exerts itself on the test.** For example, say you were targeting high-level executives, and you wanted to test whether “CEO,” “President” or “Owner” produced a better response. Your test was conducted with PPC ads and ran from October 1, 2012, through November 14, 2012. Your test would have been invalidated by the fact that the Presidential election was held during the test, and likely created a surge of non-ideal clicks on the ad including the word “President.”

Lastly, instrumentation effect comes into play when the tools you are using to conduct the test disproportionately affect your results.

**Principle #3:** Beware of only relying on a testing tool for validity.

This principle follows up on Kemper’s warning that there are validity threats outside of sample distortion (having enough responses). **Testing software cannot account for selection, history and instrumentation effects.**
**Question #6. When should I stop a test?**

**Principle #1:** It is safe to stop a test when your data meets two criteria:

- Sufficient sample size
- Desired level of confidence

In [Figure 3.1](#), you see a chart that reveals the ideal moment to stop a test. This is the moment when you have collected enough samples to rule out, or minimize the likelihood of, a sample distortion bias and you have achieved your desired level of confidence. For MECLABS, this level is 95%, but as we discussed earlier, it can be whatever you are comfortable with as the designer of the test.

You don’t want to stop a test too soon, but Filip cautioned that the opposite is equally dangerous.

“The longer a test runs, the more potential there is that something is going to happen that will ultimately change the results,” he said.

By stopping a test too soon, you run the risk of falling prey to a sample distortion bias. By stopping the test too late, you run a greater risk of succumbing to the history effect, where an outside event, like a news story or seasonal change, skews your results.
**Question #7: What is the best testing tool?**

Unfortunately, the answer to this question is one that is rarely satisfactory: It depends. However, this is truly the best possible answer to the question. Every business is different and is going to have different needs to fulfill with its testing software. Luckily, our experts said you cannot really go very wrong with this decision.

“If the testing tool doesn’t do the basic operation that we all need it to do, it’s not going to survive in this world,” Filip said. “People are going to download it, try it out, and find out it’s not the best one to use. So, you don’t really have to worry about getting the basics covered.”

**Principle #1: Consider 5 factors when evaluating testing platforms:**

1. Budget
2. Testing objectives
3. Flexibility
4. Ease of use
5. In-house expertise

When making your testing platform decision, you want to take into consideration all five of the items on the list above, Cheney said.

“Really, you are just making a business decision, so you are going to consider your budget. You are going to consider your in-house expertise. If you don’t have a lot of expertise and you don’t have a lot of budget, you want an easy-to-use tool that doesn’t cost a lot or is free,” he explained. “There are trade-offs all down the line, but in general the industrial strength testing tools are going to let you run a valid test in most cases.”

**The 7 Most Common Testing Questions**

Now that we have covered the most common questions we receive from marketers, let’s do a quick review:

**Q1: Can I test more than one variable at once?**
A: Yes, you can define your variables in “clusters” that answer your research question.

**Q2: What is multivariate testing and when should I use it?**
A: A way to run many A/B tests at one time. Use it (under the right circumstances) to see results on a faster timetable.
Q3: How do I test if I have low traffic?
A: You will have to make a choice to sacrifice time, money or certainty to achieve the results you need.

Q4: How do I determine what to test?
A: Start at the most valuable part of the funnel, then analyze with your systematic optimization methodology.

Q5: How do I know my test is valid?
A: Avoid all four validity threats (not just sample distortion effect).

Q6: When should I stop a test?
A: When you receive enough responses and reach your desired level of confidence.

Q7: What is the best testing tool?
A: It depends on context specific business factors. All tools can do the basic functions, but you must find the platform that is best for your business.

We hope to have answered some of the questions you have wrestled with in regard to testing. Hopefully, this gives you a little more confidence in your own efforts. A more in-depth explanation of some of the concepts presented in this article exists in our Online Testing Certification course (http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/online-testing/overview).

Ultimately, gaining confidence in testing comes down to experience. There are no expert marketers, only experienced marketers and expert testers. The best way to build expertise in testing is simply to roll up your sleeves and start doing it.
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]
\[ eme = rv(of + i) - (f + a) \]
Customer Management
Many marketers use a model for lead qualification based on these four key characteristics:

- **B = Budget**
- **A = Authority**
- **N = Need**
- **T = Timing**

The approach is dubbed BANT. In a recent article, Ardath Albee said, “Salespeople are adamant about these criteria.” She believes the criteria are not customer-centric, and she’s right.

Before we start another unproductive war between Sales and Marketing, maybe we should focus on building bridges of understanding between these two departments. They need each other. They can help each other.

Let’s start by creating a common language for lead qualification that makes more sense than BANT.

With all due respect to Ardath, I have interviewed hundreds of elite salespeople and have rarely heard any of them demand BANT criteria. Their critiques of marketing leads are much more fundamental.

Yet far too often, marketers send every lead to Sales and very few of those leads ever convert. In fact, Sales can rarely have a single conversation with these prospects because they’re just not ready to make a purchase.

So, let’s get real.

Unless Marketing owns an inside sales operation (and few marketing teams do), delivering BANT leads is completely impossible. Even with an inside sales operation doing lead qualification, delivering BANT qualified leads is unwise. There are two key reasons:

1. The best salespeople want to start the conversation before the buyer defines the criteria too deeply.
2. Prospects need to speak to salespeople in order to develop budgets.

Yet, we have all seen timeline questions and budget questions on lead forms.
CUSTOMER-CENTRIC LEAD QUALIFICATION

Put yourself in your customers’ shoes.

For example, if you were a customer just starting to consider buying a marketing automation solution, what would you enter into a lead form about your timeline to buy or your budget?

Early on, you probably aren’t sure you will buy a marketing automation system.

Of course, “not sure” isn’t one of the answers in the drop-down menu. Even if it was, you might be reluctant to tell the truth because you’re afraid you wouldn’t be able to get the information you need.

You also don’t know what kind of budget you need. You’re not clear yet on who will need to weigh in on a solution. In fact, you aren’t even sure the problems you have lined up with the category of marketing automation.

Now, let’s assume you are a little further along.

You’ve got a short list. You’ve talked to a couple of marketing automation vendors and are starting to get clarity on the solution. How do you answer a timeline question?

The answer is usually, “It depends.” It depends on what fires come up or how much internal pushback you get.

It can also depend on what timeline you’re asking about:

- Budget approval?
- Signing a contract?
- Starting implementation?

No matter what timeline you want or what you predict will happen, a complex sale will probably take longer than you expect.

THEN THERE’S THE BUDGET QUESTION …

As a customer, even if I have a budget, I wouldn’t tell you because you haven’t earned the right to ask that question. Plus, even if I do respect you, I still might be afraid you will overcharge me if I tell you how much I have to spend.
Also, what budget are you asking about?

- Budget for the software?
- The content budget for lead nurturing?
- The budget for resources I need to create campaigns in the software?

Furthermore, do any of the answers to these questions really mean these prospects are not worth having a conversation with?

Many prospects aren’t ready to talk to Sales early in their consideration. Sales might not want to talk to them. And that’s OK, that’s why we have lead nurturing.

**The Limits of Lead Qualification Machinery**

Instead of promising sales leadership the moon and the stars, maybe we marketers need to be a little more realistic. Marketing can’t deliver BANT leads without an inside sales operation. Instead, Marketing can deliver leads that are most likely in the target market and more likely to have a desire to speak to Sales. Yes, most of those leads will not convert any time soon into revenue. But, neither will cold calling. That is the point of reference for marketing leads.

Lead scoring can make marketing leads even more productive by helping salespeople:

1. Avoid calling some leads that are very unlikely to convert
2. Prioritize the remaining leads so that salespeople make more dials to the most likely buyers.

One of the challenges with lead scoring is Marketing often has very little information on a given lead. There are very promising developments on the horizon. For example, big data allows us to leverage oceans of unstructured information on the Web and will greatly improve our ability to score leads by providing far more information for a lead scoring system to consider.

For example, let’s say you are selling marketing automation software.

Wouldn’t you like to know which accounts are using the search phrase “lead nurturing” or have a job posting for a marketing database manager or belong to certain lead management groups on LinkedIn?

Wouldn’t it be great for the lead scoring system to consider who is reading about lead nurturing in blogs or attending webinars about lead nurturing or lead scoring?
Even with all of these improvements on the horizon, machines are still no substitute for a highly trained sales professional interacting with a would-be customer.

**Moving beyond BANT**

Ultimately, the big idea here is marketers need to start thinking in terms of moving beyond BANT scoring. In next week’s B2B Lead Roundtable Blog post, I’ll share with you my recommendation for a model that is a little more realistic than BANT.

*Editor’s Note: Find David’s follow-up post on the next page.*
According to the MarketingSherpa 2012 Lead Generation Benchmark Report, 24% of marketers ask a timeline-to-purchase question on their lead capture forms.

Q: Please select the most important fields that you need to collect from your leads on the lead generation form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email address</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone number (business)</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead source</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indication of wanting to be contacted by Sales</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone number (mobile)</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeframe for purchase</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key pain point</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Lead Generation Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded January 2012, N=1,915
Another 17% ask budget-related questions. I suspect marketers do so because they have heard about “BANT qualified leads” and apply these criteria to Web forms. For the uninitiated, BANT is an acronym:

- B = Budget
- A = Authority
- N = Need
- T = Timing

It’s time to move BANT methodology into retirement.

As I wrote in my previous B2B Lead Roundtable Blog post, BANT is not feasible without someone having a conversation with a prospect. For marketing departments, it’s impossible to deliver BANT qualified leads unless marketing owns an inside sales function.

Making matters worse, BANT does not align with customer buying behavior early in the decision process when Marketing and Sales generally need to engage prospects to win new business. So, even if Marketing owns an inside sales operation, asking the reps to use BANT criteria is misguided.

**Lead Qualification in a Post-BANT World**

Now, before introducing an alternative to BANT, I would ask you to think about the mindset of business prospects when they first express interest by sharing their identity.

We have all downloaded a white paper or attended a webinar. Think back on that experience. Now imagine after having done so, the vendor tries to call you. You go through a series of decisions, which we call “micro-yes(s).”

The micro-yes decisions depend on the channel but the thought sequence of the customer is actually quite similar, for each channel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Email and Voicemail</th>
<th>Outbound Call</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1st Question</strong></td>
<td><strong>Should I take the call?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who sent/left this?</td>
<td><strong>Who is this?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2nd Question</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does this person want?</td>
<td><strong>What does this person want?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd Question</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it relevant to me?</td>
<td><strong>Is it relevant to me?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4th Question</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How pressing is it?</td>
<td><strong>How pressing is it?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5th Question</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What’s obvious is that we want to qualify the companies who solicit us every bit as much as they want to qualify us.

At each step of the decision process, we decide not only whether to keep going, but whether to do so now using all manner of mental machinery to answer these questions for ourselves.

In the case of email, if we don’t know the sender, then we’re trying to see if the email is junk mail. The “from” field might be a clue. For example, if that field contains the name of a company, we suspect it’s some kind of advertisement or triggered email. We then look at the subject line. And so on.

With a voicemail or an outbound call, we’re listening to the accent, the clarity, the tone, not just the meaning of the words. All of these factors and more can influence how someone might react.

The decisions we make are not just “yes or no.” Often, they are “if/then” scenarios. If the call is from my agency, then X, or if it’s from overseas, then Y, and so on. Those who engage customers need to be mindful and respectful of this filtering process that all of us use.

**Lead Qualification does not start with prospects**

Given this desire we all have to be guarded with strangers, how should we qualify prospects once we decide to speak to them?

First, you need to be polite, not rude or disrespectful. I know that sounds obvious, but we all know how low the bar is. People call without an appointment, without asking if you are busy, without knowing much about you. Rarely do they offer to add value.

So, before you start qualifying them, maybe ask if you’ve called at a bad time. Before asking them questions, do some research on LinkedIn to see if it sounds like they are responsible for what you sell. In other words, you want to establish your authority and credibility, partly through your respectfulness and professionalism.

With this as a context, let me propose a replacement for BANT. I call it PAM – **Persona** qualification, **Account** qualification, **Motivation**.
**Persona Qualification**

One thing that is disrespectful is rattling on about something irrelevant to the prospect. The first point of phone qualification is making sure the person is one of the buying personas you hunt for. It’s usually not about the title, although a title is highly indicative. Really, it’s about the charter the person has.

But, how do you determine the charter?

First, provide a process-level and a prospect-level value proposition.

The process-level value proposition answers the question, “Why should I listen to you at all?” The prospect-level value proposition frames your value proposition from a buyer-persona perspective.

For example, you might say, “We have some new research that marketing executives faced with lead follow-up and lead conversion challenges find very helpful. With this new approach, companies are seeing 30% to 40% increases in lead conversion.”

Now you have possibly earned the right to ask them a question or two. Explain that you don’t want to waste their time and so you’d like to ask two questions. Ask what their role is in the company and how the company makes decisions about the kinds of solutions you sell.

Most of the time, if the person you are speaking with is not involved, he or she will give you the name of the person you might want to speak with, if they are at all aware of the challenge. If the person is involved, then he or she may want to learn more before getting others involved.

**Account Qualification**

Next, make sure the account meets the criteria you look for. Again, frame your questions in terms of not wanting to waste the time of the prospect.

If the person you are speaking to is not the right person, qualify the account in order to know whether you should be talking to someone else. That said, one of my pet peeves is needless qualification.

For example, if you sell to large retail chains, do you really need to qualify Wal-Mart? It’s important not be like the actor Bill Murray in the movie “Groundhog Day,” doomed to repeat the same qualification questions with the same account over and over.
A good database marketing strategy and solid CRM implementation is critical.

Secondly, if you can find out an answer without asking, do so. Confirming what you think you know gives you credibility and is respectful. Not doing your homework isn’t.

Account qualification often varies by solution area. The key here is finding the answer to one or two questions that give you enough directional confidence to continue interacting with the account, now and in the future.

The answers should also help you prioritize your efforts to determine if the account is a minnow or a whale.

These two areas of qualification tell you the person and the account may buy at some point. They also help you figure out the size of the account, authority and charter of the decision maker, and may also indicate how much potential revenue is at stake.

But persona and account qualification say nothing about when the account might actually buy, and that’s the reason for the final area of qualification.

**Motivation**

Is the person you’re talking to motivated enough to help you get to the people or person who matters?

What pain do they have that maps to what you sell? I like the word pain because I can live with a problem, but pain is much harder to ignore.

Pain can and should happen at the account or department level and at the individual level. But, your first job is to see if it’s happening somewhere in the account.

How big of a priority is eliminating that pain, both for the person you are speaking with and for the others involved in the decision process? Insight into motivations can tell you a lot about the probability of a purchase and timeline for purchase.
IT’S ALL ABOUT CRAFTING A TRUE SALES-READY ENGAGEMENT

With the right answers to the questions in these three areas of qualification, you have a lead that is usually worthy of sales engagement.

The questions for marketers are what they can do upstream of live conversations to tee up people and accounts that are more likely to convert into sales-ready leads. There are many things.

But for now, I’d love to hear your thoughts and suggestions for improvement on the PAM model in the comments section of the B2B Lead Roundtable Blog.
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]

\[ \text{eme} = rv(of + i) - (f + a) \]
Inbound Marketing
“I’m so far behind. Everyone tells me I need to be on social media, but I don’t know where to get started!”

Today’s MarketingSherpa Blog post is for the late adopters, those not yet deeply engaged in social media marketing.

But even if you are engaged in social media marketing, these tips may help you. Marketers all experience the same type of consternation when it comes to social media and receiving questions like these from peers:

• Are you on social media?
• Which platforms are you on?
• How often do you post?
• What are your engagement numbers?

Let me put your mind at ease. You are not alone. It’s a pressure we all feel within the industry. Companies large and small experience the same pressures.

• How do we get noticed?
• How do we create our social brand image?
• How do we drive sales from a social-oriented platform?

At MarketingSherpa, we have many more resources to help you dive into the complexities of social media marketing and I’ll end this blog post with a few links to help you answer some of the above questions. But first, let’s back it up a bit, and take a 10,000-foot view of the essential elements of any social media marketing endeavor.

**Essential Element #1: Realistic Goals**

To start, we need to keep this in perspective.

Does social interaction and engagement directly correlate to conversion? No.

So, if social interaction does not directly create conversions, what are we spending our time, money and resources on? While we cannot directly correlate brand engagement, brand recognition and brand
interaction with engagement on a social media platform, we can say the personality and presence of a brand helps to inform consumers and keep them engaged in the conversation.

**Essential Element #2: Organic Conversations**

First of all, we do not need to be on every single platform to get to the next level. Start with one platform (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Vimeo, Vine, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.) and begin the conversation.

To start a conversation, we need to understand our audience wants to engage in an interaction. Start by asking questions (e.g., I’m having a case of the Mondays, how are you doing today? or TGIF! What are you planning this weekend?), then move on to talking about what you do or want to promote.

Obviously, these questions should be relevant to your brand. The goal is to engage visitors in a conversation and keep it going.

Ask more questions, respond and follow up. You do not want to be that company that puts something out there and doesn’t respond. It’s the same as sending a message to a friend to ask them out to dinner, having them respond to you and never setting a date or time.

**Essential Element #3: A (growing) Community**

Grow your following.

I know! I know! How do I grow my brand’s following?

Once you pick where to start and you have a conversation going with your followers, this is an easy transition.

Let’s talk about the demographic you are targeting. Let’s get specific. I know. This is a hard thing to do. This is where you are probably saying, “Come on, Rachel, my product is perfect for everyone.” I get it. I’ve had the same trouble myself.

So, let’s pick your top demographic and go from there. Pick your top demographic and find out:

- Where they visit
- Who they follow
- What they read about
Why is this important? It’s simple. Once you know where they go, start networking.

Social media marketing is all about the connections and creating conversations. For example, if I’m looking to help a company that is coaching boys soccer, where would I go? What would I search for?

I’d start searching locally. I would Google the top Facebook pages for the area by typing “Jacksonville” and “boys soccer” and “Facebook.”

This search criteria would pull together the right information for my competition – Facebook pages I should start interacting with.

**Essential Element #4: Homework**

Want to know more? Now that you’ve gotten a look at the basics, here is more reading to help you answer the questions I asked above, and many more …

- Are you on social media? If you are, you’re not alone. To get attention for your marketing, you must stand out on social networks crowded not just with other marketers, but also your customers’ friends and family. Learn more – “Social Media Marketing: Can you compete with your customer’s mom?” http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/social-networking-evangelism-community/social-media-marketing-can-you-compete-with-your-customer%E2%80%99s-mom/
- Which platforms are you on? Really, which platforms should you be on? Here is a process for evaluating social media (and really all) content channels. http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/inbound-marketing/evaluating-content-channels-process/
- How do we drive sales from a social-oriented platform? In this case study, you can see how an online retailer generated a 172% ROI from direct sales from the company’s blog. http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/e-commerce-blog-content-marketing
Once upon a time, I was the new kid at school. Since I was a fairly athletic kid, I soon found myself in the midst of a pickup football game at recess. Imagine my horror when, despite my lack of knowledge about the competition, I was selected as a team captain.

I remember asking kids to explain to me, as quickly as possible, why I should choose them for my team. Some kids gave excellent reasons. “I’ve got good hands,” said one. “I’m the fastest kid here,” chimed in another. Many of the kids, however, never offered any answer to my question. Some of them ended up sitting out the game because they couldn’t articulate why they should be picked. In football, as in social media, the key to getting picked is selling yourself.

You’re probably used to selling your products, but do you sell your social media?

Here’s what I mean.

**How does value proposition relate to social media?**

The fundamental value proposition question is:

“If I’m your ideal prospect, why should I buy from you rather than any of your competitors?”

I’ve even heard the phrase expanded in an academic environment to include this add-on phrase: “or do nothing at all?”

The “do nothing at all” is an important distinction because given a set of equally depressing options, a consumer may elect to forgo any product purchase at all.

Therefore, the smart companies tailor product development efforts in such a way the value proposition question produces a satisfying answer in regard to product offerings.

This leads me to another important question.

If product developers know that answering the value proposition question effectively is the key to successful product development, then why can’t a similar logic be applied to your social media efforts?
**Whose problem are you solving?**

The biggest problem I see with most social media marketing campaigns is usually a paradigm problem. It’s also the primary reason why a company won’t ultimately become successful in the medium.

When companies launch marketing efforts, it’s generally to boost sales. But social media, however, is only successful when content solves a customer problem, not a lack of sales problem.

In other words, most companies are not asking the right value exchange questions. Let’s take Twitter for example.

![Customer Logic vs. Company Logic](image)

The prevalent mindset is a company-centric focus of “how can we sell products using Twitter?” instead of a customer-centric focus on “why should potential customers engage our Twitter feed rather than any of our competitors’?”

Consequently, it would do well for marketers to stop and ask the fundamental question, “Is there any true value in our marketing proposition?”
From my experience, when marketers begin to ask these deeper questions about their social media content, the conversational ratio of their posts begins to change – usually for the better.

Here’s another fantastic illustration of my point.

**Do this:**

![Publix example](image1)

Notice how Publix has given the visitor a solution to their problem of wanting to eat more fish. They’ve included a free fish recipe, and a mouthwatering image of a completed meal.

The value of this post is clear and easily recognized. I want to engage with this content because doing so will enable me to cook a great fish meal for my family and achieve my goal of eating more fish.

**Not this:**

![Hoodie retailer example](image2)

The hoodie retailer, on the other hand, clearly has no answer to the question of why a user would want to engage with the content. Other than the gratuitous pandering about Saturday tailgates, the retailer makes no effort to solve any problem for the customer.

It even goes as far as to command the customer to “shop now.” Anybody who’s ever crafted a call-to-action knows that dog won’t hunt.

This post is designed to solve the retailer’s problem: the need to sell hoodies. It holds no value for customers whatsoever.
Value Proposition Is the Ultimate Social Media Yardstick

Transformation takes time.

As you might have guessed, shaping engaging content is not a destination you can reach within five minutes of launching a new social campaign.

Engaging content is the reason you should quit attempting to measure the success of your social media campaigns in terms of conversion. The medium is about clout, not sales, and success has to be measured in terms of engagement, not conversion.

I know this can be tough for old-school “measurement is management” marketers to buy into. Nevertheless, social media’s entire premise is about caring for the needs of your customers.

Plenty of data and attribution models exist attempting to measure social media, but there is no yardstick that I care to use for letting people know I care about them by engaging them in conversation.

To satisfy the needs for those marketers who are not comfortable unless they have some measure of accountability, I recommend using value proposition as a litmus test for every post that goes into your social media content mix.

In short, if you can answer:

“How should someone engage with you rather than someone else?”

Then at the end of the day, they are more likely to.
I’ve heard it described this way by a frustrated marketer. “A search engine algorithm change would be like a city tearing up Main Street and moving it a few blocks overnight, and the next morning all of the stores that were on Main Street are now on Third Street.”

Organic search traffic is very enticing with its steady stream of free highly motivated traffic to your website. However, it puts your business at the mercy of search engine companies.

Given the huge rewards and the possible risk, how much do marketers rely on search engines? Let’s take a look at the data.

Q: What percent of your organization’s total lead volume is generated from organic search?

<table>
<thead>
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<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don’t know or not applicable</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=490
The quote in the summary section of this article is from the MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey. However, after taking a look at the data, it appears most marketers do not agree with this marketing manager’s reliance on organic search traffic. Only 3% of marketers said organic traffic accounts for 91% or more of their lead volume, and just 11% of marketers responded organic search accounts for more than 76%.

Most marketers see natural search traffic as the source for less than half of their leads, with 24% of marketers saying natural search is the source of just a small sliver — less than 10% — of their overall lead volume.

As we look at the breakout data, marketers who identified themselves as both B2C and B2B were most likely to focus on organic traffic, with 5% of these marketers saying it comprised more than 91% or more of lead volume.

Of B2C marketers, 23% said organic search generated less than 10% of leads. For B2B and/or B2G marketers, 27% responded similarly.

What’s the biggest takeaway from this data?

While some marketers are very tantalized by the possibilities of organic traffic, like the digital marketer who replied, “SEO is paramount at this company. Top three rankings dominate 80% of clickthrough, so achieving high organic rankings is extremely valuable to us.”

However, for the majority of marketers, organic search is just a part, and sometimes a very small part, of their business.

Why is that? There are likely many reasons, among them:

- A marketing model too reliant on organic search could be highly unstable due to make or break changes to search engine algorithms that are beyond the marketer’s control

- Difficulty in controlling the funnel flow and messaging of organic search traffic, which can harm conversion rate

- SEO can leave marketers feeling handcuffed and give them the impression that they must follow a strict set of rules, and don’t have the flexibility to make changes to improve conversion for fear of hurting search ranking
• Tales of companies getting burned by agencies or consultancies using black hat SEO techniques the company was unaware of

• And, well, SEO is just plain hard and resource intensive

I’ll leave the last (key)word on the subject to this director of marketing, “The key remains acquiring high-quality inbound links, which is extraordinarily tough — and always has been. Due to poor conversion to lead from organic traffic so far, hard to justify resources.”
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]
\[ \text{em}e = \text{rv}(\text{of} + i) - (f + a) \]
Content Marketing
Last week, we shared a chart showing where marketers produce content for search engine optimization. But, does usage map to effectiveness? In other words, what highly effective tactics are being underutilized?

To help answer that question, let’s look at more data from the 2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey …

Q: Please indicate the LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS (in terms of achieving marketing objectives) for each of the content products your organization is using.

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=67
SEO has many technical aspects, but at its heart, it is a way for search engines to channel users to relevant, high-quality content, which should bring up three vital questions for every marketer:

- What content will attract organic search traffic?
- Once prospects get to the content, will it help us meet our marketing objectives (e.g., conversion, engagement, etc.)?
- Where should we create that content?

It is the third question we focus on with this Chart of the Week. Among the most effective places to create content to help marketers meet their marketing objectives are:

- Webinars / Webcasts — 49% of marketers consider them to be very effective, 92% of marketers considering them to be very or somewhat effective
- Webpages — 95% of marketers consider them to be very or somewhat effective
- E-books — 94% of marketers consider them to be very or somewhat effective

Also ranking highly are case studies, customer reviews, white papers, microsites and articles.

Podcasts and social media were among the least effective. And yet, much like Lake Wobegon where all the children are above average, podcasts still had 79% of marketers who viewed the channel as somewhat or very effective, and social media garnered 82% of marketers saying the channel was somewhat or very effective.

While webpages were highly used (by 79% of marketers, according to last week’s chart), it’s interesting to note while webcasts were considered most effective, only 33% of marketers are using them and just 21% of marketers create e-books.

Let’s take a deeper dive into the data.

**B2C marketers favor webpages, B2B marketers favor webinars**

When we break out the data, B2B (which includes B2G) marketers put webinars and webcasts at the top for effectiveness, with 53% ranking them very effective and 94% considering this channel to be very or somewhat effective. E-books (95% very or somewhat effective), white papers (95% very or somewhat effective), and articles (96% very or somewhat effective) also did quite well.
Still, only 49% of B2B marketers utilize webcasts with just 20% creating e-books.

On the B2C side, 96% of marketers considered webpages to be very or somewhat effective, making it the top channel for that cohort.

Incidentally enough, webinars, e-books, and white papers did not even receive enough of a response to be considered.

Not surprisingly, webpages are the most frequently used channel by B2C marketers, with 76% focusing on content for this channel.

How can you help your audience solve its pain points and meet its goals?

The above question is a key question for every marketer to ask as they contemplate their marketing strategy.

To make a sweeping generalization, B2C marketers tended to favor simpler channels for content (with customer reviews and articles also performing well, in addition to webpages) while B2B marketers tended to find more complex avenues for content more effective.

This shouldn’t surprise many experienced marketers, as most B2C marketers offer a more direct path to sale, while many B2B marketers have a more complex sales path.

Hopefully this data will help you decide on the proper channels for your content. How can you best help customers? Do they need simple snippets of information, or more complex, deep-dive explanations? At which point in the sales process do they need these types of information? And, how can you deliver it to them?
In previous Charts of the Week, we took a look at the most commonly used types as well as the most effective types of content to produce. In today’s Chart of the Week, we will explore the most difficult types of content.

To discover which types of content most challenge marketers, we asked the following question in the 2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey …

Q: Please indicate the DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY (time, effort and expense required) in creating each of the content products your organization is using.

Images were the easiest content to produce for marketers, with 73% considering images to be “not difficult.” Interestingly enough, images were also the only type of content listed that do not require words or writer.

When we looked at what content was most difficult for marketers, two trends emerged.

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=70
Technology and production was considered a challenge, with 26% of marketers saying online video and mobile apps are both very difficult, and 80% of marketers considered these tactics to be somewhat or very difficult. Both tactics require heavy non-content inputs. In the case of mobile apps, that is IT resources. In the case of online video, video production resources.

Long-form, in-depth content was also a challenge — 26% of marketers considered white papers very difficult, and 78% considered white papers very or somewhat difficult. Other long-form, in-depth content — case studies, e-books, and webinars/webcasts — rounded out the most difficult tactics.

No significant differences between primary sales channels

While we found differences between primary sales channels concerning the effectiveness of content — for example, B2C marketers favor webpages, while B2B marketers favor webinars — marketers were fairly unanimous on their content challenges, or lack thereof.

When we broke down the data, marketers who identified themselves as B2C, B2B and/or B2G, as well as both B2C and B2B all ranked images as the least difficult content, and online video as the most difficult.

For B2B and/or B2G marketers, white papers and case studies ranked right up there for difficulty with online video, with 28% of marketers finding white papers very difficult (80% somewhat or very difficult) and 31% of marketers finding case studies very difficult (74% somewhat or very difficult).

Too few B2C marketers responded about the difficulty of these efforts to constitute a valid sample size, so an apples-to-apples comparison is difficult to make. Of course, that is a significant piece of data in and of itself. When we asked B2C marketers about usage of different content types, only 10% used white papers and just 9% used case studies. Since B2C marketers tend to have a more direct sales path, versus the complex sales path for many B2B marketers, less usage of long-form, complex content makes logical sense.

Are there any content diamonds in the rough?

When we compare this week’s chart about content difficulty to previous charts about usage and effectiveness, we see that webpages are considered both quite effective and not too difficult, and they are, not surprisingly, also the most used type of content.

It should also be noted there are many types of content, like case studies for example, that are considered effective, but also difficult, so their usage rate is lower.

But, where is the low-hanging fruit? Are there effective, easy-to-execute types of content marketers are overlooking?

Customer reviews stick out as one possible diamond. While 43% of marketers consider this tactic to be very effective, and 92% of marketers consider it to be very or somewhat effective, only 35% of marketers are using customer reviews. And yet, as you look at the difficulty data in the chart above, you’ll see that 54% of marketers consider customer reviews to be not difficult, with only 12% of marketers rating this tactic as very difficult.

This could be a worthy survey to conduct within your own marketing department or agency. Survey your team, and perhaps your client’s team, about the most used, difficult, and effective content types they are using. Then look for your own diamonds in the rough. What type of content is effective, not too difficult, but for whatever reason, has been overlooked?
LEAD GENERATION: CONTENT AMONG THE MOST DIFFICULT TACTICS, BUT ALSO QUITE EFFECTIVE
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

To determine the most used lead gen tactics, and map that to their effectiveness and difficulty, we asked the following questions in the MarketingSherpa 2012 Lead Generation Benchmark Report ...

Q. Which of the following lead generation tactics does your organization currently use?

Q. Please indicate the LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS (in terms of achieving objectives) for each of the lead generation tactics your organization is using.

Q. Please indicate the DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY (time, effort and expense required) for each of the lead generation tactics your organization is using.

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Lead Generation Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded January 2012, N=1,915
And then we asked your peers for their feedback on this data...

**BE THE RESOURCE**

I don’t agree that content marketing is one of the most difficult tactics, although I will agree that it is one of the most effective for lead generation. Marketing these days is about educating your target market, engaging with them, and only selling when they’re ready to buy. Until that time comes, be the resource that they go to while researching solutions to their problems.

– Jen Picard, Digital Marketing Manager, Meltwater Group

**DIFFICULTY AND EFFECTIVENESS IS IMPACTED BY HOW YOU EXECUTE**

I find email is less difficult and more effective with the right content.

– Jim Naro, President, The Naro Group

**CONTENT IS REALLY DIFFICULT TO DO RIGHT**

The reason why content was labeled as most difficult is because business owners simply don’t have the resources or time to run a proper content marketing campaign. Counting in:

- Solid keyword research
- Separating texts to target different stages of lead interest (just looking, comparing services, emotional purchasing triggers)
- Proper writing for the Web (scanability, active language, short sentences, bullet lists, etc.)

The list is pretty long, and not everybody has the time to learn all that and then apply it. Compared to say, PPC, content is really difficult.

As Jen said, it’s all about feeling the pulse of your Web visitors. The power of content is that you can use different content pieces to speed up their pulse and get them to a purchasing decision by moving them deeper into the conversion funnel. Aside of email, hardly any other tactic is as effective of a convincer as content.

– Igor Mateski, Owner, WebMaxFormance
MOBILE IS BIGGER THAN SOCIAL MEDIA

My attention was drawn to mobile marketing designated in the social media circle. While this is certainly true, increasingly people are accessing their email from their smart devices. I believe mobile is bigger than just social media and could have a significant impact on the performance of campaigns in the future.

Increasingly tracking multi-channel behavior will also play a role in assessing marketing performance.

– Joseph Ruiz, Owner, Strategic Marketing Solutions

Very true, Joseph. To be clear, social media and mobile marketing were treated as separate tactics in the benchmark report. For this specific chart, they both had similar levels of effectiveness and difficulty, so they occupy a similar place on the chart.

However, I can see that the way we displayed the chart, with mobile marketing almost looking like a little moon orbiting social media, one could easily deduce that we implied for mobile marketing to be seen as a subset of social media. That was not our intention.
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]

\[ e_{mc} = rv(of + i) - (f + a) \]
c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a
eme = rv(of + i) – (f + a)
Exceptional lifts do not always indicate exceptional results. You always need to look at the data with a discerning eye.

For example, we recently ran a test with one of our Research Partners that offers products and services to certain high-tech industries.

All of its business is online and 90% of its products are digital. This test was designed to be a value proposition development and thought process test on the company’s primary product page, which represents a significant amount of its traffic and revenue.

## Conversion Rate – Control vs. Treatments

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<th>Conversions</th>
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<th>Level of Confidence</th>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treatment A</td>
<td>3.55%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment B</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
<td>327.4%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment C</td>
<td>4.56%</td>
<td>445.6%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When we got the results back, we were all very excited that treatment C indicated a relative lift of 445.6%.

At this point, we could have taken the results, patted everyone on the back, and adopted the new treatment. Why not?

The results seemed reliable given the test validated at a 99% statistical level of confidence. By all accounts thus far, we had more than quadrupled our Partner’s revenue. Cha-ching!

How could things get any better?

**Signs of Trouble in Paradise**

But ...

Wait a minute ...

What is the standard conversion rate for the control page?

For some reason the control performed significantly below the historical conversion rate of 3.83%. In other words, the historical conversion rate represented a 356% lift over the control.

Houston, we have a problem!

What are we dealing with here?

Here are some facts about the test to help us investigate further:

1. Our test cell included only the top-selling product page for the Research Partner.
2. Our Pre-Test Estimation tool indicated we could run four treatments and have a reasonable expectation to reach validity in 13 days.

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<th>7.2 Test Duration Projection</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
3. There are another 3,200 product pages on the Research Partner’s site.

Based on our observed data we made a few discoveries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TO-Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Page</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank-You Page</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion Rate</td>
<td>0.84%</td>
<td>196%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The control had six days in a row with no conversions. The observed test overall conversion rate ended up at 3.08%.

Also, only one of the treatments outperformed the site’s historical conversion rate overall.

--- Pre-Test Estimation ---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.1 Minimum Sample Size Estimation</th>
<th>Estimated Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metric</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected Conversion Rate</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum relative difference you wish to detect:</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resulting absolute size difference</td>
<td>2.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical significance level:</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of standard deviations for this significance level:</td>
<td>1.959964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required standard deviation:</td>
<td>0.011480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected p(1-p)</td>
<td>0.127500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of observations per treatment:</td>
<td>967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
None of the treatments came anywhere near our Traffic Planning tool’s estimated assumption of a 15% conversion rate. Ouch! Bad assumption on our part.

So, what else could be going on here? We obviously have a problem somewhere.

- Can we trust the data? So we checked all of our tracking codes. All code snippets were placed correctly.
- We checked the back-end sales. They matched the test data.

Could there be a history effect?

Unfortunately, we were unable to discern the page’s performance from the previous years during the testing time period, but the Research Partner didn’t see any overall drop in sales during the testing period.

However, with between two to 10 conversions per day making such a huge difference in the conversion rate, it was obvious we needed to rerun the test to confirm or discredit the test data.

Not our favorite decision to make, but obviously the right thing to do with all of the facts.

When in doubt … start supplemental testing

Here are the supplemental products page test results:

### Conversion Rate – Supplemental Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Conversions</th>
<th>Relative Difference</th>
<th>Level of Confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S - Control</td>
<td>4.32%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S – Clone Control</td>
<td>5.62%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S - Treatment C</td>
<td>4.88%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As you can see above, we ran a cloned control, which is designed to determine what inherent variability is present in the test cell.

What’s also interesting here is the cloned control beat out an identical page by a relative difference of 30%.

What’s going on here? What happened to our huge lift?

**Conversion Rate Comparison – Test One and Supplemental Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Conversions</th>
<th>Relative Difference</th>
<th>Level of Confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control – Test One</td>
<td>0.84%</td>
<td>-80.56%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control – Supplemental Test</td>
<td>4.32%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clone Control</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.62%</strong></td>
<td><strong>30.0%</strong></td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment C – Test One</td>
<td>4.56%</td>
<td>5.56%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment C – Supplemental Test</td>
<td>4.88%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What we were dealing with is a problem of insufficient conversion events.

Since we planned our test with a 15% projected conversion rate for our control page and only experienced conversion rates between 0.84% and 5.62%, we need to redesign our next test.
NOW HERE’S THE ANSWER TO OUR TESTING CHALLENGE

We designed a template test, where we included the top 20 products, therefore increasing the number of conversion by a factor of 10. This should equalize our results, allowing us to make reasonable conclusions as to visitor behavior and the relative effect of the tested variables and values.

Remember to keep your eyes open as you analyze your test’s data.

If it is a significant outlier and there is no apparent reason for the significant difference, be sure to confirm your results before adopting a “winning” treatment.

In some cases, that winner could cost your company a lot of money.
\[c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a\]

\[\text{eme} = rv(\text{of} + i) - (f + a)\]
Appendix A: Marketing Research Charts of the Week
**What are your peers’ top email marketing goals?**

*Q: Which goals does your organization want to achieve through email marketing in the next 12 months? Please select all that apply.*

Week of July 23, 2013  
From the 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliver highly relevant content</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive additional traffic to our website</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase sales conversion and/or revenue</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase email engagement metrics</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow and retain subscribers on our list</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate email with other marketing tactics (e.g., mobile, social)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase lead generation</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build brand awareness or reputation</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectively nurture prospects</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment the email database</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve or measurably increase ROI from email programs</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve email deliverability and inbox placement rates</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand testing and optimization practices</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve database hygiene</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualify leads</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate our email data with CRM, sCRM and other data...</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=832
MOST EFFECTIVE EMAIL LIST BUILDING TACTICS

Q: What has been the most effective tactic for your organization to register new email subscribers?

Week of August 06, 2013
From the 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whitepaper or other premium content</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webinar</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive access/offer</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount or coupon</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweepstakes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift Card</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable or don’t know</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=161
WHAT MARKETERS ARE DOING ... AND WHAT THEY SHOULD BE DOING

Q: Which of the following tactics is your organization using to improve email deliverability rates?

Week of August 13, 2013
From the 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide an easy unsubscribe process</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure and remove hard bounces</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean lists regularly</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove inactive subscribers</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain an opt-in only subscriber list</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate soft bounces</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request to be white listed</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticate Sender ID, SPF, or DKIM</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor inbox placement rate</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch reactivation campaigns</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn reputation score</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign up for feedback loops</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscribe to a black list monitoring service</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send repermission campaigns</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek certification</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know / Not Applicable</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=593
### What information do marketers ask for on list registration forms?

**Q: Which form data do you collect in the registration process for your email program?**

Week of August 20, 2013

From the 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Point</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email address</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZIP code</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Number</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Address</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salutation</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax Number</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=347
How do marketers perceive the ROI of email marketing?

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

Week of August 27, 2013
From the 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
AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF SUBSCRIBERS READING EMAIL ON MOBILE DEVICES

Q: Approximately what percentage of email subscribers read your organization’s emails on mobile phones?

Week of September 03, 2013
From the 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=18 to 76
**Webinars, Webpages, E-books among Most Effective Places to Create Content**

Q: Please indicate the LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS (in terms of achieving marketing objectives) for each of the content products your organization is using.

Week of July 02, 2013
From the 2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Product</th>
<th>Very Effective</th>
<th>Somewhat Effective</th>
<th>Not Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Webinars/Webcasts</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webpages</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Reviews</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-books</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitepapers</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Apps</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsites</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-newsletters</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Video</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Web Content</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Releases</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Magazines</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcasts</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=67
Data on content difficulty reveals customer reviews may be overlooked by marketers

Q: Please indicate the DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY (time, effort and expense required) in creating each of the content products your organization is using.

Week of July 09, 2013
From the 2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Product</th>
<th>Not Difficult</th>
<th>Somewhat Difficult</th>
<th>Very Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Releases</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webpages</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Reviews</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-newsletters</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Web Content</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsites</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Magazines</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcasts</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webinars/Webcasts</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-books</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitepapers</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Video</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Apps</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=70
**Which local SEO tactics are organizations using?**

**Q:** Which of the following Local Search optimization tactics has your organization used? Which of the following Local Business Listing tactics has your organization used for local search?

Week of July 16, 2013
From the 2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey

| Local content on pages, blog posts, and page titles | 82% |
| Local keywords in internal links | 76% |
| Local business address on web pages | 77% |
| Local search platform (e.g., Google Places for Business) | 76% |
| Local keywords in external anchor text | 59% |
| Customer reviews posted prominently | 42% |
| Listing submitted to top directories (e.g., Insider Pages, UrbanSpoon) | 44% |
| Listing submitted to Internet Yellow Pages (e.g., Superpages) | 45% |
| Local citation building | 38% |

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=172
64% of marketers run all SEO campaigns in-house

Q: How does your organization manage and execute its SEO campaigns?

Week of July 30, 2013
From the 2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=1,008
MOBILE SEARCH MARKETING TACTICS

Q: Which of the following mobile search tactics has your organization employed in the past year?

Week of September 10, 2013
From the 2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobile Search Tactics</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobile version of your website</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid search campaigns enabled to show ads on mobile devices</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landing pages for mobile users</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate paid search mobile campaigns and ad groups</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Click-to-call phone extension in paid search ads</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile-specific messaging, keywords and bids</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile site map</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location extension in paid search ads</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile style sheets uploaded</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=890
TACTICS THAT ARE SEEING A BUDGET INCREASE (AND DECREASE)

Q: How will budgets for the following marketing line items change in the next 12 months?

Week of September 17, 2013
From the 2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Line Item</th>
<th>Increase</th>
<th>Remain Same</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content marketing</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landing page optimization</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website upgrades</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEO</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPC</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<td>Direct mail</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<td>Contextual advertising</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tradeshows</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<td>Telemarketing</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Print advertisement</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broadcast advertising</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=235
How dependent are your fellow marketers on organic search?

Q: What percent of your organization’s total lead volume is generated from organic search?

Week of September 24, 2013
From the 2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=490
THE ROI OF LEAD NURTURING

Q: Do you have lead nurturing campaigns in place?

Week of September 30, 2013
From the 2012 Lead Generation Benchmark Report

Source: ©2012 Marketing Sherpa Lead Generation Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded January 2012, N=1,915
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]
\[ \text{em} = rv(o_f + i) - (f + a) \]
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

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

Email Marketing: Reactivation campaign for performing arts center sees 738% ROI
Date: Tuesday, July 9, 2013
Summary: Learn how the Denver Center for the Performing Arts embraced data, got to know its subscribers and used that knowledge to launch a campaign that targeted 40,000 lapsed patrons and saw 738% ROI in email alone, and a 210% increase in clickthrough rates.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0273

B2B Social Media: SAP Latin America boosts followers 900% [Part I]
Date: Wednesday, July 17, 2013
Summary: This case study takes a look at social media at SAP, and takes a deeper dive into social media at SAP Latin America. We heard the global perspective and insights from one of SAP’s six worldwide regions on how the multinational implements its social media strategy across many markets. Not every marketer is dealing with that challenge, but the basic principles presented in this article can be applied by almost any size B2B enterprise from SMB to, well, SAP-size.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0274
Content Marketing: How McGladrey built a strategy around content development [Video]

**Date:** Friday, July 19, 2013  
**Summary:** In this MarketingSherpa Blog post, watch an excerpt from a session at last year’s B2B Summit. In this video excerpt, Eric Webb, Senior Director of Corporate Communication, McGladrey, shares the steps the accounting and consulting firm took to improve its content marketing efforts and, ultimately, execute a 300% increase in content production.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0275

Email Personalization: 750% higher CTR and more revenue for e-commerce site

**Date:** Tuesday, July 23, 2013  
**Summary:** This flash sale website for dog owners targets emails to its subscribers’ pets and even wishes them a happy birthday. We explain the unique ways the team gathers data and how they use it to increase clickthrough rates and revenue, to provide an example of how marketers should look beyond personalizing emails solely based on the recipient and consider what other factors affect purchase decisions.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0276

B2B Social Media: SAP Latin America boosts followers 900% [Part II]

**Date:** Wednesday, July 24, 2013  
**Summary:** This week, we provide part two of this extensive case study featuring how SAP Latin America managed this effort, including analytics. In this case study, hear from Adriel Sanchez, Vice President of Demand Generation, and Todd Wilms, Senior Director, Social Media Audience Marketing, both of SAP.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0277

Email Marketing Segmentation: Clothing brand uses social behavioral data to drive a 141% increase in revenue

**Date:** Tuesday, August 6, 2013  
**Summary:** By embracing social data collected on its subscribers, Johnny Cupcakes was able to put together a segmented campaign for the product launch of its new baseball T-shirts. See how simply segmenting to male and female customers enabled the company to increase conversions by 123%.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0278

Website Redesign: Message notification provider combines SEO with LPO, retargeting to drive 81% increase in conversion

**Date:** Thursday, August 8, 2013  
**Summary:** A corporate-minded visitor to One Call Now’s emergency notification website in 2011 would have seen school buses and soccer balls, and would have promptly left, despite its robust system. See how One Call Now recognized this problem and took on the task of overhauling its website to drive traffic from organic search while optimizing the prospect path’s with carefully planned SEO, content and calls-to-action for its growing market.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0279
B2B Marketing: How Cisco transformed its marketing strategy to better serve customers [Video]

**Date:** Tuesday, August 13, 2013

**Summary:** In this MarketingSherpa Blog post, watch a short clip from Karyn Scott’s presentation at B2B Summit 2012. As director of enterprise marketing at Cisco Systems, Inc., Karyn explained how she and her team discovered their target customers found only 3% of what the sales team had said was useful to them. Watch the clip and the full video replay to learn how the team transformed Cisco’s marketing strategy to better serve customers.

**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0280

Email Marketing: How an e-commerce site eschews discounts in favor of eco-friendly content

**Date:** Tuesday, August 13, 2013

**Summary:** When Paul Cannella started his online business 10 years ago, he became the first manufacturer of eco-friendly canine waste bags in the United States, and snagged the URL PoopBags.com. Learn how he built an email marketing strategy around environmentally conscious content, and used his employees and passions to grow the company.

**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0281

Email Marketing: Li-Ning’s dynamic content nets 11% of clicks, 49% of email sales

**Date:** Thursday, August 15, 2013

**Summary:** To promote the brand in the U.S. marketplace, Digital Li-Ning discovered that understanding its customers through collecting demographic, psychographic and customer interaction data would allow the company to know who its customers were. Digital Li-Ning leveraged this data trove to develop an email campaign featuring dynamic content unique to each recipient. Read on to learn how this effort led to 49% of all email-sourced purchases.

**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0282

Email Marketing: 7% repurchase rate for brick-and-mortar store welcome email

**Date:** Tuesday, August 20, 2013

**Summary:** In this case study, the marketers at a retail chain launched a welcome email for customers who provided an email address in person. The email was not promotional, but convinced 7% of recipients to buy again anyway. Read on to find out how.

**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0283

Search Engine Optimization: E-commerce site sees 400% traffic increase with generic SEO keyword effort

**Date:** Thursday, August 29, 2013

**Summary:** In this case study, discover how an e-commerce site overcame this challenge. White Hat Holsters switched its search engine optimization from self-made branded keywords to a language potential gun holster customers were far more likely to plug into their search engines. Discover how it increased sales 100% to learn what you can do to improve your SEO efforts.

**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0284
E-commerce: Moving beyond shopping cart abandonment nets 65% more checkout conversions
Date: Tuesday, September 3, 2013
Summary: This e-commerce site cut checkout abandonment 40% with emails targeted at three types of abandoners. The site sells to businesses and consumers, and this article shows the results of three triggered sends. Read on to discover the most effective send times for Envelopes.com.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0285

B2B Content Marketing: Software company increases list 130% with content curation
Date: Wednesday, September 4, 2013
Summary: In this case study, we examine how an end-user experience management company did just that through the launch of a content curation campaign. Read on to see how your company can excel in building such relationships through this content marketing strategy.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0286

Video Marketing: Coworking space grows Facebook views from 5,000 to 20,000 per day
Date: Tuesday, September 5, 2013
Summary: Learn how a Dallas coworking space improved its SEO and increased night memberships by 30% through embracing short “episodes” that showcased its unique culture. By featuring its members, Common Desk created a storyline reflecting its monthly coworking theme.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0287

Email Marketing: BustedTees’ personalized send times increase email revenue 8%
Date: Tuesday, September 10, 2013
Summary: A leading Internet-based T-shirt brand, BustedTees has customers scattered all over the world in the United States, Europe and Asia. In spite of its global audience, it was only sending a daily email at one time every day. See how it implemented personalized send times for its users, resulting in an 11% increase in clickthrough rate and an email revenue increase of 8.2%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0288

Marketing Automation: 200% increase in lead volume for software company after implementation
Date: Wednesday, September 11, 2013
Summary: This B2B Marketing article looks at the process SmartBear, a software company, went through to add marketing automation software to its business process while growing at a rapid pace.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0289

Email Marketing: Clothing retailer lifts average open rate 40% via customer segmentation campaign
Date: Thursday, September 12, 2013
Summary: This case study illustrates how a women’s e-commerce retail site, SwayChic, optimized its email campaigns by tuning them to different segments of customers, ultimately increasing revenue as well as clickthrough and open rates.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0290
**Content Marketing: Consulting firm nets 388% more leads with 4-step strategy**
Date: Wednesday, September 18, 2013  
Summary: This corporate training firm overcame reluctance and started content marketing in 2013. Now, content generates 20% higher clickthrough rates in email and 83% of the email channel’s leads. This case study outlines the four steps the team took and the principles guiding this strategy.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0373

**Email Marketing Relevance: Personalized important occasions campaign by online gift retailer achieves a 39% open rate**
Date: Tuesday, September 24, 2013  
Summary: Using an automated email campaign, see how marketers at Mud Pie used personalization and incentives to stay top of mind during events that were important to, and key purchase triggers for, their customers.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0374

**Cause Marketing: How STIHL united 100,000 independent retailers for “buy local” initiative**
Date: Thursday, September 26, 2013  
Summary: This B2C Marketing case study focuses on how STIHL, a hand-held outdoor equipment brand, powered Independent We Stand: a countrywide movement banding small businesses together for the advocacy of buying local. STIHL recruited 7,000 of its own independent retailers, but reached way beyond its base to include almost 100,000 local retailers in Independent We Stand.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0375

**MarketingSherpa How-To Articles**

**Customer Connection: Does your entire marketing process connect to your customers’ motivations?**  
Date: Tuesday, July 2, 2013  
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog post, learn how understanding why customers make the decision to buy is such an important part of the entire customer theory. By understanding motivation of the customer, marketers will see the largest gains by working to serve their customers’ needs.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0291

**Four Ideas on Marketing to Digital Natives Versus Digital Immigrants**
Date: Wednesday, July 3, 2013  
Summary: This articles covers the challenge of marketing to digital natives, also known as Millennials, versus digital immigrants — Generation X and older. Because mobile and social media marketing channels are an increasingly important part of the B2B marketer’s toolkit, this particular marketing challenge is something that many marketers may overlook.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0292
Marketing Concept: If you build it, they will come ... if you sell, they will leave
Date: Friday, July 5, 2013
Summary: The stakes are high in content marketing when it comes to effectively building your credibility with an audience. Read on to learn more about how you can use content marketing as tactic to engage your audience not as a brand, but as a trustworthy source of useful information.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0293

Search Marketing: 3 questions every marketer should ask when starting an AdWords campaign
Date: Tuesday, July 9, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog post, learn how to get started with Google AdWords. By discovering what phase of the sales funnel your customers are in, how they are searching for you and what keywords your competitors use, you can build a campaign to reach your targeted consumers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0294

Content Marketing: How a telecommunications company tripled conversions, revenue with message maps
Date: Thursday, July 11, 2013
Summary: After one year of using “message maps” to keep its content marketing consistent, this B2B company tripled soft conversions on its website and tripled its revenue goal. See how the team built its first map and put it to work, and how to make your own.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0295

What is Data? A discussion about getting value from your marketing analytics
Date: Friday, July 12, 2013
Summary: Watch the most recent Marketing Research in Action. We sat down with Scott Hutcheson, Content Director, Paramore, to discuss how to look at marketing data to discover insight into future customer behavior.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0296

Social Media Marketing: 4 basic tips for getting started
Date: Tuesday, July 16, 2013
Summary: Learn four essential elements any marketer can use to start social media marketing efforts. Whether you are just getting started or already have social media in your marketing agenda, these tips will help you determine what you need to do to get the most out of this exciting type of marketing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0297
The 4 Pillars of Email Marketing
Date: Tuesday, July 23, 2013
Summary: This post covers the four pillars of email marketing that will be the areas of discussion at Email Summit 2014. These four unique topics in email marketing are important to the success of any email program, and will help you get your creative juices flowing for your own proposal for Email Awards 2014.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0298

Online Marketing: 3 website optimization insights I learned from baking
Date: Friday, July 26, 2013
Summary: Optimization ideas don’t always have to come out of meetings and collaboration. Sometimes, these insights can be derived from hobbies, and in this case, baking. Read on to learn three website optimization techniques a MECLABS research manager has learned from baking and how you can apply these insights to your own optimization efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0299

Social Media Marketing: Insights from Email Summit keynote Jay Baer
Date: Tuesday, July 30, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa Blog post, we take a look back at Email Summit 2013 with Jay Baer’s presentation, “More Alike than Different: Why Email is Madonna, and Facebook is Lady Gaga.” Watch this video excerpt for key insights from the presentation to apply to your email and social media marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0300

E-commerce: What is Internet-based retargeting, and how can marketers use it?
Date: Thursday, August 1, 2013
Summary: Customer engagement is something most consumer marketers are probably hearing a lot about right now. It’s a great way to build relationships, particularly through social media after the sale. One way to remain engaged with these people is to implement retargeting -- also called remarketing by some in the industry. This article features four experts with eight tips on retargeting, including real-life examples of retargeting campaigns.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0301

Marketing Careers: 3 steps for using testing principles to improve office productivity
Date: Friday, August 2, 2013
Summary: At MECLABS, we talk a lot about the testing process. However, the testing process isn’t just a way to improve website performance. The general principles are transferable to so much more. Read on to learn how testing principles can be used to improve office productivity.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0302
Social Media Marketing: How to use Facebook for customer engagement [Video]
Date: Tuesday, August 6, 2013
Summary: At MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013, Jay Baer, President, Convince and Convert, presented, “More Alike than Different: Why Email is Madonna, and Facebook is Lady Gaga,” in which he explained the relationship between email and Facebook. He also explained how marketers can take advantage of the two channels of communication to customers. In this MarketingSherpa Blog post, watch a short video excerpt of this session, in which Jay discussed a myth he spends of half his time working on disproving.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0303

Marketing Concepts: 3 telltale signs your homepage is not customer-focused
Date: Friday, August 9, 2013
Summary: A homepage design might make perfect sense to company executives, but what about the customer? Read on for three signs your homepage design is company-focused rather than customer-focused, and examples on how to fix this problem.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0304

Marketing Careers: Why marketers and media professionals must never lose their wild spark
Date: Friday, August 16, 2013
Summary: If you’re working with a team of creatives, either at an agency or on the client side, here are a few suggestions to challenge you to help keep your team’s creativity alive and well. By evaluating meetings, email messaging, industry awards and sharing feedback, marketers and media professionals can keep their creative spark glowing throughout their careers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0305

Content Marketing How-to: Social media tips and tactics from B2B Summit panel
Date: Tuesday, August 20, 2013
Summary: At B2B Summit 2012, Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, sat down with a panel of marketing experts: Eddie Smith, Chief Revenue Officer, Topsy Labs; Nichole Kelly, President, SME Digital; and Chris Baggott, Chairman, Compendium. Watch this clip as the panel discussed the value of harnessing company’s internal email power, verifying sources and using a human tone with your customers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0306

Email Marketing: What I’ve learned from writing almost 1,000 emails for MarketingSherpa
Date: Friday, August 16, 2013
Summary: Having written close to 1,000 emails for MarketingSherpa promoting marketing products over the past few years, Justin Bridegan, Senior Marketing Manager, MECLABS, has learned many lessons from what customers want to receive when it comes to email. Read on for four of his top lessons from his experiences you can use to improve your own email marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0307
A/B Testing: 1 word will unclog your conversion testing

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa Blog post, learn about the most essential word in a research question, “which.” This word, as explained in the newly updated MECLABS Online Testing Course, will allow you to create research questions that test your hypothesis properly.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0308

Email Marketing: Verizon, REI share ideas to profit from growing mobile e-commerce traffic

Date: Friday, August 30, 2013
Summary: If your emails and websites aren’t optimized for smart devices, you’re likely losing a significant piece of your marketplace according to recent analysis of more than 500 million online shopping experiences. Watch this video clip from Email Summit 2013 to learn more about how Laura Velasquez, Marketing Program Manager, REI, and Jason Jennings, Associate Director, Digital CRM, Verizon Wireless, optimized their company’s websites for the mobile marketplace and lessons learned in the process.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0309

Bottled Lightning: 3 creative approaches to email marketing (yes, email marketing)

Date: Tuesday, September 3, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa Blog post, take a look at previous winners from MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2013, 2012 and 2011. By getting interactive, winning back customers, and letting subscribers share your message, these winners saw impressive results in their email marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0310

Email Marketing: Inactive lists and deliverability

Date: Friday, September 6, 2013
Summary: Email inactive lists are a growing issue for a number of marketers for a number of reasons. From mobile email customer interaction to major ISP email reassignments, deliverability is becoming harder than ever. Read on for a recent interview with marketers to hear some of their insights on email marketing and deliverability.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0311

Social Media Marketing: Why should I like or follow you?

Date: Tuesday, September 10, 2013
Summary: The fundamental question of value proposition is “Why should I buy from you rather than any of your competitors?” But, what about social media? Value proposition is often an afterthought of social media campaigns, so read on to learn more about why it’s up to you to answer why your ideal customer should like or follow you.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0312
Customer Relevance: 3 golden rules for cookie-based Web segmentation
Date: Friday, September 13, 2013
Summary: The Internet has become more adaptive to the things we want, almost to the point that it seems as if sites are directly talking to us and can almost predict the things we are searching for – welcome to cookie-based segmentation. So read on for three best practice golden rules of cookie-based segmentation you can use to aid your marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0313

Email Messaging: Start empathizing with your potential customers
Date: Tuesday, September 17, 2013
Summary: One of the biggest hurdles you face as marketer lies in the mind of your customers. You need to uncover the attitude of your consumers and tweak your marketing efforts to appeal to that way of thinking. Read on to learn more about how transparent marketing principles can help you start empathizing with your potential customers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0376

Marketing Strategy: How you can use emails to test your value proposition
Date: Friday, September 20, 2013
Summary: We should always strive to better understand what resonates with our customers. Watch this video excerpt as Austin McCraw, Senior Editorial Analyst, MECLABS, shared how email marketing is one of the most effective ways to quickly test your value proposition.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0377

Social Media: 4 simple steps to calculate social media ROI
Date: Tuesday, September 24, 2013
Summary: We have entered an era that presents new challenges for marketers. How do we accurately attribute credit for conversions with so many possibilities? So read on for four simple steps you can use to calculate social media ROI.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0378

Testing and Optimization: Implementing insights from Email Summit at accounts payable company
Date: Friday, September 27, 2013
Summary: At Email Summit, marketers gather from around the world to hear success stories and case studies from fellow marketers and return to the office with fresh, new ideas. At Email Summit 2013, Rachel Hoppe, Marketing Manager, AvidXchange, shared how she did just that and presented the results from her takeaways from Email Summit 2012. Watch this brief excerpt from her session and watch the full replay at MarketingSherpa.com/video.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0379
MARKETING SHERPA RESEARCH CHARTS

Marketing Research Chart: Webinars, webpages, e-books among most effective places to create content
Date: Tuesday, July 2, 2013
Summary: “The medium is the message,” according to Marshall McLuhan. This MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week looks at data about the most effective channels for content to help you along the path to achieving your marketing objectives.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0314

Marketing Research Chart: Data on content difficulty reveals customer reviews may be overlooked by marketers
Date: Tuesday, July 9, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week, we are taking a look at types of content marketers indicated as the least and most difficult, and compare the data to previous charts on effectiveness and usage to see what type of content may be overlooked by many marketers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0315

Marketing Research Chart: Which local SEO tactics are organizations using?
Date: Tuesday, July 16, 2013
Summary: Organic search has impacted the way consumers buy, the way business decision makers research products, and now is moving ever deeper into the realm of how customers find products and services in their hometown. In this Chart of the Week, we explore data showing which local SEO tactics your peers are employing as they fight for traffic in this ever-growing battleground.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0316

Marketing Research Chart: What are your peers’ top email marketing goals?
Date: Tuesday, July 23, 2013
Summary: What are you trying to achieve with your email marketing? Well, let’s look at how your peers answered that question. In this MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week, we explore organizational email marketing goals.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0317

Marketing Research Chart: 64% of marketers run all SEO campaigns in-house
Date: Tuesday, July 30, 2013
Summary: Perhaps more than any other marketing tactic, search engine optimization changes very quickly. After all, marketers are at the whims of decisions by very few, and depending on who you ask, only one company. So, the market can sometimes whipsaw based on a single decision. To understand how marketers manage this evolving tactic, we asked a very simple question for this MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0318
Marketing Research Chart: Most effective email list building tactics  
Date: Tuesday, August 6, 2013  
Summary: As any marketer knows, without proper feeding and care, email lists can stagnate or, even worse, decline. This poor performance affects much more than just the email marketer. Email lead gen and acquisition, lead capture for an email list … these are all just alternative ways to say capture contact information and communicate with people who are interested in buying a product. For the most effective tactics to achieve that, read this MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0319

Marketing Research Chart: What marketers are doing ... and what they should be doing  
Date: Tuesday, August 13, 2013  
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week, we focus on email deliverability improvement tactics. Learn what marketers should and shouldn’t be doing when it comes to email deliverability.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0320

Marketing Research Chart: What information do marketers ask for on list registration forms?  
Date: Tuesday, August 20, 2013  
Summary: It takes money to make money, as the famous idiom states. When it comes to email marketing, a sufficient budget to execute successful campaigns is essential. To help you justify or perhaps decide on that budget, this research chart looks at data about email marketing ROI.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0321

Marketing Research Chart: How do marketers perceive the ROI of email marketing?  
Date: Tuesday, August 27, 2013  
Summary: Knowledge is power, but the corollary for 2013 might be “data is power.” For email marketers, that data provides the power to send more relevant email messages. In this week’s MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week, we explore what data your peers collect on email registration forms.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0322

Marketing Research Chart: Average percentage of subscribers reading email on mobile devices  
Date: Tuesday, September 3, 2013  
Summary: Are you reading this on an iPhone? A Galaxy? An iPad? An HTC One? If so, you’re like 25% of email subscribers. Read this edition of the MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week to take a closer look at mobile email habits.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0323
Marketing Research Chart: Mobile search marketing tactics
Date: Tuesday, September 10, 2013
Summary: Search engine marketing was hard enough when marketers were just trying to optimize their content to grab a top search results page ranking and outbid their competition for important paid search keywords. Then, an entirely new variable was thrown into the mix: mobile computing. To help you manage this new variable, we’ll look at mobile search tactics in this MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0372

Tactics that are seeing a budget increase (and decrease)
Date: Tuesday, September 17, 2013
Summary: To help you get a jumpstart on crafting your 2014 budget, this week’s MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week arms you with data about the marketing line items your peers are looking to increase, and decrease, investment in.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0394

Marketing Research Chart: How dependent are your fellow marketers on organic search?
Date: Tuesday, September 24, 2013
Summary: You probably know you should have a robust lead nurturing track for prospects below a certain lead score. You also know you should floss every day and eat organic vegetables instead of processed foods. The question is: do you? To encourage you to invest your time and budget in lead nurturing, we’ll look at the ROI difference between organizations engaging in this tactic, and those that don’t.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0380

Marketing Research Chart: The ROI of lead nurturing
Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2013
Summary: You probably know you should have a robust lead nurturing track for prospects below a certain lead score. You also know you should floss every day and eat organic vegetables instead of processed foods. The question is: do you? To encourage you to invest your time and budget in lead nurturing, we’ll look at the ROI difference between organizations engaging in this tactic, and those that don’t.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0381

Marketing Sherpa Webinars
Email Optimization: A discussion about how A/B testing generated $500 million in donations
Date: Wednesday, July 2, 2013
Summary: In this webinar, you’ll hear from Amelia Showalter, who headed the email and digital analytics teams for President Barack Obama’s 2012 presidential campaign. Showalter discussed with Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, how the team maintained a breakneck testing schedule for its massive email program. More than $500 million was raised as a result of this campaign, with 4.5 million online donors.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0324
Landing Page Optimization: How CRC Health transformed decision-making across 140 sites
Date: Thursday, July 18, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar replay, you will hear from Jon Ciampi, Vice President, Marketing, Business Development & Corporate Development, CRC Health Group. Ciampi and Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, discussed how Ciampi choosing to engage in optimization and A/B testing led to a $500,000 profit increase in the first five months, along with an astounding 14,000% increase in CTR for branded PPC ads.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0325

Social Media: How SAP operationalized social for replicated worldwide success
Date: Wednesday, August 7, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar replay, hear from Todd Wilms, Head of Social Business Strategy, SAP, discuss with Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, how he was able to create a social business strategy for SAP’s 65,000 employees worldwide. By localizing content specific to the needs of audiences in different regions and countries, he found his audience was much more likely to interact and engage with SAP.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0326

Lead Generation: How Adobe generated a 500% lift in conversion by changing its webinar strategy
Date: Wednesday, August 21, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar replay, learn how Shelby Britton, Senior Product Marketing Manager, Adobe, and her team revamped the entire webinar strategy to achieve a 500% lift in conversion.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0327

Search Marketing: Insights on keyword research and customer personas
Date: Wednesday, August 28, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar, Jacob Baldwin, Search Engine Marketing Manager, and Christina Brownlee, Director of Marketing Communications, both of One Call Now, joined Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, for a discussion on how they used customer personas and keyword research to increase conversions by 81%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0328

Content Marketing: How MarketingExperiments increased blog traffic by 232%
Date: Thursday, September 19, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar, Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, and Jessica Lorenz, Visual Storyteller, both of MECLABS, explained how MarketingExperiments, sister company to MarketingSherpa, saw a 232% increase in blog traffic. In addition, learn from many B2C and B2B content marketing case studies to aid your own marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0382
MarketingExperiments

Usability Testing: 5 tips for augmenting A/B testing
Date: Monday, July 1, 2013
Summary: At MECLABS, we approach marketing as a science, always testing to create more questions and then testing the answers. Read on for six tips you can use to augment A/B testing and usability testing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0329

Online Cart: 6 ideas to test and optimize your checkout process
Date: Monday, July 8, 2013
Summary: The checkout process is one last opportunity for marketers to connect with customer before they leave your site. Read on for six testing ideas for optimizing your checkout process that you can use aid your testing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0330

A/B Testing: Example of a good hypothesis
Date: Thursday, July 11, 2013
Summary: Centering your testing on a hypothesis that is rooted in solving problems can be a huge benefit to your testing and optimization efforts. Read to learn more about you can craft a good hypothesis that will drive the focus of your testing efforts to discovering more about your customers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0331

B2B Gamification: Autodesk’s two approaches to in-trial marketing [Video]
Date: Monday, July 15, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments blog post, read how Autodesk devised a plan to take a gamification approach to its in-trial marketing for its complex products. Watch the full video on MarketingSherpa.com/videos to learn the results of the team’s efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0332

Landing Page Optimization: Simple pop-up overlay increases conversion 63%
Date: Thursday, July 18, 2013
Summary: When it comes to how color use can impact the performance of a landing page, some of the least intuitive changes can produce significant lifts. Read on to learn how the MECLABS research team used a simple pop-up overlay on a landing page to increase account sign-ups 63%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0333

Conversion Optimization: 3 keys to a successful call-to-action you can learn from childhood
Date: Monday, July 22, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments Blog post, learn three keys to improving your calls-to-action on your site by remembering some basic instincts from childhood.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0334
Marketing Analytics: Should you use a daily or aggregate method to validate A/B test results?
Date: Thursday, July 25, 2013
Summary: Applying scientific principles to their A/B testing can help marketers get as close as possible to the “truth” using limited resources available. But, how you measure helps determine how accurately you can discover the truth. Read on for to learn more about the differences between aggregate and daily validation methods and how they impact your split testing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0335

Marketing Analytics: Frequently asked questions about misunderstood and misinterpreted metrics
Date: Monday, July 29, 2013
Summary: At MECLABS, we begin the test planning process by looking at the available metrics. But sometimes the discussion about metrics can become more of a discussion about the definition of certain metric, rather than trying to piece together a data story and understand what that metric is trying to tell us about the customer. So read on for some of the most frequently asked questions about misunderstood and misinterpreted metrics that you can use to aid your analysis efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0336

Metrics and Analytics: 4 questions every marketer should ask their data analysts
Date: Thursday, August 1, 2013
Summary: Marketers understand the value of using metrics to gain customer insights, but often have a limited background in data analysis. This can have a profound impact on the accuracy of information used to make important decisions. Read on for four essential questions every marketer should ask their data analysts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0337

Email Marketing: Learn from 3 A/B test results to set a firm foundation for your next campaign
Date: Monday, August 5, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments Blog post, read about three highly successful email tests featured in MarketingExperiments over the past year, and the lessons learned from the results you can apply to your own email marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0338

Web Tracking and Online Testing: Come to the dark side, we have cookies!
Date: Thursday, August 8, 2013
Summary: The placement of small data files called “cookies” on a visitor’s computer has long been a key tool in tracking our behavior across a website, keeping us logged into sites, and remembering who we are and what we like when we return. In this Star Wars-inspired MarketingExperiments Blog post, read on for tips to understanding how cookies affect your online testing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0339
Email Marketing: Subject line test increases open rate by 10%
Date: Monday, August 12, 2013
Summary: Every year, MarketingSherpa holds its annual Email Awards as a showcase to recognize marketers who designed email campaigns that exceeded expectations. Read to learn more about how one gold medal winner used a subject line test to increase open rate by 10%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0340

Marketing Analytics: 4 tips to boost confidence in your analytics reporting
Date: Thursday, August 15, 2013
Summary: Working on a project where the data reporting is less than ideal can impact your ability to make solid data-driven decisions. Read this MarketingExperiments Blog post for four tips you can use to boost your confidence in your analytics reporting that will aid your testing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0341

Transparent Marketing: 3 tips to help build your online credibility
Date: Monday, August 19, 2013
Summary: Building credibility with your online customers can feel like you’re pushing boulder uphill at times, but luckily, there are some tools marketers can use to minimize the heavy lifting. Read on for three tips you can use to build your credibility with your customers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0342

Online Testing: Microsite A/B split test increases lead rate 155%
Date: Thursday, August 22, 2013
Summary: Plenty of marketers use microsites to communicate the value of specific products or services to potential customers, but is it possible to say too much on a microsite? Read on to learn more about how a recent experiment reduced content on a microsite and increased lead rate 155%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0343

Landing Page Optimization: 6 common traits of a template that works
Date: Monday, August 26, 2013
Summary: In a recent Web clinic, Jon Powell, Senior Manager of Research and Strategy, MECLABS, asked the audience to look at before and after screenshots of control and treatment pages from a few experiments to see if they could find any patterns. Read this MarketingExperiments Blog post to learn six common traits of successful page templates.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0344

Display Advertising: 4 common mistakes marketers make with banner ads
Date: Thursday, August 29, 2013
Summary: Display advertising allows you to grab visitors’ attention and earn qualified clicks onto your landing pages, but your banner ads could be leaving conversions on the table. Read on to learn four common banner ad mistakes and how to avoid them.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0345
Customer Motivation: 3 steps to help you stop thinking like a marketer
Date: Thursday, September 5, 2013
Summary: Testing and data are some of the most vital tools in optimization, but to use those tools effectively, understanding the needs and motivations from the perspective of your prospects is vital to improving your marketing efforts. In short, thinking less like a marketer and more like a prospect can help you test your way into improving results. Read on for three steps you can use to help you stop thinking like a marketer.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0346

Online Testing: 3 benefits of using an online testing process (plus 3 free tools)
Date: Monday, September 9, 2013
Summary: Some of the benefits that derive from A/B testing can go ignored or overlooked if marketers do not have a set testing process in place to guide their testing efforts. Read for three benefits of using a testing process that you can use to aid your online testing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0347

A/B testing: How we drilled down to discover the truth behind a 445% lift
Date: Thursday, September 12, 2013
Summary: You should always look at your data with a healthy amount of skepticism, as a discerning eye can help you discover when an exceptional lift does not indicate an exceptional result. Read on to learn more about why a 445% lift was not a reason to celebrate.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0348

Online Testing: 6 business lessons I’ve adapted to website optimization
Date: Monday, September 16, 2013
Summary: Our careers don’t always take the path we expect. Learn how MECLABS Optimization Manager Rebecca Strally has learned to adapt business savvy into concepts that you can apply to optimization and testing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0383

Marketing Analytics: 4 tips for productive conversations with your data analyst
Date: Thursday, September 19, 2013
Summary: Research analysts and many marketers do not define projects and goals the same way data analysts approach a data challenge. Read on for four tips you can use to help generate productive conversations with your data analyst.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0384

Online testing: 3 tips to help keep test designs aesthetically friendly
Date: Monday, September 23, 2013
Summary: Turning test ideas into wireframes can be a little problematic when it comes to keeping aesthetic elements at the forefront of optimization when the focus is often centered on metrics. Read on for three tips to help keep your test designs aesthetically friendly.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0385
Lead Gen: The 3 pillars of lead generation
Date: Thursday, September 26, 2013
Summary: Next week at Lead Gen Summit 2013 in San Francisco, lead gen marketers will have the chance to learn about A/B testing, landing page optimization and many other essential elements of lead generation. Before the Summit commences, read about the three pillars of lead generation Summit will revolve around: capture, quality and nurture.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0386

Lead Generation: Perceived value and cost of free incentives [Live test from Lead Gen Summit preview]
Date: Monday, September 30, 2013
Summary: To prepare you for Lead Gen Summit 2013 in San Francisco, read this preview of the live test conducted with the help of attendees at Summit. See how the MECLABS research team developed a test to see whether a choice, or lack thereof, of choices leads to more higher-quality leads.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0387

Marketing Experiments Web Clinics

Page Templates that Work: New research reveals 3 high-performing webpage templates that consistently improve conversion
Date: Friday, July 5, 2013
Summary: Often, marketers do not really know where to begin when it comes to the structure of a webpage. They lean on best practices, favoring those they find most aesthetically appealing. But, is this an effective approach? In this Web clinic, Jon Powell, Senior Manager of Research and Strategy, MECLABS, revealed three high-performing site templates that consistently increase conversion across multiple industries.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0349

Does Brand Really Matter? A recent experiment reveals how brand impacts the conversion process
Date: Thursday, July 25, 2013
Summary: Marketers often hear of the “power of brand,” and organizations spend significant revenue on building brands. But, is this a truly effective approach for increasing conversion? Watch this Web clinic replay to learn about a recent experiment with one of the largest print news sources in the United States, and how branding impacts the conversion process.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0350
Converting Free Trials to Paid Customers: How the right message at the right time generated a 68% lift in free trial conversion

**Date:** Thursday, August 8, 2013

**Summary:** Companies frequently use free trials as an incentive to draw customers closer to the final point of transaction. But, when the free trial is over and customers choose not to convert, marketers are often left wondering what went wrong. Watch this Web clinic replay to learn about a recent experiment with a sports team management software service, which revealed how messaging surrounding a free trial impacts conversion.

**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0351](http://mecla.bs/digest0351)

Microsites Tested: Recent experiments reveal 2 common design mistakes that can kill microsite conversion rates

**Date:** Thursday, August 22, 2013

**Summary:** Many marketers connect prospects with specific products or services using microsites. Yet, the process of designing microsites that communicate high levels of value to those customers remains a challenge. Watch this Web clinic replay to learn about a recent experiment with a physician-only social network and microsite design choices that can impact conversion.

**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0352](http://mecla.bs/digest0352)

Can I Test More Than One Variable at a Time? Statisticians answer some of the most commonly asked A/B testing questions

**Date:** Thursday, September 5, 2013

**Summary:** Marketers are discovering A/B testing has become increasingly sophisticated. Even though software platforms can make testing easier, many marketers are left questioning how they should best approach the testing process. Watch this Web clinic replay to hear some of the most common questions associated with online testing answered by members of the MECLABS research team.

**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0353](http://mecla.bs/digest0353)

Accordion-Style Checkouts Tested: How one company uncovered 26% more conversions by putting its checkout process to the test

**Date:** Thursday, September 19, 2013

**Summary:** Accordion-style checkouts, among other developing cart technologies, have become increasingly popular in e-commerce, especially from its use by top-grossing companies. But, does this style really perform better? Watch this Web clinic replay to learn how accordion-style checkouts affect optimization.

**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0388](http://mecla.bs/digest0388)
B2B Lead Roundtable

Lead Generation: How Lithium Technologies uses webinars to grow its customer database
Date: Monday, July 1, 2013
Summary: Using webinars to grow your lead list is a small investment of resources that can yield big results. Read further to learn more about how Lithium Technologies uses webinars to grow its customer database.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0354

Event Marketing: How a technology start-up made a trade show splash booth-free
Date: Monday, July 8, 2013
Summary: This B2B Lead Roundtable Blog post explains how Brickstream attended a trade show without the use of a booth. Learn how it branded its products, created walking billboards, secured sponsorships, made the most of partner relationships and followed up with attendees.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0355

Lead Generation: Content among the most difficult tactics, but also quite effective
Date: Monday, July 15, 2013
Summary: According to the 2012 MarketingSherpa Benchmark Report, content is among the most difficult marketing tactics to use, but also one of the most effective. Read on to learn more about B2B marketing tactics including feedback from your peers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0356

B2B Digital Marketing: How Volvo Construction drove site visits through its email campaigns
Date: Monday, July 22, 2013
Summary: In this B2B Lead Roundtable Blog post, watch an excerpt from a session at last year’s B2B Summit 2012. Learn how Volvo Construction drove site visits through email campaigns, and watch the entire session video replay to learn more about the team’s efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0357

B2B Marketing: 3 reasons for adopting video content into your marketing mix
Date: Monday, July 29, 2013
Summary: Using online video advertising as another channel to support your lead generation efforts can help you craft a global audience of potential leads — if you create content designed for sharing versus selling. Read further for three reasons you should adopt video content into your marketing mix.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0358

Content Marketing: How a technology company used its employees to generate quality content [Video]
Date: Monday, August 5, 2013
Summary: Content marketing is one of the most difficult forms of marketing, yet most effective. In this B2B Lead Roundtable Blog post, learn how a technology company used its employees to generate quality content.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0359
B2B Content Marketing: 5 questions every marketer should ask themselves when using native advertising
Date: Monday, August 12, 2013
Summary: We’ve heard how native advertising is going to revolutionize the advertising industry and phase out traditional display ads. But despite all of that hype, it seems like everyone still has no concurrent idea to what native advertising actually is. Read this B2B Lead Roundtable Blog post to learn more about what native marketing is and how it can aid your marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0360

B2B Email Marketing: Batch and blast, mobile, and other challenges
Date: Monday, August 19, 2013
Summary: MarketingSherpa Senior Reporter David Kirkpatrick spoke with several email marketing experts about comparing “batch and blast” email strategies against some of the more targeted and personalized email approaches. Read on to learn the answers given by Matt Bailey, President, SiteLogic; Christopher Donald, CEO and Lead Strategist, Inbox Group; and Loren McDonald, VP Industry Relations, Silverpop.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0361

B2B Marketing: Why Marketing shouldn’t promise BANT qualified leads for Sales
Date: Monday, August 26, 2013
Summary: Many marketers use a model for lead qualification based on these four key characteristics called BANT. However, we should focus more on building bridges of understanding between these two departments. Let’s start by creating a common language for lead qualification that makes more sense than BANT.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0362

Lead Gen: A proposed replacement for BANT
Date: Monday, September 9, 2013
Summary: It’s time to move BANT methodology into retirement. BANT is not feasible without someone having a conversation with a prospect. For marketing departments, it’s impossible to deliver BANT qualified leads unless marketing owns an inside sales function. Read on for a proposed replacement for BANT, called PAM.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0363

B2B Marketing: The first step a systems integrator took to achieve Sales-Marketing alignment
Date: Monday, September 16, 2013
Summary: In this blog post, watch a video excerpt of Kelly Harman, Vice President, Marketing, Carousel Industries, as she discussed how to improve Marketing’s relationship with Sales by working more congruently to help them generate leads at the MarketingSherpa B2B Summit 2012. In this excerpt, learn how the teams at Carousel took the first step to better their relationship by having Marketing walk in Sales’ shoes.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0389
Appendix B: Content Directory

Lead Generation: How using science increased teleprospecting sales handoffs 304%
Date: Monday, September 23, 2013
Summary: Anyone who has worked in inside sales knows that sales professionals are always informally testing to learn what works and what doesn’t. Why not add a little hard science to that testing? Read to learn the results of three teleprospecting tests that used a simple repeatable process to increase sales handoffs 304%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0390

Lead Management: 4 principles to follow
Date: Monday, September 30, 2013
Summary: Live from MarketingSherpa Lead Gen Summit 2013, MECLABS Senior Reporter David Kirkpatrick live blogs the Lead Management Workshop, which features a dive into larger topics including lead capture, lead qualification and lead nurture. Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS, presented the introduction to the workshop, and David had the opportunity to speak with Brandon Stamschror, Senior Director of Content Operations, MECLABS, and co-author of Lead Generation for the Complex Sale.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0391

Video Presentations

B2B Gamification: How Autodesk used game mechanics for in-trial marketing
Date: Wednesday, July 10, 2013
Summary: For the in-trial marketers at Autodesk, gamification is not a toy. Because of gamification, Autodesk experienced a 40% increase in participation in a free trial for one of its products. This presentation from B2B Summit 2012 featured Dawn Wolfe, Senior Marketing Manager, and Andy Mott, both from Autodesk, as they discussed how they took a gamification approach to their in-trial marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0364

How Volvo Construction Equipment uses digital marketing to fuel sales
Date: Tuesday, July 16, 2013
Summary: In this B2B Summit 2012 video replay, watch as Justin Bridegan, MECLABS, interviewed John Johnston, Director of Digital Marketing, Volvo Construction, on content-rich emails as an important element of an overall digital marketing integration strategy.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0365

Confessions of a Content Marketer: Lessons from a 4-year transition from “push” to “pull” marketing
Date: Wednesday, July 25, 2013
Summary: Edwin Jansen, Director of Business Development, The Ian Martin Group, explained how the Internet changed the relationship between marketers and consumers at B2B Summit 2012. Learn from his success and the challenges he experienced as the team transitioned from company-centric marketing to consumer-based content marketing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0366
More Alike than Different: Why email is Madonna, and Facebook is Lady Gaga  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 30, 2013  
**Summary:** At Email Summit 2013, Jay Baer, President, Convince and Convert, gave his presentation “More Alike than Different: Why email is Madonna, and Facebook is Lady Gaga,” in which he discussed why integrating email and social media programs at companies is becoming more essential every day.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0367](http://mecla.bs/digest0367)

B2B Marketing: How Cisco’s enterprise marketing team helped Sales have the right conversations  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 31, 2013  
**Summary:** When Cisco’s sales team started losing sales on the margin, the marketing team had to rethink its strategy. In this B2B Summit 2012 replay, see how Karyn Scott, Director of Enterprise Marketing, Cisco Systems, Inc., integrated listening to customers and the sales team into building a workable marketing strategy.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0368](http://mecla.bs/digest0368)

B2B Marketing: 4 steps a systems integrator took to achieve Marketing-Sales alignment  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 14, 2013  
**Summary:** At B2B Summit 2012, Kelly Harman, Vice President, Marketing, Carousel Industries, presented, “Make Marketing Indispensable: Strategies for turning the sales team into your biggest fans.” Carousel is a systems integrator with 60 products and, according to Harman, sales people are constantly overwhelmed with information on leads. To establish a relationship between Sales and Marketing, Harman and her team took four steps including walking in Sales’ shoes, giving Sales useful tools, making it easier to find information, and finally, making the departments transparent.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0369](http://mecla.bs/digest0369)

5 B2B Social Media Career Killers Panel  
**Date:** Thursday, August 22, 2013  
**Summary:** Watch this panel of social media professionals exchange ideas and tips on how you can not only survive, but thrive in your social media campaigns with smart multichannel integration and using the right content in this B2B Summit 2012 video replay.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0370](http://mecla.bs/digest0370)

E-commerce: How Verizon and REI integrate mobile and email marketing  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 27, 2013  
**Summary:** In this session from MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Summit, Laura Velasquez, Marketing Program Manager, REI, and Jason Jennings, Associate Director, Digital CRM, Verizon Wireless, discuss their successes, insights and lessons learned in optimizing emails for mobile devices.  
**URL:** [http://mecla.bs/digest0371](http://mecla.bs/digest0371)
How You Can Use Email to Discover the Essence of Your Value Proposition
Date: Tuesday, September 17, 2013
Summary: A company’s value proposition is “probably one of the most fundamental aspects of a business,” Austin McCraw, Senior Editorial Analyst, MECLABS, explained during his presentation at Email Summit 2013. In this full video replay, see how email testing can be used to devise an applicable and meaningful value proposition to customers through testing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0392

Email Measurement: How a former Email Summit attendee achieved a 270% increase in conversion
Date: Wednesday, September 25, 2013
Summary: At Email Summit 2013, Rachel Hoppe, Marketing Manager, AvidXchange, presented how she took the key takeaways from Email Summit 2012 back to her team, implemented changes and saw impressive results. In her session, she walked the Summit audience through her seven steps of success that led to impressive results, including a 105% increase in sales-qualified lead volume, 68% of new revenue sourced through Marketing and a better relationship between Marketing and Sales.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0393
About MarketingSherpa LLC

MarketingSherpa is a primary research facility, wholly-owned by MECLABS, dedicated to determining what works in marketing via exclusive case studies, surveys, and results data analysis. Then we publish what we learn so our community of marketers and weekly readers can improve their results and train their teams.

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

MarketingSherpa features:

• **Best Practices:** 1,000+ brand-side marketer case studies and 3,500+ creative samples
• **Research:** 2,000+ marketing and research abstracts
• **Instruction:** 800+ how-to articles
• **Newsletters:** 230,000+ marketers read weekly case studies on topics such as email, search, social, lead generation, lead nurturing, optimization and content marketing
• **Training:** 100+ live, hands-on training sessions providing practical and proven solutions
• **Summits:** 3 annual vendor-neutral, research-based marketing events

About MECLABS

MECLABS is a science lab that uses real-world research and training to help business leaders get better use out of sales and marketing technology and resources, including Internet marketing, website optimization, and lead management. We have been involved in direct Research Partnerships with companies throughout Europe and North America since 2001.

MECLABS deploys a rigorous methodology to conduct research. This research is compiled from:

• More than **10 years** of Research Partnership with our clients
• **1,300** experiments
• Over **1 billion** emails
• **10,000** landing pages tested
• **5 million** telephone calls
• **500,000** decision-maker conversations

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

Register for Summits and Workshops at MECLABS.com/training or contact:
Customer Service (available M-F, 8:00am-5:00pm ET)
service@marketingsherpa.com
1-877-895-1717 (outside the U.S. call 651-294-6356)
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.

In the test we just looked at, a surplus of information was condensed down to create a single straightforward conversation to better communicate to prospects. But is this always the best course of action? Are there times when more information is better?

See more on page 41

A simple, powerful value proposition is the only foundation upon which to build a brand that will result in the maximum number of sales. No advertising, however creative, can make up for the lack of a value proposition.

See more on page 84

As marketers, our problem is usually not that we have brand confusion, but that we are confused about brand – what it is and how to use it. We hope to end that confusion with the following insight.

See more on page 80