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- **Integrating email and search marketing tactics**
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### 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report

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- **Have you kept up with new marketing developments?**
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Subject Lines That Convert: A review of 100+ successful subject lines reveals what motivates people to open (or delete) an email

- Flint McGlaughlin, Jon Powell, Austin McCraw, Shaun Metzger
Dear Marketer,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Marketing Research Charts of the Week** – A section dedicated to MarketingSherpa’s benchmark studies, where we include all 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.
  - 28 MarketingSherpa case studies
  - 24 MarketingSherpa how-to articles
How To Use This Digest

- 10 Charts of the Week, from 5 Benchmark Reports
- 5 MarketingSherpa webinar video replays
- 25 MarketingExperiments articles
- 6 Web clinic video replays
- 13 B2B Lead Roundtable articles
- 2 video presentations

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

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

- **Content Type** – Search our content by type, from how-to articles and research charts to 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
Manager of Editorial Content, 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.
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]
\[ \text{eme} = rv(of + i) - (f + a) \]
c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a
eme = rv(of + i) – (f + a)

SITE OPTIMIZATION
Marketers writing copy often struggle with how much is enough. While it can be common to take the “less is more” approach, simplicity does not always equal clarity. Your copy must complete the product’s story for customers. In other words, the solution your product offers is not relevant unless your customers understand the problem.

In a recent experiment, MECLABS researchers broke this issue down into smaller components to gain a greater understanding of the whole. We capitalized on this strategy after significantly increasing the conversion rate by adding a simple paragraph of copy to a page. This result, in concert with the minimal change to the page, allowed us to discover crucial insights into the use of copy, as well as the art of copywriting.

**An Experiment:**
**Can one paragraph of copy make a difference?**

The experiment is Test Protocol 1700 in the MECLABS Research Library. Our Research Partner for the test was a company selling a car repair product. The product fixes a serious issue for a specific car part.

The control page used a very common layout, perhaps not unlike your own product pages, which you can see in Figure 1.1. This page was the result of multiple tests we had already run to improve conversion, so it was performing well at the time. It functioned as the central portal for online purchases of the product – all traffic went through it.

Our treatment did nothing more than add a paragraph of copy to the top of the page, which can be seen in Figure 1.2. Everything else on the page remained the same.

Could one paragraph of copy really make a significant difference? It turns out that it absolutely could – producing a 36% lift.
But why did this particular paragraph impact conversion so steeply? **What can we learn about copywriting and page design from this test?** We discovered it came down to the “needs” and “wants” of customers.

**The difference between “need” and “want”**

First, we must understand that **simply identifying a customer need does not inspire the need to act.**

**Needs do not matter to customers unless those needs are also wants.** Our goal as marketers is not to simply present a way to meet a need, but to actually help the customer want what they already need. **Assuming prospects already know and desire what they need is one of the top causes of conversion suppression.** This is tied intimately to the copywriting of a tenet “story.”

**People think in stories** (Figure 1.3). Yet, in the narrative of the sale, we tend to skip over the problem the visitor is facing and move straight on to the solution. This was the weakness of the control page that we corrected with the treatment.

If the control page was a book, it would only be the final chapter – the resolution. By introducing a simple paragraph of copy that outlined the problem faced by prospects, we presented a full story. Now prospects could clearly see why the solution was applicable to them. It made them want what they already needed.
Second, we must realize that to inspire action, your copy must transform a customer need into a customer want. We can achieve this by using one or more of three problem intensifiers: relevance, importance and urgency.

So, if addressing a need is not sufficient, and we must also cause prospects to want their needs, how do we go about this? We must inject into our narratives one or more of the problem intensifiers outlined above. By doing so, we ensure our copywriting adheres to “story,” which transforms a prospect’s need into a want.

But how are relevance, importance and urgency injected into a product page? We will answer that question in the remainder of this article.

**Problem Intensifier #1: Relevance**

**Key Principle #1:** Relevance is the degree to which an offer is connected to a recipient’s situational motivations.

Situational motivations are what drive the prospect at the moment they encounter your offer. If your offer has absolutely no relevance to the prospect, you cannot turn a nonexistent need into a want. It doesn’t matter what you say, that person simply has no need for what you are selling. However, if your offer does have relevance to a prospect, you need to communicate that relevance through your copy.

**Key Principle #2:** To enable relevance in your marketing copy, you must identify with at least one of two types of relevance for ideal prospects arriving to your page:

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It isn’t enough to simply have a relevant offer; you must communicate the relevance to the prospect. You can accomplish this by identifying the types of motivations that drive prospects to want your products, and crafting content that appeals to those motivations.
For example, in the experiment above, the paragraph we added to the treatment included specific phrases intended to boost relevance. Both the headline and bullet points focus on why the product is relevant to the reader with phrases like, “Does your car have a blown _____?” “Is there white smoke coming from your tailpipe?” and “Is there water in your oil?”

Additionally, the use of a case study can increase relevance. In a separate test, we found moving from Figure 2.1 to Figure 2.2 produced a 44% lift in conversion, because the case study helped prospects understand real ways the product could benefit them.

**Problem Intensifier #2: Importance**

**Key Principle #1:** Importance is the degree to which an offer is essential to a recipient’s livelihood.

Whereas relevance deals with whether or not a prospect’s current motivations are in line with your offer, importance has to do with whether or not your offer has large-scale implications on their life. The better you are able to display the importance of your product, the more desirable it becomes.

**Key Principle #2:** To enable importance in your marketing copy, you must identify with an underlying need in the recipient. Examples include:

- Being safe
- Meeting expectations (job, family, etc.)
- Feeling of belonging
- Self-affirmation

The esteemed economist and Harvard Business School professor Theodore Levitt capsulated a brilliant insight into marketing when he noted that people don’t want to buy a quarter-inch drill bit – they want a quarter-inch hole. **There are always deeper motivations to purchases, and the extent to which we are able to identify and connect with the ones that impact a prospect’s livelihood (i.e., safety, belonging, affirmation, etc.) is the extent to which we convey our product’s importance.**

In our car repair product example, we introduced importance by connecting the problem directly to a consequence: “Avoid a costly repair bill.” This drove home the importance of the product by showing that the problem could have a very real impact on the prospect’s wallet. Additionally, the bullet points that helped make the product relevant to the reader also pulled double duty by driving home the important safety ramifications of not addressing the problem.
Active Network, Endurance offers your event easy, effective running software to manage online registrations and payments, volunteers, and live results. Plus, you can boost participation with Active's marketing services, which include a free listing on the Active.com event calendar, customized training plans, social media integrations, and donation tools. Our running software is built to help you do more with less.

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<th>Donations and Fundraising</th>
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<td>Develop, manage and promote online donations fundraising</td>
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<td>Volunteer Management</td>
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<td>Streamline and simplify the volunteer management process</td>
<td>Engage race spectators on the course and track participants from afar</td>
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<td>Training Plans</td>
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<td>Increase revenue with customizable online training plans and tools</td>
<td>Communicate effectively through appealing, professional and up-to-date websites</td>
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<td>Reach your target market through unique marketing opportunities</td>
<td>Increase event participation and extend your reach into the community</td>
</tr>
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Visit our event director community

Figure 2.1

Case Study: See Jane Run increases 5K registrations by 200% using Active Network running event software

After 6 years of successful races fueled by Active Network’s online running software, See Jane Run opted to increase exposure for their regional races using Active’s exclusive marketing services.

See how placement in Active’s monthly newsletters and targeted e-marketing tools helped Jane connect with over 36,000 motivated runners and increase online registration for their 5K Race Series and Women’s Triathlon by over 200% year-over-year.

Download the case study

Get comprehensive software, live tech support, 10+ years of experience

Figure 2.2
In Figure 3.1, you see the control ads for a different test. The messaging touts the benefit of “getting back to your life” as the main reason for undergoing the client’s less invasive back surgery. In our treatment campaign (Figure 3.2), the focus of the messaging takes on more importance by showing the prospect that they can avoid a potentially huge health risk in the future by undergoing this procedure instead. “Avoid Open Back Surgery” increases importance by appealing to the prospect’s desire for self-preservation. The result was a 16% increase in clickthrough and a 118% increase in conversion.

**Problem Intensifier #3: Urgency**

**Key Principle #1:** Urgency is the degree of immediacy associated with an offer imposed by either the recipient’s situation or the nature of the offer itself.

A situation can be both relevant and important without needing to be resolved right away. This happens all the time. Urgency comes into play when time is of the essence due to a given situation or the nature of your offer. Urgency is a key problem intensifier, because urgent situations are often relevant and important – though not always.

**Key Principle #2:** To enable urgency in your marketing copy, you must draw from at least one of two types: natural urgency and artificial urgency.

You can convey urgency through your marketing copy in two ways. Natural urgency comes about through the prospect’s situation. Maybe they are running late for a meeting and forgot to brush their
teeth. Suddenly, a breath-freshening product is urgently needed. Artificial urgency is created by the nature of an offer. For example, maybe a retailer offers a 50% discount on all merchandise, but only for one day.

Either type of urgency can be used, but it is important to note that artificial urgency must still have a basis in reality. In other words, if you tell everyone that they only have two weeks to respond to an offer, but you give the discount to everyone regardless of when they call, your urgency is undermined and you are not truthful.

In our main example, natural urgency is layered into the copy with the phrase “ignoring these symptoms can lead to ...” It is clear to the reader that if they are experiencing the problems outlined in the bullet points, they should act quickly to avoid negative consequences.

In a different test, we added artificial urgency to an offer to boost response. Figure 4.1 shows the control pop-up offering free access to all of the newspaper’s online content for two weeks. In Figure 4.2, you can see our treatment, which changes the messaging to offer free access to all online content for the next two weeks, which was an enforced stipulation. The result was a 71% increase in conversion.

![Figure 4.1](image1)

**From This**

**LOGO**

**EXCLUSIVE FREE TRIAL OFFER**

Get access to all our content FREE for two weeks!

**Figure 4.1**

![Figure 4.2](image2)

**To This**

**LOGO**

**EXCLUSIVE FREE TRIAL OFFER**

You have been selected to receive FREE UNLIMITED access to all of our content for the next two weeks!

**Figure 4.2**
**Transforming “needs” to “wants” in your copy**

To write copy like the simple paragraph that produced a 36% conversion lift, there must be a complete story. **You cannot assume the prospect already knows the problem your product solves.** Rather, you must present the problem first, and then offer your solution. Once you present the problem, you must intensify it. There are two principles that tie up this teaching.

First, simply identifying a customer need does not inspire the need to act. **The problem must be intensified so that it is properly felt by customers.**

Second, to inspire action, your copy must **transform a customer need into a customer want.** Marketers can achieve this by using one or more of three problem intensifiers: relevance, importance and urgency.

Write copy that crafts a complete story. Write copy that is relevant, important and urgent. Write copy that identifies and intensifies the prospect’s problem, and then, and only then, solve the problem. It doesn’t take as much copy as you might think – sometimes it takes only one paragraph.

---

1. In this Web clinic replay on “Optimizing for Multiple Personas,” learn how our researchers discovered simplicity is not always the best course in Web design: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/multiple-personas.html

2. Learn more about becoming a Research Partner with MECLABS: meclabs.com/partnership

3. Learn how story connects to the conversion process in this past Web clinic: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/copywriting-on-tight-deadlines.html

4. See how motivation plays a very important part in the MECLABS Conversion Sequence Heuristic: http://www.meclabs.com/methodology#heuristics

5. Learn how to add relevance in your marketing emails based on internal and external factors: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/email-marketing/email-marketing-two-relevance-factors-why-you-must-be-correct.html

6. Read this blog post from MarketingSherpa to learn more about using case studies as a way to tell your customers a story: http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/copywriting/be-a-case-study-storyteller/

7. See how adding urgency to email copy increased clickthrough by 15%: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/copywriting-research-topics/urgency-email-marketing-copy.html
Testing and Optimization: Radical Website Redesign Program Improves Lead Gen 89%
- David Kirkpatrick, Manager of Editorial Content

I’m live blogging at MarketingSherpa Lead Gen Summit 2013 in San Francisco, and attending a brand-side case study with Jacob Baldwin, Search Engine Marketing Manager, One Call Now.

To begin a testing and optimization program, Jacob launched a test on the website with a radical redesign, attempting to improve lead capture. The program was executed sequentially as opposed to A/B split testing.

Jacob said each new homepage version replaced the previous – the marketing team created new treatments and “flipped the switch” to learn how the page would perform.

An important insight from this testing approach is there isn’t necessarily a need for a complex A/B or multivariate testing program.

The testing program was run on the homepage, and there were several objectives:

- Increase conversion rate
- Increase traffic
- Reduce bounce rate
- Provide niched messaging via enhanced segmentation

There were several key differences with the treatment:

- Restructured navigation
- Consolidated calls-to-action (CTAs)
- Single value proposition – no competing headlines on the page
- Trust indicators
- Color palette
- New tag line
- New content
Here is the test control and original website:
And, here is the radical redesign treatment:
The original homepage, the control in this test, achieved 2.40% lead capture, and the radical redesign treatment pulled in 2.85% lead capture – an 18.75% lift over the control.

Jacob said the radical redesign was based on a revamped segmentation model.

“The new segmentation model drove the basic navigation structure and information architecture of the new homepage,” he explained.

This test with an early “win” was part of an ongoing optimization program. Not every test uncovered a lift, but every test did garner a discovery. The testing protocol involved taking the “winning” treatment and then refining the webpage layout, calls-to-action and length of the sign-up process for lead capture.

Through optimization, the sign-up process was shortened, the free trial sign-ups increased 55.3%, and the overall redesign of the entire website garnered a 89% lift in lead generation.

For the big takeaway, Jacob advised, “Never stop improving. Complacency is lead capture optimization’s worst enemy and perfection is impossible. Complacency is conversion rate optimization’s worst enemy.”
MARKETING RESEARCH CHART: DOES A/B TESTING DELIVER A POSITIVE ROI?
- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

While it would be valuable to really know the most effective marketing messaging, let’s face it, A/B testing takes a lot of work. You need:

- The IT resources and tools to create and measure a split test
- To create two versions (at least) of every element you want to test
- A testing methodology to ensure you run valid tests, and learn from those tests

Is all of this extra work really worth it? To find out, in the MarketingSherpa 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report, we asked marketers …

Q: Did optimization or testing demonstrate ROI in 2011?

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2012 N=789
Many marketers are not measuring the ROI of testing

The majority of marketers could not or did not calculate ROI for conversion rate optimization and A/B testing. Calculating that ROI can be difficult, and it is an imperfect science. You have to include not only, for example, a software platform purchase, but also the extra time a designer had to take to produce not only the original, but a treatment version as well.

Calculating the ROI can be extremely valuable. After all, demonstrating return on investment is the way marketers are able to secure the resources to continue to run the tactics that are effective for their companies (and, dare I say, the way marketers are able to earn promotions after proving their success to business leaders).

If you don’t know, well now you know

If you are among the marketers who aren’t measuring split testing ROI, here’s the good news — it is very likely positive.

After all, 38% of marketers demonstrated a positive ROI with their testing efforts. For 6% of marketers, testing was a wash, and only 3% experienced a negative ROI.

And, that ROI can be extremely powerful ...

$200 million in extra revenue

When I asked Amelia Showalter, Director of Digital Analytics, Obama for America, about the amount of campaign donations that could be directly attributed to improvements thanks to A/B testing, here’s what she had to say.

“When we’re working on the campaign, we’re actually working so hard to run all those tests that we didn’t always keep perfect track of exactly what results were long term. It’s hard to calculate this stuff out when we want to put all our resources into running more tests. So, we don’t actually ever have a perfect estimate of actually how much extra revenue was due to our testing, but I think that $200 million is a fairly reasonable estimate.”

So, if you aren’t calculating the revenue of your A/B testing, you can take heart that, yes, it is quite hard, even for the advanced professionals.
You can also take heart that if you’re running valid tests, you are likely improving the bottom line.

So, give it a try. While your first calculations won’t be perfect, and you don’t want to take too many resources from running the tests themselves, those ROI numbers can help you gain the resources you need to continue, and improve, your testing.
At MECLABS, we have been observing, hypothesizing, testing and analyzing e-commerce websites since Yahoo’s “Y! Store” was the preeminent e-commerce platform.¹

The world of e-commerce has come a long way since then. Technology has improved, design has modernized, and functionality has simplified.² Yet, for all the changes in the medium, customer psychology has not changed. The motivations for purchasing are the same, and the thought processes that lead from interest to desire to a purchase still follow the same pattern.

One of the key steps in the decision-making process is the narrowing down of options, which is represented by the category page in e-commerce.

The category page is often the precursor to the specialized landing page, which focuses on a particular product. In fact, many marketers send paid search traffic to the category page. As a result, small changes to this vital cog in the purchasing process can produce dramatic improvements.

But what should these changes be? More to the point, what can we implement tomorrow to see lifts in our online stores and improve our everyday conversion efforts? To discover, we must first look at an experiment.

**An Experiment:**
**Which category page will convert better?**

This experiment is Test Protocol (TP) 1665 from the MECLABS Research Library.³ We worked with a company that offers strength and conditioning training tools through its online store. Our optimization goal was to increase the order rate from the traffic that went through the category page. We will look at an A/B test that had a radical redesign⁴ going up against the original page.
The control page (Figure 1.1) lists the various products in a typical list format, providing easy access to the products but relatively little information about them. On the other hand, the treatment (Figure 1.2) includes a few paragraphs of copy at the top of the page and a product list that expands to provide more information about each specific product. What was the result?

The treatment outperformed the control by 20% in terms of actual orders placed.
The task now is to discover why the treatment was victorious. We have uncovered key principles to guide us.

**Optimizing Category Pages: Maintaining Momentum and Matching Motivation**

**Key Principle #1:** Similar to shopping carts and transactional pages, category pages are a critical step by which you, the marketer, are tasked to maintain cognitive momentum generated by the channel or its landing page.

Cognitive momentum is what you are trying to build in the mind of the customer. It is the force that will carry them through the inevitable friction produced by the checkout process. If you have not generated enough momentum, the reality of completing the purchase (e.g., entering payment information) will cause customers to stop and abandon the purchase.

In Figure 2.1, you can see a chart that represents a prospect’s cognitive momentum at every given stage of a purchase, from the channel, to the category page, to the product page, to the checkout process. The cognitive momentum climaxes at the product page before the friction of the checkout process begins to eat away at it. **The goal of a category page is to maintain the momentum created by the channel and to funnel that momentum into the product page,** where it can be increased exponentially by a page dedicated to the prospect’s desired purchase.

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**Figure 2.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Channel</td>
<td>To engage visitor and lead them to the most relevant value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category Page</td>
<td>(Indicated by blue box)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Page</td>
<td>To obtain a conversion commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cart Page #1</td>
<td>To maintain the cognitive momentum generated by the product page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cart Page #2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank-you Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Principle #2: A meta-analysis of our experimentation revealed no “best practice” template. However, it did reveal two underlying patterns of visitor motivation\textsuperscript{vi} that can impact both the clickthrough and conversion commitment:

1. End-motivated (Hunters)
2. Process-motivated (Browsers)

After 15 years of research, we can confidently say there is no “silver bullet” category page template. As marketers, and really as humans, we like the idea of a “best practice.” We like to be able to simply plug in a certain design or copywriting practice and expect the best possible return. Unfortunately, the evidence does not support this approach.

Rather than a best practice, our meta-analysis\textsuperscript{vii} of category page experiments revealed there are actually two groups of prospects that land on our category pages: end-motivated and process-motivated buyers. End-motivated buyers are like hunters. They visit to find what they need, and once they find it, they want to get and go home. Process-motivated buyers enjoy the experience of shopping. They like comparing options, studying features and making an informed decision.

A category page must be optimized for the needs of both groups if it is to provide the best possible conversion rate for your company. That is the “why” behind the result we saw in the experiment above. How can we apply this information to our own category pages?

In this article, we will closely examine these two types of buyers and discover how to design category pages that cater to the specific needs of each of them.

**Type #1: The End-motivated Buyer**

End-motivated buyers are motivated by a present objective in their mind. Their primary concern surrounds the time it takes to find a predetermined substance of interest within the primary eye-path.

These online shoppers are driven. They have a need or desire they want to fulfill, and they want to fulfill it as quickly as they can. If a category page does not allow them to easily identify what they need and where they can get it, they will find another page that does – and that new page likely won’t be on the same website.

To match this visitor motivation type, we must ensure our category pages provide the visitor with the ability to accomplish their objective with little to no distraction. The key design metric is speed, or number of clicks.
To meet the needs of end-motivated buyers, we must provide them with a way to find what they need without distracting them from their purpose. The best way to tell whether or not we are end-motivated-buyer friendly is to track speed, which can often be identified by number of clicks.

In the experiment above, the control page makes certain information difficult to access. The treatment page (Figure 3.1) uses expanding windows to make the necessary information readily available and with a natural eye-path that leads to a clear call-to-action.
Figure 3.2 shows how the category pages in another experiment list categories in a way that is confusing and difficult to scan. By simply laying out the links more clearly (Figure 3.3), we were able to increase conversion by 17%.
In Figure 3.4, the search bar is de-emphasized and the category links require too much work to decipher. By moving the search bar to a prominent position and reorganizing the category links (Figure 3.5), we increased conversion by 13%.

To meet the needs of end-motivated shoppers, you have to make the entire process quick and easy. But they are not the only type of customers you will encounter. The very same category pages must also cater to process-motivated buyers.
Type #2: The process-motivated buyer

Process-motivated buyers are motivated by the process of shopping. They do not feel concern in identifying a predetermined substance of interest; rather, they are focused on uncovering a substance of interest.

These visitors do not arrive on your category page with a particular purchase in mind. If they find something that strikes their fancy, so be it. If not, they get value out of the act of browsing. A page that is optimized only for end-motivated buyers will be of little use to a process-motivated shopper, so we must find a way to meet the needs of both groups.

So what do we need for process-motivated buyers?

To match this visitor motivation type, we must ensure our category pages achieve two secondary objectives: education and discovery.

How can we integrate education and discovery into our category pages? Let us turn to successful case studies.

In Figure 4.1, the category page headline is “Browse Categories.” While this is the process-motivated shopper’s intention, it provides them with no guidance. We can add elements of education and discovery to this page by changing the headline and content to reflect the “Most Popular” categories (Figure 4.2). This provides a social-level filter to guide the shopper’s browsing. What is the difference?
It made no difference in clickthrough, but there was an 11% increase in orders.

Figure 4.3 shows a control page that provides very little direction for a process-motivated shopper. Discovery elements are out of the eye-path in the middle of the sidebar. Our treatment (Figure 4.4) moved the discovery elements to the top left corner of the sidebar, and the result was a 44% increase in clickthrough and a 146% increase in orders.
In the first experiment of this article, we saw increased conversion for the strength and training tools provider by optimizing the page for end-motivated users. Now, we will look at a different page for the same company, in which we had to move toward the second type of shopper.

This test is TP 1631 in the MECLABS Research Library. The control page (Figure 4.5) looks like a typical category page, listing the products in a grid format. Our treatment (Figure 4.6), however, uses expanding windows to provide more information about each individual product. This allows the user to browse the different products, gather information, and come to a purchase decision.
The result was a 61% increase in order rate.

By including educational and discovery elements in a category page, we allow process-motivated buyers to browse while still guiding their thought sequence toward a purchase decision. By making it easy to identify and purchase a needed product, we increased sales from end-motivated shoppers.

Optimizing for both buyer types

Except in very specific cases, almost all sellers need to appeal to both types of shoppers. Certain products (e.g., milk, batteries, wiper fluid, etc.) lend themselves to end-motivated buyers, while others (e.g., clothing, sports equipment, electronics, etc.) tend to attract process-motivated shoppers. However, a category page optimized for both types gives you the best chance to maximize your conversion and order rates.

Remember these points about optimizing for both types:

1. While we haven’t discovered a “best practice” template, we did uncover two underlying patterns of visitor motivation that can impact both the clickthrough and conversion commitment.

2. The end-motivated buyer is primarily concerned with the time it takes to find a predetermined substance of interest.

3. The process-motivated buyer is primarily focused on uncovering a substance of interest.

Based on this, we can say that a category page that both allows a user to quickly identify and purchase their desired item and provides a way for browsers to discover and learn about new products will put you in the best position to succeed. Once you are in that zone, continue to test and further optimize to maximize your sales.

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i See a snapshot of that research from 2008 through 2012 in the MECLABS Research Catalog: http://www.meclabs.com/catalog


iii Review a portion of the vast MECLABS Research Library in the MECLABS Research Catalog, a selection of experiments abstracts dating back to 2008: http://www.meclabs.com/catalog
Learn how to plan a radical redesign so you gain a lift and customer insight:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/landing-page-optimization-research-topics/common-denominator-of-radical-redesign.html

Discover more insights about cognitive momentum as it relates to e-commerce in the Web clinic replay of “Shopping Carts Optimized: How a few tweaks led to 12% more revenue across an entire e-commerce website”:

This blog post gives insights into thinking about your page with your customers’ motivations in mind:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/marketing-insights/stop-thinking-like-a-marketer.html

Learn about the methodology MECLABS researchers use to create real-world experiments and analyze data:
http://www.meclabs.com/methodology
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]

\[ \text{eme} = rv(of + i) - (f + a) \]
Email Marketing
Email is one of the most cost-effective forms of communication for the marketer. Thus, a tendency to overuse it has emerged, often with an approach to email that fundamentally differs from the medium’s original purpose. Email was intended as a two-way exchange between participants (a dialogue). However, email marketing has largely become a one-way flow of communication (a monologue), with no response or engagement from the recipient. Furthermore, a lack of communication could lead to a lack of value exchange.

MECLABS has tested more than one billion emails since the very formative days of the medium. In the early days, all email communication was in plain text, which naturally lends itself to a more informal or letter-style format. But, as the industry developed, email deviated into a way for marketers to send out catalog pages, magazine advertisements and other print media ads in an email format. Today, we have become so used to that approach that we don’t even question whether or not it is the most effective use of our email marketing efforts.

However, since email is such a widely and largely used marketing strategy, the potential for lifts, and more importantly, insights into customer behavior is substantial. We need to discover if the industry has evolved to a more effective email format, or if convenience and design aesthetic have given rise to an inferior style of email marketing. Of course, the only way to truly discover the answer is to test.

**AN EXPERIMENT:**
**ARE LETTER-STYLE EMAILS STILL EFFECTIVE?**

When you are conducting an A/B split experiment, like the one we are about to examine in Test Protocol (TP) 2137, you must answer three questions to truly understand and make use of your results.
1. The “which” question: “Which of the subjects performs better?”
2. The “why” question: “Why did the winner outperform the loser?”
3. The “what” question: “What does this result teach us about the customer?”

In TP 2137, the research question is our “which” question: “Which email will generate the highest conversion rate?” Let us examine the subjects.

The control email (as seen in Figure 1.1) is standard of what you see with most marketing emails. In fact, it is better than most. The email features popular design principles that create balance and hierarchy on the page. It heavily employs images and graphics to catch the reader’s attention. Also, it presents multiple call-to-action (CTA) buttons for increased points of entry.

![Figure 1.1](image-url)
The treatment (Figure 1.2) uses a different communication approach through presenting information in a form more similar to a letter than a print ad. Rather than use images to grab attention, there is limited use of graphics for the express purpose of reinforcing the value proposition set forth in the headline. Additionally, the multiple CTA buttons of the control, which are all the same CTA, are condensed to a single CTA button at the conclusion of the copy.
What was the result? The treatment outperformed the control by 181% in terms of lead conversion.

The “which” question has been decisively answered, but why did the letter-style email outperform the control by such a wide margin? To help us answer the “why” question, three key principles will guide us.

**Why Did the Letter-Style Email Prevail?**

**Key Principle #1:** An email message is not a monologue; it is a dialogue. People don’t buy from emails; people buy from people.

The operative word in this principle is “dialogue.” Email was intended to be a method of written communication between two or more recipients. When we move away from that purpose, we lose the dialogue. Suddenly, marketing emails begin to feel less like the beginning of a conversation and more like an advertisement being waved in front of recipients’ faces. We must revisit the dialogue communication method if we want to improve results.

**Key Principle #2:** If the marketer can learn to participate in the prospect’s conversation, they can guide it (with messaging) toward a satisfactory conclusion (the purchase).

A mental conversation occurs within your prospects’ minds as they read your email message. To join this conversation, you must understand the feelings, desires and intentions of your prospects. When you understand their motivations, you can guide their thinking toward a satisfactory conclusion – the one you want them to make. By engaging in the conversation they are already having, you work from the inside rather than shouting slogans at them from the outside.

**Key Principle #3:** Therefore, effective email messaging requires one often overlooked skill on the part of the marketer: empathy.

**Empathy is the foundation of every good marketer.** When you encounter a successful salesperson or marketer who has never had any formal education or practice in marketing, the fundamental skill they display is empathy – the ability to understand how their prospects are feeling and what is motivating them. Inversely, the problem many of us have with our marketing is we cannot move beyond company-centric thinking to attain customer-centric thinking. We struggle to set aside self-interest, and as a result, we fail to understand the interest of the other party. We must cultivate our empathy if we wish to improve our marketing.
The Philosophy of Marketing Empathy

We know “which” and “why,” but what about “what”? What does this result teach us about customer-centric thinking, and how can we adapt our thinking to match? On one hand, we all have different audiences with different motivations and desires. However, empathy is the unifying undercurrent we must all seek to attain. In the realm of marketing, empathy is the ability to discern – through listening and hearing – the ontology (nature or being) of the customer.

To better market to our audience, we must not only understand what they want, but who they are. Four fundamental philosophical principles will help us understand marketing empathy, and these principles are illustrated by the following insights from MECLABS Managing Director Flint McGlaughlin’s soon-to-be-released book, The Marketer as Philosopher.

First, it is not a desire to fulfill our needs that brings a prospect to our website. It is not an intention to boost our open rates that causes a prospect to open an email. Instead, “selfishness, if a benign version, is the primary driver of sales velocity. It is the selfishness of the prospect that empowers the transaction,” according to McGlaughlin. Very natural selfishness is at the base of every action taken by a prospect. They are seeking to fulfill their needs and desires, not ours.

Second, this selfishness does not need to be thought of as a negative attribute. He stated, “The concept, selfishness, has a negative connotation. But this can be unfortunate. ... How can a self be faulted for being self(ish)? In one sense, selfishness is essence(tial).”

While the word has been given a negative connotation, it is actually a morally neutral fact of life in most cases. People act in their own self-interest; this is neither shocking nor blameworthy.

Third, if we are to be truly excellent marketers, we must cultivate empathy. “Empathy enables the marketer to identify with the market and experience its ‘selfishness.’ Empathy is the marketer’s intuition.”

We can accomplish this by talking, and more importantly, listening to our customers and prospects. The more we fully understand the motivations and characteristics of our audience, the more accurate our intuition will be when designing marketing communication, design and strategy.

Fourth, McGlaughlin said, “The marketer does not eliminate their self; we seek to empty ourselves, identifying with the ‘self’ of the prospect – this paradoxical move enables us to achieve that empathetic messaging that powers true conversion.”

In philosophical terms, we are not eliminating ourselves from the equation. We do not want to become the customer; we simply want to understand the customer.
In practice, this means not allowing our desired outcome to solely dictate our marketing decisions. This leads to company-centric language that does not engage the customer. Neither does it mean allowing the customer’s desires to rule our decision making, as this would lead to offering all products and services free of charge. Rather, we must seek to understand our customers for who they are, and allow that knowledge to inform our marketing decisions.

**Marketing Philosophy in Action**

There is philosophy, and then there is real-world application. It is crucial to understand the philosophy behind marketing, but it is equally important to understand how that philosophy plays out in your everyday decision-making. Let us examine the role empathy played in the experiment above.

The control (Figure 2.1) does not employ empathy to inform its messaging. In the subject line and CTA, it commands the customer to act, rather than introducing what the customer stands to gain from the email. As a result, the email feels promotional, not conversational.

![Figure 2.1](image-url)
The treatment (Figure 2.2), on the other hand, **empathizes with the customer using a personal email style**. The customer feels like they are having a conversation. The **headline immediately introduces what the customer stands to get** from opening and reading the email.\(^*\) The design elements all work together to **communicate the value the customer can expect** if they make the decision to purchase the subscription.

Letter-style emails still work because they fundamentally operate within a format that forces a marketer to empathize with their prospects. Letters are meant to begin or continue conversations; ads are meant to inspire action by intruding on a customer’s thought process from the outside. The conversational
approach of a letter-style email belies an empathetic marketing approach, and empathy is the pathway to marketing and sales success.

i 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/catalog

ii See the research in a MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week:
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/chart/widely-used-lead-gen-tactics

iii To discover how you can gain customer insights from email campaigns, watch the MarketingExperiments Web clinic, “The Web as a Living Laboratory: The Three Most Important Discoveries from Over a Decade of Experimentation”: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-optimization/the-web-as-a-living-laboratory.html

iv Learn more about the MECLABS methodology:
http://www.meclabs.com/methodology

v To learn about crafting a research question, see:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/general/marketing-optimization-testing-question.html

vi Email Messaging Online Course:
http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/email-messaging/overview

vii For more information on putting customers at the center of your lead gen efforts, watch the MarketingSherpa webinar, “Creating Customer-centric Messaging for Optimal Lead Generation”:

viii Discover how a B2B mobile marketing solutions company increased lead quality 130%, Sales-accepted leads 40% by listening to its customer in a MarketingSherpa case study:
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/customer-centric-b2b-marketing

ix See the Web clinic, “Headline Optimization,” to learn how emphasizing what the visitor gets improves conversion:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/optimizing-headlines.html
To be overly broad for a moment, effective email marketing essentially comes down to three elements:

**What should you send?** — What content or promotion will best serve your audience and get them to act?

**Whom should you sent it to?** — An organically grown opt-in list? A purchased list? A partner’s list? What segment of that list?

**When should you send it?**

To help you come up with test ideas to answer that last question, we asked your peers, “How effective are emails sent each day of the week?” in the MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report.

### Marketing Research Chart: Which Day is Best to Send Emails?

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>1 Least Effective</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Most Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>3% 7%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>4% 8%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>4% 11%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>19% 26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>39% 22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>42% 16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=566
Weekend email sends least effective

As you can see, Sunday was the least effective day to send emails, with Saturday following close behind. Tuesday was rated as the most effective day for sending emails.

But, before you give your email marketing a day of rest, keep these three factors in mind when considering email timing.

Test to learn which days and times are most effective for your unique email marketing

We’re providing this aggregate data for two reasons.

First, you can use this chart to encourage your team to consider how day and time of the week affects the performance of your email marketing.

Second, this chart is to give you ideas for days to test with your audience to find out what really works best. For example, if you’re sending on Sunday now, perhaps try testing a Tuesday send.

This is the overall goal because the performance with, and even within the segments of, your unique audience interested in your unique product and with your unique newsletters and promotions may vary greatly from what works for your peers. There is no single right answer for the best day to send that applies to every company.

To illustrate that point, when we look at the breakout data, Sunday was still the least effective for B2C marketers, but only 23% rated it as least effective, while 55% of B2B and/or B2G marketers rated Sunday least effective.

For marketers who have both a B2B and B2C audience, Wednesday was tied with Tuesday for most effective. Those working for a marketing agency or consultancy rated Wednesday as most effective. Marketers working in the professional, personal and financial services industries rated Saturday as least effective.

While 20% of marketers in retail, e-commerce or wholesale distribution rated Sunday as least effective, 40% gave the day a four or five (most effective). And, a whopping 60% of software, software as a service or video game marketers rated Sunday as least effective.

The point being, as the following marketer said in responding to the benchmark survey, you have to test to know what works best for your business.
“We want to be able to determine which time and day is the best to deliver to our target audience. They are busy people so is it best to email them at six in the morning so they can read it over their breakfast, or at 6 p.m. at night when they need a break? Test, test, test and then test some more.”

**BEFORE YOU TEST, YOU MUST BE ABLE TO MEASURE**

Of course, before you can launch your first test, make sure you have a testing methodology in place so you can truly learn from your tests. If you are not able to test, at the very least make sure you are tracking email marketing performance, as this market research manager pointed out.

“We have just started on the journey of eDM and have spent considerable time setting up the analytics framework to measure behavior and activity. That’s why we couldn’t comment on the different impact of day sent as we have not collected enough data. So, our challenge is to build the analytics in, but to also maximize eDM as a communication tool.”

**INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Lastly, email timing would be easier if we all just lived in one giant time zone. Since we do not, understand the impact of the geographical spread of your audience on your send time.

Also, understand cultural differences throughout the regions you serve, as indicated by this marketer who had a firsthand experience.

“We’re located in Israel, where Sunday is a workday, and some of the email providers are having their maintenance jobs on Sunday, which sometimes makes the system unavailable to use.”
To better understand how to overcome the difficulties associated with B2B email deliverability, MarketingSherpa picked the brains of three experts:

- Dennis Dayman, Chief Deliverability Officer, Oracle
- Spencer Kollas, Global Director of Delivery Services, Experian Marketing Services
- Tom Sather, Senior Director of Research, Return Path

As the way we consume our information has expanded, so has the world of deliverability. For consumer marketers, opportunities are flourishing in social and mobile media. Though those areas are at B2B marketers’ disposal as well, email is still reigns as the chief communication preference.

“Do you see social? Sure. Do you see mobile? Sure. But traditionally, it’s mostly through email than it would be in the B2C market where you might see Facebook or other sorts of channels involved,” Dayman explained.

For B2B marketers, it’s more crucial than ever to master deliverability to the inbox.

**TACTIC #1: PRIORITYZE QUALITY OVER QUANTITY WITH EMAIL LISTS**

Bigger isn’t always better — especially when it comes to list management.

Rather than blindly targeting as many potential consumers as possible, it’s far more beneficial to narrow your focus.

“Because you’re dealing with these larger deals, you want to make sure that you’re focusing on people who are going to really turn your message into a deal versus dealing with people you’re going to be chasing for a long time,” Dayman said.

Time and resources are valuable, so placing quality over quantity with email lists is imperative. To achieve that quality, direct your efforts toward the most engaged users. These are going to be recipients who are actively opening and clicking through your emails.

“By focusing your list on your most active users, it’ll help you pinpoint and get the true ROI that you’re looking for from the email channel,” Kollas said.
One of the hardest sells

This quality over quantity mentality can cause a butting of heads within your company, particularly between the marketing department and the CFO.

Upfront, it’s a scary proposal. By focusing your list on more engaged users, you’ll be cutting people out. Though that portion is comprised of inactive, non-opening consumers, it seems like you’re slashing potential buyers. Most of all, it seems like you’re slashing revenue. Of course, that’s not the case. In fact, you’re no longer wasting resources and money on users who are reporting you as spam or who are emotionally unsubscribed, Dayman explained.

However, that doesn’t make it any less difficult to persuade this idea to the CFO.

“It is one of the toughest things to do,” Dayman said. “It takes more than just a couple of days. It sometimes takes months to prove the model.”

Tactic #2: Segment Consumers to Reduce Deliverability Complaints, Shorten B2B Sales Process

In B2B transactions, you’re dealing with a longer, more complex sales cycle than those found in the B2C market. But, you can accelerate this process by segmenting consumers with characteristics including:

- Job title
- Website activity
- Downloads
- Product affinity

Segmentation fosters a better sales position because you’re generating a clean lead from the very beginning of your campaign, Dayman explained.

This also benefits your deliverability due to the fact that fewer complaints are stemming from unwanted information. Someone who is receiving relevant content won’t mark it as spam. They’re more likely to open and engage with your email. Based on the items you’re segmenting, you can unearth what type of information that consumer will best react to.

“They’re telling you what they want, and you’re reading that body language and going, ‘Here’s what I need to do with them at this point,’” Dayman said.

Sather added segmenting users is becoming easier due to the capabilities of marketing automation platforms.
“There are a lot of different ways to segment users and I think as marketers are becoming more analytics and metrics based, we’ll start to see more of it, too,” Sather said.

**TACTIC #3: RECOGNIZE HIGH TURNOVER IN B2B MARKETS**

The modern business environment’s frequent job turnover results in equally frequent changes in company email addresses. When an employee leaves a job, as a marketer, you’re still targeting that company email address despite that no one is on the other end.

“Let’s face it, the job market isn’t like it was 20 years ago when my father worked for the same company 37 years and retired,” Dayman said. “I’ve changed jobs every two to five years.”

He added when a person leaves a job, it’s possible that email address is forwarded to their former boss or another employee within the company. Now, another person is becoming bombarded with whatever emails the ex-employee signed up for. The person managing those emails is likely to mark it as spam in hopes of unsubscribing, which hurts your deliverability.

This issue is far more prevalent in B2B deliverability due to the fact that B2C targets personal emails, which most people carry with them for long periods of time. Think about how long you’ve had your Gmail, Yahoo or Hotmail account.

Dayman advised implementing a reactivation campaign to determine if your B2B messages are still reaching the right person. These could involve sending messages along the lines of:

- Is this still you?
- Are you still interested?
- Hey, are you still there?

By doing this, you can elicit some sort of action whether it’s getting someone to unsubscribe or to re-engage with your brand. Most of all, it targets inactive accounts on your list.

“We save the resources, the time and the cost associated with managing so many extra dead email addresses that aren’t doing anything,” Dayman explained.

Sather suggested examining items such as job titles and length of activity to determine when it’s time to cut someone from your email list.

For example, if you’re dealing with an account associated with a CMO, look at the average turnover for the CMO position and adjust efforts accordingly. Has this user been inactive for a few months? Perhaps they’ve switched jobs.
“The situation is going to change based on the business,” Sather explained. “I think it’s a decision that needs to be made across the different marketing departments to determine what makes sense and how to measure that activity.”

Another solution involves building a relationship beyond email by utilizing other channels, especially social media.

“If you can get somebody who likes your product on social, then that’s going to follow them wherever they go,” Kollas said. “If they start following you on LinkedIn, it doesn’t matter which company they’re with.”

Buying lists is no longer a viable tactic

Because of the frequent changing of B2B email addresses — among a slew of other negatives — our expert sources are unanimous in their disapproval of purchased email lists.

“I honestly have never seen [a] well-performing purchased list,” Kollas said. “I’ve only seen negative repercussions from a purchased list.”

On the surface, purchased lists seem like an easy way to aggregate a lot of email addresses quickly. But, not taking the time to segment users by building a list organically actually can create deliverability problems.

For example, with some purchased lists, you end up hitting a large number of spam traps that people have put in the Web with their very old email addresses. This is in addition to those email addresses that have become irrelevant due to users moving jobs.

Our three experts aren’t the only ones who frown upon this tactic. Dayman explained some countries have even outlawed purchased lists because “they’re not true opt-in.”

“Buying an email list in today’s relevant world of marketing is just not a good thing to do,” Dayman said.

There are other productive ways to grow your email list without running into those reputation issues associated with buying a list. Viable options include collecting addresses through Google searches and email sign-up forms. Marketers can also capitalize on the “Promotions” tab in Gmail by purchasing ads in that space, Sather said.

“The thinking is if people are already in there, they’re in the mindset to purchase something or look for a good deal,” Sather explained. “It’s a great way to serve and deliver very targeted and relevant ads.”

By growing your email lists organically, you’re benefiting the overall deliverability of your messages by ensuring you’re targeting engaged users who are likely to give you those clickthroughs and opens.
TACTIC #4: UTILIZE OPT-IN OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE REPUTATION SCORE

Having a full grasp on what goes into your email reputation score in the B2B environment can be extremely difficult due to inconsistencies in companies’ security and spam measures.

“It’s more of an art than it is a science,” Dayman said.

As a B2C marketer, you have more tools at your disposal to target the meaning of your score. You can simply contact the ESP’s postmaster site, input some information, and quickly discover why you’re being blocked, for example.

In the B2B realm, however, this type information isn’t typically available publicly. The process of investigating your reputation score becomes more elongated. Rather than a postmaster site, you have to figure out who the proper contact point is within a company. Most times, you’re dealing with one person — an IT administrator.

When employees are spammed, they’ll report it internally. Most often, the IT administrator will want to make the spam issue go away quickly and the fast fix is installing a major block on a network or domain.

You’re also dealing with a very fragmented and segmented market because each IT department may have tighter spam filters than others. There are not universal standards to target, Kollas explained.

“B2B is so subjective to the IT departments’ whims,” Kollas said.

This heightens the importance of:

• Looking at bounce logs
• Monitoring complaints and content
• Understanding how you’re engaging with your users
• Reaching out to companies through cross-channel marketing

In regard to cross-channel marketing, you should ensure you’re building messages across Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to help your company with the deliverability of emails.

“It’s really putting your message front and center with whatever market you’re after, wherever their attention is going to be,” Sather said. “It does a really good job of building awareness and definitely helps with email.”

In addition to cross-channel marketing, Sather advised against trying to solve deliverability issues for every single domain — prioritize instead. To conserve time and resources, examine where the bulk of your consumers are in a domain. Then, identify what spam filters those domains are using and work from there.
“Otherwise, you’re trying to solve deliverability issues at 50 different spam filters and you’re not really knowing if it’s having a major effect or not,” Sather said.

According to Sather, recent deliverability benchmark reports are showing top domains are Google and Gmail, even for B2B marketers. If you’re using Google for your hosted enterprise solution, you are using Gmail underneath the hood, including for filtering, Sather said.

“With hosted solutions like Google, you are no longer maintaining an email server in-house, but everything is handled in the cloud,” Sather explained.

Thus, it’s beneficial to look at those particular filters and fine-tune to those filtering standards. But, it’s also important to understand you’ll have to get through more spam filters after the initial domain filter. For example, most company emails are sent to Outlook. So, you should ensure your message is equipped to bypass those additional spam filters, as well.

**Notice, consent and choice**

Generating that clean lead we discussed earlier will also aid you with your reputation score. You can achieve this by forming your email lists based on opt-in opportunities presented to users.

Dayman, who is on the ethics committee of the Direct Marketing Association, encouraged building privacy into the very beginning of your email marketing strategy.

“We’re more apt [as consumers] to give our information to somebody or something when they’re making the right choices — when marketers are making the right choice on how to contact and are respecting their choices,” Dayman said.

If a consumer opts in to receive your emails, they’re less likely to complain because they asked for the information. The consumer is less likely to hit the spam button, resulting in a better reputation score for you.

**TACTIC #5: DETERMINE WHETHER A DEDICATED OR A SHARED IP IS THE BEST FIT**

There are two avenues to take when selecting an Internet protocol (IP) for your company: dedicated or shared. As a marketer, you must weigh the benefits and drawbacks of each to see which one will offer your company the most benefits.

“There are a number of different factors that could play into what will work best for a particular company based on [its] business model and [its] business goals,” Kollas said.
A dedicated IP is allotted to a single hosting account, which gives your company greater control over your reputation score. A shared IP, on the other hand, hosts several sites, meaning the actions of one company affect the reputation scores of all the companies hosted on the IP — good or bad.

“If somebody does something that goes against best practice, it can negatively affect you,” Kollas explained. “I think that’s the biggest risk anytime you’re talking about sharing IPs.”

For example, if someone on the IP is spamming users, everyone is punished through reputation score.

That’s not to say shared IPs don’t possess strong positives for some companies — especially for those starting out fresh in email list building. By sharing an IP, a company is able to share the email volume of other companies to help get its own emails out there. Shared IPs are also more cost effective, and it makes more sense for smaller businesses sending out small volumes.

“There are many B2B senders that it makes perfect sense for the use [of] shared networks simply because they don’t send enough mail to warrant the cost, management or upkeep of having their own IPs,” Kollas said.

If your company does utilize a shared IP, there are a few items to keep in mind. Sather suggested finding a good email service provider to partner with that has strict service level agreements for using a shared IP. With these agreements in place, you’re less likely to run into those big reputation score issues.

“The last thing you want is someone that doesn’t have any rules in place for the people that are on their shared IPs, where it’s kind of a Wild West,” Sather said.

On the other hand, if your company does send out high volumes and can afford the expense, a dedicated IP may be the way to go. Utilizing a dedicated IP address allows the mailbox provider to better rate your reputation score as an individual.

“We tend to push clients in that direction because it allows them to not only segment themselves out from the rest of the world, but also allows us to do our job and to better identify if there’s a problem that’s related to them and, more specifically, what that problem was related to,” Dayman said.

Dayman added dedicated IPs are strongly recommended for highly phished brands, like banks. With a dedicated IP address, email service providers don’t have to second-guess the reputability of the email.

**TACTIC #6: OPTIMIZE EMAIL FOR MOBILE**

Chances are, your message is being consumed on a five-by-two-inch screen. Are you creating your emails with those constraints in mind?
“I think a lot of B2B marketers haven’t been, and now need to start optimizing for mobile form,” Sather said.

By the end of the year, Sather added, most B2B companies will see their emails opened on a smartphone. This is a huge positive moving forward as it ups the chances of your message being seen or opened by extending your message onto an additional device. But, a simple tap of the finger makes it much easier for your email to become triaged.

To make the most of your email on mobile, focus on the HTML content. Dayman said you should focus on ensuring messages are more visually appealing and that you’re allowing your consumer to get through the information faster due to the smaller reading space.

“There have been studies that show you have three to five seconds to garner the attention of the user — whether it’s on a laptop or otherwise,” Dayman explained. “By giving that dynamic mobile version to them, you’re still giving them those three to five seconds to really get the full picture.”

Remember just because an email shows up beautifully on a laptop, it could be showing up funky on the phone. Tailor your messages for mobile moving forward.

**Tactic #7: Don’t Jeopardize Your Company’s Deliverability by Comparing It to the Competition**

“Don’t always try to keep up with the Joneses,” Kollas warned. “Focus on what is going on within your business and try to improve from there. Don’t just worry about industry standards or industry numbers.”

Kollas explained weighing your company’s success against industry averages can be a dangerous game.

For example, if your company open rate is higher than the industry average, you’re not going to adjust your practices to sink to the industry average. Examine what’s working best for your company and continue polishing from there.

A way to do this effectively is to create trending reports to track peaks and valleys of your campaign. These reports can serve as a valuable tool for bettering your understanding of what is or isn’t working and why.

**Tactic #8: Dedicate Time for Careful Analysis of Campaign Results, Metrics**

Clearly, mastering the many challenges of email deliverability is no easy feat. According to Dayman, recognizing and committing to those difficulties is a key component on your path to success as a marketer.
“This is not an easy job,” Dayman said. “This is a very difficult job, and if you’re not willing to put the analytics and the time into measuring certain aspects of your campaign, you’re going to fail at this.”

When you do run into email deliverability problems, seek to identify them by asking insightful questions such as:

- Am I getting hard bounces?
- Are there any unknown emails?
- Where did this list come from? Is it old or purchased?
- Could the expectations of my consumers have changed?
- Have my consumers switched jobs?
- How much activity am I seeing here?

It’s also important to categorize the problem at hand in terms of whether you’re looking at a list issue, a content issue or a relevancy problem.

Then, once you have your diagnosis, take action. Implement processes to address those issues. This could be in the form of a new campaign that allows consumers to unsubscribe or perhaps it’s a survey to help better profile your prospects and target their needs.

As a B2B marketer, know that you have more limited resources than a B2C marketer does when it comes to deliverability. Take a look at what’s available to you and capitalize on that information. You can garner such metrics from service providers or in-house systems.

Along with that, start your analysis immediately, Dayman advised. He suggested comparing campaigns after you send them rather than waiting until after they are finished. This could be daily or even monthly.

Examine complaint ratios and where your metrics are dropping.

Dayman knows this involves a lot of legwork, but it’s all part of your responsibility as a marketer.

“If this was easy, we’d all be millionaires at this point,” Dayman joked. “We’d all retire to some island.”
At the heart of email marketing campaigns, it often seems as if a tug-of-war is being waged.

On one side, you have gaining attention as a tactic and on the other, you have using conversation.

But, which of these is truly effective?

Let’s take a look at how the MECLABS research team tested a promotional-style email design against a letter-style and what we can learn from the results.

Before we get started, here’s a quick review of the research notes for a little background on the experiment.

**Background:** A large international media company focusing on increasing subscription rates.

**Goal:** To increase the number of conversions based on the value proposition conveyed through the email.

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

**Approach:** A/B multifactor split test

**Control**

The research team hypothesized the control featured popular design principles to create balance and hierarchy on the page.

The promotional-style email also featured heavy use of images and graphics to catch the readers’ attention and multiple call-to-action buttons for increased points of entry.

**Treatment**

In the treatment, a letter-style email was designed to look and feel more like a personal letter. The design limited the use of graphics and images and featured a single call-to-action button.
CONTROL
Subject line:
Open this now for Special Savings

TREATMENT
Subject line:
Get unlimited Access to [Product] with Home Delivery

Get Free Unlimited Online Access to
WHEN YOU SIGN UP FOR PRINT DELIVERY

Hello (Name),

We want to thank you for being a valued reader. We would like to offer unrestricted online access AND print delivery of [Product] for as low as $3/week. That is a savings of 50% for your first 12 weeks.

All Digital Access includes:
- Unlimited access to [Product] from any device
- 100 archive articles every 4 weeks
- Free Smartphone and tablet apps

Enjoy all of this and more at an exceptional value. Subscribe today and save 50% on your first 12 weeks of home delivery.

VIEW SUBSCRIPTION OPTIONS
Results

181% Increase in Conversion

The overall conversion rate increased 181% due to a clearly stated value proposition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversion Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control – Standard Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment – Letter-style Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Difference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What you need to know

By limiting the amount of graphics and focusing on engaging the customer in a conversation, the treatment outperformed the control by 181%. To learn more about why the letter-style email beat the promotional-style design, you can watch the free on-demand MarketingExperiments Web clinic replay of “Are Letter-Style Emails Still Effective?” found here: http://mecla.bs/digest0488
In my experiences with helping our Research Partners with email campaigns, I’ve discovered when it comes to testing, it’s not a one-size-fits-all activity.

Your email campaigns are fundamentally different than landing pages or any other elements of your marketing mix and sales funnel.

Consequently, your approach to testing them will also be different.

They have different goals, elements, best practices and bad habits to avoid.

In today’s MarketingExperiments Blog post, I wanted to share six common bad habits to avoid when testing email campaigns.

**Bad Habit #1: Not knowing how your email list is being split**

This is a very common mistake I see, and it’s one of the most avoidable. Marketing teams will test with limited understanding of how their email list is being split into test cells.

Or worse, they don’t know how their email platform splits at all. This is troublesome because it can easily cause sampling errors that will skew your results.

So first, check the platform you’re using to learn how the list splitting algorithm works.

If there’s not any specific information about how the email platform is allocating test cells, consider testing a dual control email send to gain a better understanding of how much your data may vary.

Also, try to make sure each test cell has allocated recipients fairly, especially if your list has information in the database that indicates recipients have varying degrees of motivation.

The reason for this is unlike A/B split testing, where landing page traffic comes from multiple sources and is split at random, email lists are a finite traffic source.

What if I’m splitting lists myself, you ask?

If that’s the case – try to do so as randomly as possible.
Bad Habit #2: Drawing Conclusions After Only One Test

Judging a test by a single email drop is a mistake, even if your testing tool says your results have reached statistical significance.

I recommend testing your treatments over multiple email drops to ensure you are seeing some form of consistency in your results before making a business decision.

Also, one common question I get about data analysis is which method of analysis should be used to interpret your results.

In this case, I recommend recording the data as separate points in time instead of lumping all of the data together.

The reason for this is the fixed points will give you a better picture of behavior across sends, which is likely more accurate given this approach also takes into account variability over time.

Bad Habit #3: Random Send Times

The results of an email drop represent a single point in time versus landing page testing, which has a continuous stream of traffic to pages.

Consequently, if you are not consistent in the delivery of your email drops – time of day, day of week, etc. – this inconsistency will impact your ability to interpret results accurately.

Here’s why …

If you think about when you go through the emails in your own inbox, it’s likely you do so at random. So, the only way to account for that randomness is by sending emails on a consistent schedule.

Inherently, you can adjust that send schedule to test your way into discovering the ideal time to send your customers an email, but keeping the frequency constant is key.

Bad Habit #4: Not Having a Clear-Cut Goal in Your Testing

This is another common mistake I see that’s avoidable – lacking a clear test hypothesis.

Email is one of the strictest channels. The general conversion path of an email is something like this:

1. You send an email to your list
2. The customer receives your email in their inbox (unless it gets caught in a spam filter)
3. They identify the sender, skim the subject line and choose to open or delete the email
4. If they choose to open the email, hopefully they engage the content
5. If all goes to plan after engaging the content, they convert
But even with the path clearly laid out, you still can’t go anywhere without a sense of direction.

That’s why you want to make sure you have a good hypothesis that is clear and testable right from the start to help keep your testing efforts strategic in focus.

**Bad Habit #5: Inconsistent Key Performance Indicators**

Ultimately, conversion (or revenue) of the treatment cell should be used to determine the winner. Depending on your goals, the point here is to make sure you are consistent as you evaluate the results.

Also, I would caution judging test results solely on clickthrough or open rates, which tend to be the primary drivers in email tests. Secondary metrics can tell a very interesting story about customer behavior if you’re willing to look at the data from all angles.

**Bad Habit #6: Not Setting a Standard Decay Time**

So, what is time decay exactly?

To keep things simple, time decay is really just a set period of time for an activity to take place around an email drop – an open, a click, etc.

If you are judging multiple drops, the data for each drop should follow a standard decay guideline that everyone on your team understands and agrees with. We generally suggest a week (seven days) as enough time to call the performance of a typical email drop.

One caveat here worth a mention is there is no magic bullet with email decay time.

The goals and objectives for campaigns vary by industry, so there are no universal standards in place.

Your organization should come to a consensus about a standard decay time to judge campaign performance before the campaign gets underway.

**In Email Testing, Kicking Bad Habits Starts with a Moment of Clarity**

There’s one more thing I wanted to mention ...

Before embarking on your next email testing cycle, ensure that your site analytics platform and email platform are as integrated as possible.

Integration (and a little quality assurance won’t hurt either) can help provide you with an accurate picture of your entire funnel from email to conversion.
The subject line of an email represents one of the very first micro-yes(s) an email marketer needs to achieve to convert a sale. If they earn an open with their subject line, they can move on to generating a click to the website, then another click, and another – until the prospect has completed the purchasing process.

With such emphasis placed on the subject line, it makes sense for us to attempt to construct a framework that will allow our organizations to generate high-quality subject lines with greater consistency, regardless of the staff involved in sending the email.

In the course of our ongoing email research, we came across a tool that claimed to do just that. The tool uses more than 400 rules to automatically analyze a subject line and assign it a score between 1 and 100, and claims to have tested and tracked more than 1 billion email subject lines.

We were suitably intrigued, albeit skeptical, about the prospects of this tool and its ramifications for email marketers, so we decided to put it to the test and see how well it was able to predict the winner in an A/B subject line test.

**An Experiment:**
**Can an online tool predict the winning subject line?**

The first experiment we used the tool on was Test Protocol (TP) 2092 in the MECLABS Research Library. The test was run for one of the largest financial institutions in the world, and the goal was to determine which value claim generated the most conversion. For the subject lines tested, note the tool's score in parentheses:

A. Looking for a lower mortgage rate? You’re not alone. (63)
B. Discover the advantages of [Brand Name] mortgages (78)
C. Own your home sooner with free bi-weekly payments (81)
What were the actual results? The tool accurately ranked the subject lines’ effectiveness. Subject Line B was opened by 9.5% more recipients than Subject Line A, and Subject Line C was opened by 16% more recipients. This was an exciting result, but the secondary data wasn’t as kind to the tool.

When it came to clickthrough, Subject Line B underperformed Subject Line A by 7.5%. Subject Line C proved the overall winner. This raised a question about the tool’s ability to predict a truly effective subject line, so we continued our research.

A second test showed that the tool inaccurately ranked the open and clickthrough rates for a news publication’s subject lines. A third test revealed an even bigger discrepancy, as a subject line with a 94 rating was handily defeated by a subject line with a 76 rating.

All in all, after we tested hundreds of subject lines with the tool, we were able to verify that the tool could accurately predict the winner of a test just 32% of the time. To put that in perspective, a coin flip can predict the winner 50% of the time.

So the tool was a bust, but what did we learn from this experience? More importantly, are there rules we can use to consistently generate effective subject lines? There are two approaches, but let’s first review two principles that can guide us.

Why are emails opened?

**Key Principle #1:** Customers aren’t trying to open your emails; they are trying to eliminate them.

These days, nobody approaches their email inbox with excitement and enthusiasm. They approach it as an annoyance. They want to eliminate anything that isn’t important or necessary immediately, so they spend time on only those emails with vital information. Often, they do not thoughtfully consider the emails they eliminate, either. It is more the work of an industrial threshing machine than a surgeon’s scalpel.

**Key Principle #2:** To prevent elimination, the marketer must make an immediate connection with the customer. This personal connection in the current email environment is often more important than even the benefit you are offering in terms of having your email read.

The tool failed to accurately predict winning subject lines because it lacked the ability to understand human connection. All of the best practices and industry standards in the world will not generate consistently successful subject lines because human connection is paramount.

**So how can we craft better subject lines consistently? Are there guidelines we can follow?** Our research reveals two proven effective approaches for generating winning subject lines.
**Approach #1: Connect to an Internal Issue**

First, **we must understand that an interruption is not enough; we must transfer customer attention into customer interest.** This transfer occurs when we create a space in the customer’s mind that can only be filled with what is coming next.

Interruptions get attention, but this is not sufficient. **Attention is only sustained for a split second, and if it is not converted into interest, it will not last long enough to get a message through.** When we create interest, we create a space in the mind into which we can then place our message. If we try to deliver our message before creating space in the mind, it will simply have nowhere to land.

Second, **in most cases, we can create this space by connecting to an internal issue common to our customers and intensifying the offer’s connection to that issue to attract them toward a potential resolution.**

One way to create space in the mind is to generate interest by addressing an internal issue the prospect is facing. Then, you can connect your offer to that issue and suggest it as a solution. **Internal issues include:**

- Limited resources (time, money, help)
- Unmet expectations (work and family)
- Deficient skillsets (inability or inadequacy)
- Operational difficulties (routine usability)
- Fragmented perspectives (ignorance or misunderstanding)

Let’s look at a few examples to see these principles in action.

**Example #1:**

**Not This:** “[Company Name]: A New Way to Order”

**But This:** “[Company Name]: Now Only 2-Meal Minimum Order”

**Results:** 25% increase in opens and 196% lift in clicks

The first subject line hints at a potential issue in the ordering process. However, it does not make the connection clear. Too much meaning was left for the prospect to try to figure out on his or her own. It does not convert attention to interest. The second subject line, by contrast, clearly connects the offer to an internal issue experienced by the customer – specifically, that the order minimum has been lowered.
Example #2:

**Not This:** “Get Unlimited Access to [Newspaper.com] with Home Delivery”  
**But This:** “Free Unlimited Access to [Newspaper] Online”  
**Results:** 10% increase in opens and 34% lift in clicks

While the recipients of this email want access to this publication, the first subject line doesn’t directly address the internal issue they are having, which is a limitation of resources. The second version directly connects to that internal issue. The recipient does not want to spend much money. The subject line provides a potential way to solve the problem, which converts the prospect’s attention into interest.

Example #3:

**Not This:** “Target MDs with Surveys and Panels”  
**But This:** “Reach 120,000 Physicians through Social Media”  
**Results:** 8% increase in opens and 28% lift in clicks

The first subject line is not bad, but it is too general and fails to address a need or show a new way to solve a problem. The second subject line connects to an internal need – the need to achieve results quickly and thereby justify personal value. The “120,000” suggests that the list is comprehensive, which it is, and it implies the value proposition.

Additionally, the keyword “social media” in the sender’s marketplace is highly valuable because the industry is currently trying to understand how to capitalize on that particular medium. Thus, the second subject line addresses an internal issue faced by the recipient.

If you cannot connect your subject line to an internal issue faced by the prospect, you are not out of luck. **There is a second approach** you can use to create interest and space in the customer’s mind.

**Approach #2: Connect to an External Event**

Messages have more meaning when they are presented in a story (**Figure 1**). People use stories to make meaning and organize disparate facts into a comprehensible whole. A series of events that builds toward a conclusion is easier to understand than a series of random events that aren’t connected. When you **connect your message to the customer’s external story**, your message will be more meaningful to them.
Examples of external events include:

- An action or behavior
- A conversation
- A single exchange (completed or abandoned)
- A cancellation (membership, contract, recurring transactions)
- A service interaction

What does it look like to connect your message to a customer’s story? Let’s consider two examples.

Example #1:

Which subject lines connect to a recent event in the story of the customer?

A. [Name], Your Account Information is Ready To View
B. It’s easy to access your [Bank Name] Accounts Online. Sign On Now
C. Your Accounts are Protected with [Bank Name] Online. Sign On Now
D. Did you forget your [Bank Name] Online username or password?
The answer is both A and D. As a result, those subject lines significantly outperformed B and C (Figure 2).

**92.2% Relative Increase in Open Rate**

*Subject lines A and D significantly outperformed those that did not connect to an event*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Subject Line</th>
<th>Open Rate</th>
<th>Rel. Diff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>[Name], Your Account Information is Ready To View</td>
<td>30.67%</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Did you forget your [Bank Name] Online username or password?</td>
<td>24.14%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Your Accounts are Protected with [Bank Name] Online. Sign On Now</td>
<td>20.33%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>It's easy to access your [Bank Name] Accounts Online. Sign On Now</td>
<td>15.96%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example #2:**

**Control:** Subject lines that convert - MarketingExperiments Web clinic invite  
**Version A:** What makes a good subject line?  
**Version B:** Subject lines that fail - Recent research reveals why your emails don’t get opened

This example comes from one of MECLABS’ own tests. The control subject line announces the topic for the Web clinic, but it does not do much to generate interest. It gets attention, and the idea is communicated, but that is all. The trouble with Version A is that it is unclear what is being offered. It requires an intellectual jump, which stalls momentum and interest.

Version B touches on an acute problem every marketer has faced: writing subject lines that fail. This is a real external event. This subject line incorporates both approaches by connecting to the recipient’s internal desire to improve their email marketing performance and connecting to an external event (e.g., the recent failure of a subject line).

The results speak to the power of connecting to internal and external realities: Version B was declared the winner and **outperformed the control by 6% in open rate and 18% in clickthrough**.
Getting your emails opened

If you want to write subject lines that get your emails opened, you must keep two key customer insights in mind.

First, know that customers are trying to eliminate your emails, not open them. To escape the trash folder, the marketer must transfer customer attention into customer interest. This transfer occurs when we create a space in the prospect’s mind that can only be filled with what is coming next.

Second, marketers can use two effective approaches to create that space in the customer’s mind: connect to an internal issue and connect to an external event.

While it certainly would be nice to plug subject lines into an online tool and receive a definitive grade, our testing shows that it simply is not viable at this time. The research says that it is in the marketer’s ability to connect to the internal and external issues a prospect is facing that yields a great subject line. Focus on that and you will be in good shape. And, of course, continuously test.

---

i Learn what an example decision path might look like starting with the subject line:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/marketing-insights/the-ultimate-yes-conversio.html

ii Learn about the MECLABS Email Messaging Optimization Index created to evaluate email marketing:
http://www.meclabs.com/methodology#heuristics

iii Too learn what other obstacles email marketers face, download the MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report:

iv Learn how to transform a customer need into a customer want in this MarketingExperiments Web clinic replay:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/missing-copy.html

v Learn how the results of another subject line test performed on MarketingExperiments Web clinic invites:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/analytics-testing/effective-subject-line.html

vi Watch a Web clinic replay to learn a four-step checklist that can help you convert attention into interest:
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-optimization/subject-lines-tested.html
If you stopped sending promotional emails, would the majority of your customers actively notice? Would your customers even contact you because they missed them?

What about email newsletters? Other than a few exceptionally well-written and helpful newsletters, customers probably would not notice.

But, I would argue transactional emails are the golden ticket — especially for e-commerce marketers during the holiday season.

We will have more on that in a bit. First, let’s see how often consumer marketers are using transactional emails. In the MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report, we asked:

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Email</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activation</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post purchase</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upsell/Cross promotional</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date triggered</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triggered based on website behavior</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event countdown</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Win-back/reengagement</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping cart abandonment</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=50
The Trojan Horse of Email Marketing

If transactional emails are your “in” to a few dedicated moments with a customer, how can they help your marketing?

If you see them only as bills, receipts or order confirmations, you are missing the big picture. They offer secondary real estate for a relevant call-to-action around this primary information. You can craft an offer based on that customer’s value to your organization.

RFM — recency, frequency and monetary value — is marketing 101. For every transactional email you send, unlike promotional emails, you likely have or can gain access to at least some of this information.

But don’t overstay your welcome.

I hate to use the Trojan horse analogy because, in a sense, it implies disingenuous motives. As with all marketing, to be truly effective, you have to put the customer first.

Relevance is key. After all, these are your customers. The last thing you want to do is abuse the trust they’ve placed in your company by making a purchase.

If you are able to craft a relevant call-to-action around transactional information, you are adding additional value for your customers.

“Here’s the confirmation that your partridge has arrived. Where will you put it? Do you now need a pear tree?”

“Well, we see you bought a menorah. As a valued customer, we can send you the Hanukkah candles with free shipping.”

If you include random marketing messaging that doesn’t apply, you will likely be less effective. But, it probably won’t hurt your relationship with the customer too much, as long as the marketing message is not intrusive.

If, however, the marketing message is not secondary to the transactional info, you are no longer comfortably ensconced in your Trojan horse — you have burned a bridge.
Some marketers see the opportunity, like this agency marketer who responded in the benchmark survey by saying, “It was really hard to narrow it down to one thing. We have been depending mostly on promotional and informational emails sent out on a schedule; we’re going to try to talk clients into doing more with transactional emails.”

A B2B/B2G (business to government) marketer intended to “use transactional streams for promotional, more event trigger-based programs.”

**OF COURSE, ADDING MARKETING MESSAGES TO TRANSACTIONAL PROMOTIONS IS NOT WITHOUT ITS CHALLENGES**

Otherwise, 100% of email marketers would be doing it. A B2B/B2G marketer mentioned some of these challenges in the benchmark survey.

“Because transactional is a major communication stream, managed outside normal email marketing channels, and integration of promotional with transactional presents CAN-SPAM compliance challenges, as well as analytics challenges (i.e., we don’t have permission, interaction analytics on many transactional recipients).”

So start small. Maybe you can add dynamic offers with pictures, but what about grouping your products into a few broad categories, and adding a simple line with a link for a complementary product and service? Could you accomplish this in time to impact sales for this holiday season?

**A DEEPER LOOK AT THE DATA**

I’ll end this Chart of the Week by looking at some of the segmented, breakout data for you data fans out there:

- For all marketers, only 40% use transactional emails
- For B2B and B2G marketers, 27% use transactional emails
- For those who market to both a B2C and B2B audience, 50% use transactional emails
- For those with under 100 employees, 34% use transactional emails
- For companies with more than 100 employees, 46% use transactional emails
- For marketing agencies or consultancies, 32% use transactional emails
"Attempting to craft an effective subject line is addicting,” a marketing director said in the Benchmark Report survey.

You’re busy this time of year, so let’s be quick about it. How can you improve your chances of crafting an effective subject line?

In the MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report, we asked marketers:

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

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=264
In the Benchmark Report survey, a marketer responded, “Email is heavily used in today’s market, so rising above the noise is very challenging. Good subject lines are definitely key to having your email opened and read.”

As you can see, subject lines dominated the responses of elements that marketers are testing, and testing is a key way to help improve your subject lines. In the breakout data, B2C marketers were even slightly more likely to test subject lines, with 87% indicating they did so.

**There’s still time to test and impact your results**

With only weeks left in the holiday marketing season, subject lines are one of the very few elements of your campaigns that:

- You can change to impact results
- Can provide valuable customer data

Your shopping cart is locked in place, and if you don’t have mobile-optimized campaigns ready to go by now, it won’t happen in the next few weeks. But, you can still change subject lines on the fly to increase your email opens, and ultimately, increase sales.

You can change them based on the 2013 holiday shopper — not what you remember worked well in 2012.

**You still have time to gain valuable customer intelligence of your customers with A/B testing**

It is a tactic employed by the vast majority of marketers, but don’t give up on it over the next few weeks just because you’re slammed this time of year.

A/B testing can still teach you:

- Which product features resonate most with customers in the 2013 holiday shopping season
- How much your product and brand names grab customer attention
- If customers are interested in clever campaigns this late in the game or just want a straightforward message with clear value

As an email marketing manager said in the Benchmark Report, “Still, to this day, the subject line remains the most important part of our email marketing efforts. If they don’t open, then we can’t market to them, and our revenue is directly tied to open rate success!”

It’s a crowded inbox this time of year. A/B testing subject lines can still help you stick out in that crowd.
I like to think of email marketing as more of a newspaper than a television ad.

When you’re creating a television ad, you can create one (or a very few ads) and place them across endless media buys. After all, a customer should be exposed to the ad at least three times during each purchase cycle, according to old school advertising conventional wisdom.

However, with a newspaper, you have to give the customer a reason to keep receiving that daily delivery on their driveway every morning. Sometimes it’s easy to find fresh, compelling content such as the recent health care website kerfuffle. Other times, it’s a slow news day and you just have to fill some slots (“mosquito bite victim”).

Many marketers I talk to who are just starting out in content marketing seem to face many slow news days. They often struggle how to find valuable, compelling content for potential customers.

At MarketingSherpa Lead Gen Summit 2013, I pulled Joe Pulizzi, Founder, Content Marketing Institute, aside during lunch to share some tips about email marketing content. Watch the video to find out what Joe had to say.

Here are a few key points I took away from Joe:

- Stay away from pitching; focus on the long-term relationship.
- People don’t care about us, our products or services. They care about their own challenges.
- Think of yourself like a publisher or media company.
- Give value every day, so when you do have a sales message, customers will let you in.
- Content marketing is a marathon, not a sprint – content marketing starts, and there is really no end.
- Create a content marketing mission statement: What is the outcome for the reader?
- Leverage employees, customers and influencers to become the trusted, go-to resource for your customers.
- The position to hire first and foremost? Managing editor.

**Email Marketing:** **How do you create excitement around the content you have?**

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content
Watch the video excerpt on the MarketingSherpa Blog:  http://mecla.bs/digest0503
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]

\[ eme = rv(of + i) – (f + a) \]
Marketing Optimization
Marketing keeps getting harder.

With print advertising, you just had to stand out among the articles and other ads in the newspaper.

Online advertising raised the bar, forcing you to not just compete with content and advertising, but instant messages and emails as well.

Now with mobile, you have to compete with everything happening in the real world. The fire truck siren down the street. Running into a friend on the sidewalk. The waiter discussing today’s specials.

What is the most effective way to engage mobile users? We posed that very question to your peers in the MarketingSherpa 2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report.

Q: Indicate the level of EFFECTIVENESS for the mobile engagement and relevancy tactics used by your organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobile Tactics</th>
<th>Very effective</th>
<th>Somewhat effective</th>
<th>Not effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Include video content</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide an easy, fast payment system</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design simple mobile pages to load</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamically personalize mobile content</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimize message for specific OS and/or device</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run loyalty/reward programs</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leverage mobile device tools</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualize message for the mobile experience</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment campaigns based on behavior and/or sales cycle</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

©2012 MarketingSherpa Mobile Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded August 2012, N=99
My top three takeaways from this chart are ...

**Use Video to Grab Attention and Interest**

As you can see, mobile video content was considered the most effective tactic, with 38% of marketers calling it “very effective.” Video has moving pictures and audio, and it is dynamic and compelling. It can be dramatic, comedic or informative. Thus, video is able to compete with the short attention spans and multilayered distractions accompanying mobile device usage.

**Be Device Specific**

While you can count on consistency with your newspaper advertisements, mobile is not just one thing. First of all, there are multiple operating systems — most prominently Android and iOS.

While Samsung has the most mobile penetration in the United States, Sharp leads in Japan and Nokia leads in Germany. Even in the U.S., the top three mobile manufacturers (Samsung, LG and Motorola) hold less than half of the market.

Then, of course, there are not only smartphones, but also tablets and feature phones (especially prominent if you have an international or less wealthy target market).

Your content and promotions can render differently across all of these devices and operating systems, so it’s important to test your offers on many different devices (or at least use a computer-based tool that emulates these devices).

If that wasn’t difficult enough, if your marketing involves apps, those apps will be OS and device specific (think smartphone versus tablet). Not only OS specific, but OS-version specific (without the latest operating system installed, your customers may not even be able to download the app even if they have an earlier version of the same OS).

Oy vey. It’s enough to give a marketer a headache.

It’s easy to see why optimizing messages for specific devices and platforms can be crucial to mobile marketing success.

**Mobile Payment May Be Premature**

While a large majority of marketers found “providing an easy, fast payment system to secure conversions” to be effective, a significant minority — 14% — found it not effective.

Catalog and TV direct marketers often provide a “cash on delivery (COD)” option. You may also want to consider making alternative payment options available for potential customers that may be anxious to use their smartphone to make a purchase.

After all, watching a video of a girl falling into a fire while twerking in a local coffee shop surrounded by shaggy “novelists” is not an environment that lends itself to safe and secure mobile payment.
“The medium is the message.”

Or so says Marshall McLuhan.

But, when I think of cross-channel and multichannel marketing, I often think of the words of another 60s icon – Jimi Hendrix.

“You’re just like crosstown traffic, so hard to get through to you …”

Cross-channel marketing is difficult because it often involves lots of coordination to keep the messaging consistent.

For instance, you have the players involved …

Multiple departments (and often multiple companies), ranging from:

- The brand
- Agency vendors
- Media partners
- Channel partners
- Freelance writers
- Franchisees
- Really, you name it

Also, don’t forget about the process …

You must get buy-in on budget, launch dates, incentives, brand use, legal regulatory compliance and real estate on the homepage or in-store.

The list goes on.

Needless to say, it can be very hard to get through to everybody.

So to help you herd cats … I mean, to help you with multichannel campaign planning, here are tips to help you overcome some key challenges. These are meant to give you a heads up on potential land mines you might hit and challenges you might run into, before you hit them, so you’re able to coordinate with all parties in a smooth, efficient manner.

Or, at the very least, appear to have some of your ducks in a row.
**Challenge #1: Knowing who you’re talking to**

No campaign, not even a multichannel campaign, should start with channels. Or even a message.

It should start with a person.

The customer.

It’s even better if you’re able to segment this starting point into several types of buyers.

“As the world becomes more connected and the consumer really has the ultimate control of the brand, I think it’s even more important that we put their perspective first in our marketing efforts,” said Tami Cannizzaro, Global Director of Marketing, Social Business, IBM.

Tami shared some of the persona work she’s done with IBM as an example...

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IBM Social Business - Pragmatic Personas - Sept 27, 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Idira the Influencer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Charlie the Change Agent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oliver Old Skool</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maple the Millennial</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doug the Digital Downer</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“We developed ideas around the different possible stakeholders in an enterprise-buying decision. We put thought into their personalities and lifestyles,” Tami said. “I think the most important piece of the exercise was that we thought outside our standard viewpoint, put aside our knowledge and assumptions of the market, and considered our customers’ various needs first and foremost.”

To put a face behind those customer segments, you can include fun little doodles, real pictures or stock photos, but most importantly, try to put yourself in the customers’ varied shoes.

A mistake I often make is to think about how I would react to a certain message or piece of content that I’m working on. But, unless my audience is comprised only of devilishly handsome directors of editorial content living in Jacksonville, Fla., I’m missing the boat.

A great example of this often happens at marketing events. A speaker will ask, “How many people in the audience have smartphones?”

Invariably, 99% of the audience raises their hands. Then, they’ll say, “See, everybody has smartphones!” and then proceed to harangue the audience for not engaging in mobile marketing.

But, unless your target market is people who attend the same marketing conference as you, by following this advice, you are not considering the customer. If, for example, your audience is poor or old, mobile marketing may not be a priority for your company’s marketing budget.

So, never make the argument, “Well, I would love a campaign like this.” Instead, take a good, hard look at “Oliver Old Skool” in your buyer persona, and ask, “What would Oliver think?”

**Challenge #2: Hitting it where they are**

The purpose of a multichannel marketing campaign isn’t to get your message out to as many channels as you can. It’s to get your message out to the most effective, most efficient channels.

“A millennial is likely going to interact with greater frequency and preference on mobile, so mobile would be a priority channel if you’re targeting that audience. If you’re trying to reach a senior B2B buyer, that might not be your best channel,” Tami said.

“Social properties like Facebook and Twitter may provide you data and insight into your customers, your owned properties can provide your insight into how your customers seek information, engage and transact with your brand,” Tami suggested.

The personas can really help here, as well.

“Millennials might like less text and more video. The techy guy might like more hands-on demo. [The persona] forces the exercise of targeting so your website isn’t completely generic,” Tami said.
As you're selecting channels, budgets have a way of focusing the mind. After all, if we all had our druthers, who wouldn’t want a Super Bowl spot? But, the varied channel costs, much like a fantasy football draft, force us to make those trade-offs.

As an example, in our “How much should leads cost?” panel at MarketingSherpa Lead Gen Summit 2013, Tom Reid, Executive Director, Hacker Group, shared the following media mix review for a health care company …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicle</th>
<th>CPS</th>
<th>Qty</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Resp Rate</th>
<th>Resp Qty</th>
<th>Lead Rate</th>
<th>Leads</th>
<th>CPL</th>
<th>Mbr. Rate</th>
<th>Mbrs.</th>
<th>CPM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Mail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail: 3pkgs</td>
<td>$0.45</td>
<td>2,055,000</td>
<td>$931,600</td>
<td>1.15%</td>
<td>23,633</td>
<td>$39</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>21,270</td>
<td>$44</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRTV</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60s Spot</td>
<td>$196</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>$550,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5,600</td>
<td>$94</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>4,760</td>
<td>$116</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search</td>
<td>$5.50</td>
<td>7,556</td>
<td>$41,558</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>$69</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>$81</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>$1.65</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>$49,500</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>$37</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>1,148</td>
<td>$43</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display</td>
<td>$4.33</td>
<td>9,800</td>
<td>$42,434</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>$144</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>$170</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Display</td>
<td>$1.24</td>
<td>47,690</td>
<td>$59,136</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>$496</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>$584</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Digital          |      |           |         |           |          |           |       |      |           |       |     |
| Search           | 95,046| $192,628 | 2.49%   | 2,368    | $81      | 85%       | 2,013 | $96  | 15%       | 302  | $638 |

| Inserts          |      |           |         |           |          |           |       |      |           |       |     |
| Newspaper        | $0.22| 1,041,000 | $229,020| 0.15%    | 1,562    | $147      | 85%   | 1,328 | $172      | 15%   | 199  | $1,438|
| Shared Mail      | $0.12| 1,200,000 | $144,000| 0.10%    | 1,200    | $120      | 85%   | 1,020 | $141      | 15%   | 153  | $1,176|
| Inserts          | $0.17| 2,241,000 | $373,020| 0.12%    | 2,762    | $135      | 85%   | 2,347 | $159      | 15%   | 352  | $1,126|

| Total            | $0.48| 4,306,356 | $2,047,248| 0.80%   | 34,363   | $60       | 89%   | 30,389| $67       | 15%   | 4,558| $449 |

So, how do you get started?

“By starting with small tests and proper Web analytics and attribution, marketers can get a good enough grip on the role each channel plays towards reaching the campaign objective and allocate budgets accordingly,” advised Lori Davis, Online Writer, Qwaya.

**Challenge #3: Finding Their Voice, Not Your Voice**

Once you know where to say it, you have to know what to say.

“Too often brands lead with product-focused messaging. It’s the wrong approach. Customers don’t know what you’re talking about, or worse, know that you’re trying to sell them something without providing them value. That’s a branding misstep,” Tami advised.

“Marketing should approach any customer-facing campaign by putting their customers’ needs first; it should provide value, it should be like a service. You need to build a conversation with your customers and...
first speak to their interest or pain point and then, after multiple interactions, consider a solution. It’s about relationship building.”

**Challenge #4: Creating a Consistent Message and Experience**

To help build that relationship, once you know what you want to say, you must ensure everyone is saying the same thing across all channels – with a seamless customer experience to boot.

If the email department sees the campaign focused around luxury, and the agency copywriters creating prints ads think the message is about value, there can be a serious disconnect to the consumer.

As you’re thinking about this, take a look at the world of politics.

Political parties are essentially one big brand, with hundreds of owner-operator franchisees.

It’s also a world where a single slip-up by any one of those owner-operators will be broadcast across the 24-hour news networks and blogosphere with a maddening speed threatening to torpedo the brand.

To stay on the same page, the parties create talking point memos.

“In an attempt to influence public opinion, the leaders of both major parties — Democrats and Republicans alike — craft talking points, scripts for rank-and-file members to follow when discussing particular policy issues. Talking points, when used frequently, become the party line.”

– FactCheck.org

Likewise, when you are launching a complex campaign across many entities, you need to ensure the messaging, and central thesis behind the entire campaign, is understood and embodied by all involved.

Your brand comes into play here. A clear primary value proposition along with derivative value propositions is essential.

But, it would also help to have your own version of a talking points memo. Tami presented a Campaign Message Map at Lead Gen Summit that her team uses, and she was kind enough to allow you to download it for free and use it for your own campaigns.

“We start by building a very simple conversation map. It starts with key pain points of our customers, then drops to the business value and finally to our capabilities,” Tami explained.
Beyond messaging, there is also the functional aspect of ensuring a consistent experience from one channel to the next.

“Oh only marketers think in terms of channels – consumers don’t. They consume content, not caring if it’s via the ‘mobile, social channel’ or via the ‘print channel.’ Keep that in mind to make sure the consumer’s transition between channels is natural,” Lori said.

Lori provided this example, “If you advertise a URL in offline media, make sure the website provides a good experience on mobile devices. Sounds obvious, but it is often missed.”

The next level is to gain a single view of the customer.

“You need to create a consistent experience and then you need the ability to track your customers whether in-store, online or via mobile so you have a single view of the customer and can personalize their experience in a way that they will appreciate, to build loyalty,” Tami advised.

**Challenge #5: Measuring performance**

With multichannel marketing, 1 + 1 = 3 … if executed properly.

However, it can be difficult to granularly measure exactly which messages in exactly which platforms resulted in an ultimate conversion.

For example, a prospect might read three blog posts and take no obvious action. The prospect may see newspaper and magazine ads and not follow the call-to-action. But then, he is exposed to a pay-per-click ad at just the right moment and converts.

Was it the messaging in the pay-per-click ad? Or was it the blog posts and print ads that built the interest, and the PPC ad simply passed in front of his face at a moment he had time to click? After all, people do not necessarily consume background information at the same time they make purchasing decisions.

All put together, these messages ultimately led to a conversion. This example reveals the power of multichannel marketing.

But, it also brings up that major challenge of measurement. As an evidence-based marketer, you want to know what is most effective. So, what if you only attribute this conversion to the PPC ad, and strip blog posts and print ads away from future campaigns? Would the prospect still convert on the PPC ad without the helpful information the blog posts provided and the authority and credibility garnered from the print ads?
This is what makes multichannel marketing so difficult ... and exciting.

There are, of course, a few things you can do to achieve better data, but as the saying goes, they will likely not be fast, cheap and easy.

“It’s difficult to measure the cross-channel performance of a single customer,” Tami agreed. “You need a database that captures behavioral data.”

“A good Web analytics interface and proper tagging [in terms of online] is a must,” Lori advised. “Depending on the objective, coupon codes, campaign offers and other ‘triggers’ work for offline media.”

It won’t be perfect, but by being able to measure, you are able to iterate and improve.

**CHALLENGE #6: CONTINUALLY MAKING IT BETTER**

“Once you have characterized your audience, you need to test – always test – to ensure your assumptions are correct,” Tami concluded.
Shopping from your seat is a beautiful thing.

Customers relish the convenience and ease of online shopping, but those on the other side of the screen know the process isn’t so effortless. E-commerce can present itself as a multidimensional demon, frightening marketers with shopper abandonment and confusing consumer behavior.

However, there are plenty of marketers who have slain the beast on their way to success. Our MarketingSherpa reporters know this because they have penned many of these marketing heroes’ tales of triumph.

Let’s take a look back at the lessons we learned from these 10 e-commerce case studies.

Lesson: Don’t assume your company’s existing features or services are on the customers’ radar

Case Study #1: E-commerce: Edible Arrangements’ countdown ad lifts same-day orders 8%

The basis for a stellar marketing campaign doesn’t have to revolve around a new service, product or feature. Your company could have a pre-existing item that could use some additional awareness. Take Edible Arrangements’ same-day delivery service. Kaitlin Reiss, Vice President of E-commerce, Edible Arrangements, told MarketingSherpa the service was the company’s “hidden gem.”

“A lot of people don’t realize that we have same-day delivery, even though it is not something new for us, so we realize that we will need to do even more to promote it,” Reiss said.
The hub of tasty fruit bouquets utilized simple promotion through a variety of channels to increase both email open rates and its same-day orders, too. Are your company’s pre-existing services being promoted to their greatest potential?

Doubtful. Despite the fact that those features may not be new to the company, it could be new to consumers.

**Lesson: Targeting Customer Abandonment is Worth It**

**Case Study #2: E-commerce: Moving beyond shopping cart abandonment nets 65% more checkout conversions**

We’ve all been there. Perusing products on the Internet when the phone rings, it’s time for dinner or the dog is barking for a walk. No matter what it is that pulls us away from the computer, distractions are inevitable.

As an e-commerce marketer, understanding and reeling your consumers back in is crucial for garnering conversions. Many e-commerce companies have found success recovering customers through abandonment emails.

The case study above examines how Envelopes.com targeted category, cart and checkout abandonment with emails sent less than a week after the customer left the site. The campaign lifted the company to net 65% more checkout conversions.

Examine why your e-commerce site isn’t earning those sales. Is it internal, or could it just be the busy lives of your consumers? Sometimes, all it takes is a little reminder.
Lesson: Content can help you connect with consumers while building trust, too

Case Study #3: Email Marketing: How an e-commerce site eschews discounts in favor of eco-friendly content

As an e-commerce marketer, you’re not face to face with your consumers — your computer screen is. Establishing trust and connecting with them is a feat of its own. In these two case studies, e-commerce companies utilized content to increase traffic and awareness of their brands to stand out in a crowded Internet space.

PoopBags.com – yes, you read that right – built an email marketing strategy on eco-friendly content. As a biodegradable bag for pups’ – er – business, the brand developed email content emphasizing environmental causes, charities and pet-related issues.

“It makes it easy to bond with people ... knowing that we write about things that are so important, and we care passionately about, makes [writing email content] pretty easy to do,” Paul Cannella, Owner, Poopbags.com, told MarketingSherpa of the company’s content strategy.

Case Study #4: E-commerce: How Wine Enthusiast increased organic traffic 154% with content marketing

Retailer Wine Enthusiast also put content into play to earn trust with consumers. The company’s website features wine reviews, articles and videos to help build an audience. The content helped yield a 50% increase in monthly email opt-ins.

“We put time into creating helpful content that helps people either make a buying decision or entertain them,” said Erika Strum, Director of Internet Marketing, Wine Enthusiast Companies. “Even if they aren’t making that purchase in the moment, we feel that they will come back to us as a great source of information.”

Do you have something to offer your consumers other than a great product or service? Look to content to form valuable trust and relationships in your market.
Lesson: Your website must align with the way people shop online

Case Study #5: B2B E-commerce: Redesigned online form increases quotes 67.68%

A website is never a finished product – it’s forever evolving. After all, it has to. Think about what would happen if you kept your website the same year after year. You couldn’t do that and be successful. The Internet is constantly changing as is the way customers expect to shop online. Failure to take this into account with the structure of your website has the potential to lead to your company’s downfall.

Take our case study on Company Folders, a company that provides businesses with custom folders. Prior to its marketing efforts, the company’s website was out-of-date and had a quote form that wasn’t conducive to the ease-of-use online shoppers expected.

By redesigning the website and online form, Company Folders experienced a 67.68% increase in total quotes.

The old online form:
Company Folders CEO Vladimir Gendelman explained to MarketingSherpa how crucial it was for his company’s website to keep in the consumer in mind.

“In order to tackle this, and do all this, we had to think just like a customer would,” Gendelman said. “A redesign is not just like making [the website] look pretty. It is about making it extremely easy for [website] function.”
Lesson: Small changes can lead to big differences

Case Study #6: E-commerce: Adding trustmark boosts sales conversion 14%

Optimization doesn’t have to involve some huge website overhaul. Even the seemingly smallest of things can make a huge difference for your company and our case study on Modern Coin Mart certainly demonstrated that.

The self-described “Modern Coin Superstore” added a simple trustmark to its e-commerce site to ease customers’ anxieties about the purchasing process. A tiny graphic produced monumental results, boosting sales conversions to 14%.

What can you as an e-commerce marketer take from this? Don’t think you have to exhaust yourself to yield impressive results – even small changes can lead to big successes.
Lesson: Social media fosters marketing by the consumer

Case Study #7: Social Media Marketing: How a small e-commerce site attracted 293,000 Facebook fans

What’s on your mind? Facebook gives its users a platform to speak their minds, share their photos and promote your products. Yes, promote your products.

It may not be what Mark Zuckerberg initially had in mind, but Facebook can offer huge boosts to your company. It’s so simple for a customer to take a photo of your product, which provides your company with a testimonial, review and super sharable content that is free.

Does the product or service you’re selling suit the Facebook realm? In other words, is it sharable? Could it be? This can lead to impressive results. Look at our case study on Diamond Candles, a company that features rings beneath the wax of its candles. By utilizing customer-contributed photos on its Facebook page, Diamond Candles upped conversion rates and attracted more than 290,000 new Facebook fans.

For minimal effort, your e-commerce site has the potential to produce maximum results. Determine how your product can start a conversation in consumers’ social networks and then capitalize on it.
Lesson: Segment your customers, then tailor email campaigns accordingly

Case Study #8: Email Marketing: Clothing retailer lifts average open rate 40% via customer segmentation campaign

Case Study #9: Email Marketing: Li-Ning’s dynamic content nets 11% of clicks, 49% of email sales

Case Study #10: Email Personalization: 750% higher CTR and more revenue for e-commerce site

Tapping into the consumer mindset is one thing, but targeting it? Now that’s key. Appealing to consumer behavior through segmentation has served up successes for plenty of e-commerce companies. The three case studies above highlight the successes companies have experienced through customization and segmentation.

SwayChic, a women’s clothing retailer segmented its customers based on email open times, past purchases and time of conversions. Sports brand company Li-Ning optimized its email campaigns by targeting items such as gender, age range and items clicked on. Doggyloot customized emails for subscribers based on the size of their dogs.

No matter what each of the e-commerce sites segmented on, all experienced increased clickthroughs and revenue. In other words, personalization pays off.
We analyzed which MarketingSherpa charts from 2013 were most helpful to you, based on the number of tweets those charts received.

Let’s get right into it. What were the most popular discoveries from surveying thousands of marketers in 2013?

**DISCOVERY #1: TUESDAY IS CONSIDERED THE MOST EFFECTIVE DAY FOR SENDING EMAILS**

**Marketing Research Chart: Which day is best to send emails?**

*Q: How effective are emails sent each day of the week?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>1 Least Effective</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Most Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>3% 7%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>4% 8%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>4% 11%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2013, 1866

Tuesday ranked as the most effective day for sending emails, with 26% of marketers ranking it a 5 out of 5, and 35% ranking it a 4. Marketers considered Sunday a day of rest, with 42% ranking it a 1, or least effective.
**Discovery #2: Content marketing is the tactic mostly likely to have a growing budget**

Marketing Research Chart: 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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Line Item</th>
<th>Budget will increase</th>
<th>Budget will not change</th>
<th>Budget will 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>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct mail</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual advertising</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradeshow</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telemarketing</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print advertisement</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast advertising</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: © 2013 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded: February 2013, N=235

Content marketing showed the most promise for growth in budget, with 64% of marketers indicating their content marketing budget will increase.

Interestingly enough, contextual advertising, associated with such growing (or perhaps, hyped?) tactics as targeted advertising and mobile advertising, was the constant of the group, with 71% of marketers indicating their budget will not change.
**DISCOVERY #3: BLOGS ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM FOR SEO**

Marketing Research Chart: 84% of marketers consider blogs at least somewhat effective for inbound marketing

Q: Please indicate the LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS (in terms of achieving objectives) of using social media platforms in your inbound marketing efforts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Platform</th>
<th>Very Effective</th>
<th>Somewhat Effective</th>
<th>Somewhat Ineffective</th>
<th>Very Ineffective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube or other video sharing</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SlideShare or other presentation sharing</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scribd or other document sharing</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr or other photo sharing</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delicious or other social bookmarking</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=148

While stock prices tend to make all of the headlines when it comes to social media, the lowly blog — the social media tactic without an IPO underwriter — was considered a very effective social media tactic for inbound marketing success by 32% of marketers, and somewhat effective by 52% of marketers.
**DISCOVERY #4: VIDEO IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE MOBILE MARKETING TACTIC**

*Marketing Research Chart: Which mobile tactics are most effective?*

*Q: Indicate the level of EFFECTIVENESS for the mobile engagement and relevancy tactics used by your organization.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobile Engagement Tactics</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>4%</th>
<th>2%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Include video content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide an easy, fast payment system to secure conversions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage participation in surveys, trivia or games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design simple mobile pages to load fast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamically personalize mobile content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimize message for specific OS and/or device</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run loyalty/reward programs</td>
<td></td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leverage mobile device tools</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualize message for the mobile experience</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment campaigns based on behavior and/or sales cycle</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mobile video was another hot trend in 2013, from football on your phone to Vine. According to 38% of marketers, it is a very effective tactic.

But don’t overlook a tactic just because it’s a little lower down the chart. Segmentation is core to mobile marketing, and even though fewer marketers rated it very effective, 83% of marketers considered segmenting campaigns based on behavior and/or sales cycle to be somewhat effective.
**DISCOVERY #5: GENERATING HIGH-QUALITY LEADS IS THE TOP B2B MARKETING CHALLENGE**

**Marketing Research Chart: What is the biggest B2B marketing challenge?**

*Q: Which of the following marketing challenges are currently most pertinent to your organization?*

B2B marketers are challenged much more by quality than quantity. They view generating leads that are likely to make a final purchase, such as someone who has asked to learn about the product, as more of a challenge than simply getting a high number of leads, like an email address from an unrelated squeeze page.

As you can see in the chart, 80% of B2B marketers in the trial phase — no current process or guidelines — rated generating high-quality leads as their top challenge, with similar responses from their peers at organizations with more mature B2B processes.

Methodology: Fielded June 2011, N=3,745*
**DISCOVERY #6: TRAFFIC IS THE MOST TRACKED WEBSITE OBJECTIVE**

Marketing Research Chart: What metrics should you track?

*Q: Which of the following website objectives is tracked by your marketing department?*

Marketers focus their website tracking at the top of the funnel, with 79% of marketers measuring the easy-to-track metric of traffic.

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2012, N=1,814
DISCOVERY #7: EMAIL NEWSLETTERS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE FOR LEAD NURTURING

Marketing Research Chart: Messaging tactics for effective lead nurturing

Q: Which of the following have been the most effective for nurturing your leads?

From previous MarketingSherpa research, we’ve found that marketing departments with a lead nurturing campaign in place reported a 45% higher ROI. So what is the most effective tactic for lead nurturing? Email newsletters, according to 57% of marketers.
When social media came on the scene, the focus was more on engagement than ROI. However, marketers are looking squarely at the bottom line when it comes to mobile, with 63% of marketers indicating that increasing sales conversion and revenue was a top business object for mobile marketing, surpassing softer and lower-funnel goals.
**DISCOVERY #9: WEBINARS ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE CONTENT MARKETING CHANNEL**

Marketing Research Chart: 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.

Webinars and webcasts were rated very effective by 49% of marketers. With the growth of smartphones and tablet computers, it’s surprising to see mobile Web content and digital magazines farther down the scale of effectiveness. Still, 68% of marketers considered these quickly growing tactics somewhat effective.
**DISCOVERY #10: RELEVANCE, TRAFFIC AND REVENUE ARE THE TOP GOALS FOR EMAIL MARKETING**

Marketing Research Chart: 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?*

<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 systems</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=832

Organizations expect email marketing to achieve a lot of objectives. Chief among them — deliver highly relevant content, drive additional traffic to the website, and increase sales conversion and/or revenue — according to 67% of marketers.
After tallying up the number of times our audience shared posts, social media, content and email marketing are the areas to receive the most tweets from your peers. That means inbound marketing as a whole once again reigned supreme on the MarketingSherpa Blog, earning 10 of the top 15 spots of 2013. We’ll break down these three areas with key lessons we can learn and apply to our efforts in the new year.

And, since this list is all about the tweets, we’ll include some interesting ones about select posts. Carry on to learn the top 10 lessons of 2013.

**SOCIAL MEDIA LESSONS**

**Lesson #1: Adapt your social content so that it is appropriate for each social media platform**

In his post, “Social Media Marketing: Which type of content is appropriate for different platforms?” (http://mecla.bs/digest0162) Jonathan Greene, Business Intelligence Manager, MECLABS, used an unusual set of analogies to help marketers understand what tone and content to use on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Read this post to learn about the personality each platform has, and how you can effectively put them to work.

![Twitter screenshot](image)

**Lesson #2: Be able to answer why customers should like or follow you**

When it comes to social media buttons, you should ask yourself why your customers should follow you. This can be a tougher question for companies that aren’t natural content producers.
You must provide some value for customers in exchange for the privilege to show up in their newsfeed. Value can be ongoing, like exclusive discounts just for Twitter followers, or a one-time opportunity, such as a chance to win a prize.

Read more about this question, and three others, in the post, “Social Media Marketing: 4 questions to ask yourself about social media buttons.” (http://mecla.bs/digest0185) You can also use value proposition to better answer this question, as described by Jonathan Greene in this post, “Social Media Marketing: Why should I like or follow you?” (http://mecla.bs/digest0312)

**Lesson #3: Add visual elements to your social media content**

While a quote is just words, it doesn’t mean you can’t bring a visual component to the content. The New York Public Library created graphics for an already popular content type – celebrity quotes – to create a social media campaign with impressive results. Learn more about its efforts from Courtney Eckerle, Manager of Editorial Content, MECLABS: “Social Media Marketing: How New York Public Library increased card sign-ups by 35%.” (http://mecla.bs/digest0036)

Interestingly, it seems this post was the most shared on Twitter for certain individuals:

![Twitter post](http://mecla.bs/digest0036)

**Lesson #4: Go beyond the “like” to track your social media success**

David Kirkpatrick, Manager of Editorial Content, MECLABS, broke down a chart covering social media marketing metrics tracking in the post, “Social Media Marketing: Social metrics from “likes” to ROI.” (http://mecla.bs/digest0142) While social reach (e.g., “likes”) tops the list, some marketers are also measuring ROI, leads and conversion. See what other metrics your peers are using to benchmark success in their organizations.
CONTENT MARKETING LESSONS

Lesson #5: Analyze your blog to identify areas for improvement

There are a lot of elements that make up your blog. When was the last time you stood back to evaluate if all of those pieces were working as well as they could?

In his post, “Content Marketing: An 8-point analysis for your blog,” (http://mecla.bs/digest0035) Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, explained the eight points on which to focus your evaluation. From the frequency of your posts and their titles, to author bios and social media integration, you could have untapped potential waiting to be found.

Lesson #6: Use WordPress, or any tool, to its fullest potential

No matter what channel or platform you’re using, you want to get all you can out of it. For the post, “Content Marketing: 5 tips for WordPress blogging,” (http://mecla.bs/digest0183) Erin Hogg, Copy Editor, MECLABS, broke down some ways she’s learned to improve a WordPress blog. Learn how to cross promote media with embedding, use basic HTML to improve the look and feel of a post, and more.

Lesson #7: Implement (and stick with) a style for your content

AP? Chicago? MLA? APA? There are many established styles, and one might work as-is for your organization. You could decide to create your own. At MECLABS, we use the Associated Press Style Book as our foundation and supplement it with a set of our own guidelines.
No matter which direction you choose, it’s important to stick with the guide for all of your content. Having well-proofed and consistent content adds to the credibility of your content and builds the authority of your brand.

Erin Hogg explained this and other tips in her post, “Content Marketing: 7 copy editing tips to improve any content piece.” (http://mecla.bs/digest0429)

**Email Marketing Lessons**

**Lesson #8: Don’t forget about current customers when designing triggered email campaigns**

In the post, “Email Marketing: 3 overlooked aspects of automated messages,” (http://mecla.bs/digest0120) Daniel Burstein said nurturing current customers is one of the most overlooked automated email opportunities. He shared a list of triggered email types you can implement to strengthen relationships with your customers, including product education and upselling.

This post also features two other overlooked aspects of automated emails: customer lifetime value and the gap between what marketers should do and what they actually do.
Lesson #9: Test your emails to discover what really works for your audience

You could be using every best practice you’ve come across, but unless you know it’s best for your specific audience, then it might not be the practice you should be using. Testing lets you know what your audience best engages with.

Justin Bridegan, former Senior Marketing Manager, MECLABS, explained how testing revealed two segments of the MarketingSherpa email list prefer different email lengths. Read on to learn his other tips in the post, “Email Marketing: What I’ve learned from writing almost 1,000 emails for MarketingSherpa.” (http://mecla.bs/digest0307)

Lesson #10: Consider the mobile design of your email

What percentage of your audience reads your emails on a mobile device? Are your emails optimized for mobile reading? A desktop design can cause friction for a mobile user, resulting in a potential loss in clickthrough and conversion.

In the post, “Email Marketing: 58% of marketers see mobile smartphones and tablets most impacting email,” (http://mecla.bs/digest0012) learn the results one retailer saw after split testing a responsive design on its emails. You’ll also read about two other takeaways marketers can learn about mobile email marketing.
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]
\[ \text{eme} = rv(oi + i) - (f + a) \]
Customer Management
Marketing is not black and white, and the smartest marketers understand that. What works in one situation for one business may not necessarily work for a different business in the same situation or a similar business in slightly different circumstances.

This doesn’t mean it is impossible to identify reliable patterns in the psychology of buying. But it does mean we must be willing, in all situations, to question whether there is a variable present that could cause results to run contrary to our expectations.

Optimizing a page for multiple personas is one such situation. No two groups of people are exactly the same, even within the same audience. So how do you optimize for prospects with different goals or prospects at differing stages of the buying process? Do you optimize the page using best practices for one group, or do you discover your own path to find a way to appeal to your multiple personas at once?

A recent experiment from our lab revealed a design tactic that flies in the face of previous findings actually produced a 331% conversion lift for a website catering to multiple personas. We will examine this test and extrapolate new key principles based on our meta-analysis.

**AN EXPERIMENT:**
**WILL A “WRONG” DESIGN APPROACH INCREASE CONVERSION ON A SITE SERVING MULTIPLE PERSONAS?**

The experiment, Test Protocol (TP) 1560, was conducted with the simple purpose of increasing leads from the page. The key metric we tracked was conversion rate. Our Research Partner for the test was a medical company offering a minimally invasive surgery procedure for the relief of chronic
pain, and the control page (Figure 1.1) appeared to be a fairly well-optimized page based on previous experiments we had conducted.
In this situation, we identified multiple personas for the prospects coming to the page. In other words, some people were coming to find out more about the procedure, others wanted to compare treatment options, while others wanted to know whether or not they would even qualify for the treatment.

In previous research, we concluded that equally weighted options on a page decreased conversion by confusing visitors. This was confirmed in hundreds of tests like those in Figure 1.2. However, we hypothesized that this company’s prospects might need the multiple calls-to-action approach in this situation. So, we designed the treatment in Figure 1.3.

The treatment used a simple three-option layout to allow visitors to quickly identify which category met their needs. What was the result? As mentioned, the treatment lifted conversion by 331%.

Why did a previously unsuccessful design strategy work in this case? We discovered three principles at work that we can reference for future page designs.
OPTIMIZING YOUR WEBPAGES FOR MULTIPLE PERSONAS

Key Principle #1: Messaging is naturally ordered into four stages: (1) To Listen, (2) To Attract, (3) To Converse, (4) To Nurture. And the order is as important as the activity. One cannot converse before one attracts; one should not attract before one listens.

As marketers, we mistakenly skip the entire first step too often. We try to attract, engage and convert prospects without taking the time to really listen to the needs and desires of our audiences. This potentially fatal error for our messaging results in company-centric webpages that talk about what we want to say, rather than what visitors want to hear.
Key Principle #2: To enable conversation with different customers arriving at the same intersection, one must alter the geography of the page in a way that attracts each group into its own conversation.

In the experiment above, three different personas arrived at the same page. We needed to design the page so that each group could quickly enter a conversation appropriate to its needs. The result was a page with three equally weighted options on the page. However, while equal on the page, the options were not equal in the mind of the visitor. This is absolutely critical to understand. Each person that arrived on the page was presented with an option specific to their needs, making the other options effectively irrelevant to them.

Key Principle #3: A meta-analysis of these page types has uncovered how copywriting and design can be adjusted to maximize response from pages serving multiple customer personas.

Since we often hear from advanced marketers about dealing with multiple personas visiting a webpage, we conducted a meta-analysis to identify concrete steps you can take to better communicate your message to these groups. We will review tactical design and copy changes that allow you to do just that.

Designing for multiple personas

When it comes to design, the first principle to understand is that (1) the marketer’s goal is not simplicity; the marketer’s goal is clarity. The former is the means to the latter.

Simplicity has become the trend in marketing today, and there is nothing inherently wrong with simplicity. However, when simplicity becomes the end rather than the means, we have lost our way. Clarity is the end, and sometimes simplicity can help us achieve clarity. The goal of all messaging should be to communicate your message as clearly as possible.

That leads us to a second principle to remember: (2) Simplicity that obscures clarity is lethal to the close. This is true as it relates to the prospect’s understanding of the marketer’s offer.

For example, we attempted to optimize the control page (Figure 2.1) for search traffic in TP 1315, found in the MECLABS Research Library. We hypothesized that the content beneath the search box was a distraction and that removing it would increase searches. We were wrong. Our simplified treatment (Figure 2.2) actually underperformed the control by 5.4%. In our attempt to simplify, we removed content that helped clarify the value proposition of the page. Thus, our simplification reduced clarity and conversion.
Figure 2.1

Figure 2.2
In another experiment (Figure 2.3), we eliminated a pop-up window that required the user to choose between two options, but ultimately sent them to the same page. The change reduced friction by moving the prospect to the form page faster. However, the treatment reduced conversion by 11%.

Simplicity does not equal clarity. So, how can we improve clarity? We have discovered a key action to direct us.

When seeking to increase the clarity of your page, focus on the following three key design changes. You can add or subtract conversion paths. You can add sub-headlines to provide guidance. You can change the order of the content to better meet the prospect’s needs. Let us examine how this plays out on real pages.

Figure 2.4 shows a pop-up banner that attempts to convert traffic through one call-to-action. We changed it to include three calls-to-action (Figure 2.5) based on the three different personas that would see the ad, and the result was a 25% lift in conversion.
From this

**Free Live Demos, Tools & Resources**

When you set up your free universal access to MB Trading, you get:

- Live Forex and Equity account demos
- Live webinars on popular topics including Desktop software training, and in-depth order type overviews
- Active users’ forum membership, how-to training resources, and the news center
- Online wizard to set up a live account

![GET MY FREE ACCESS](image)

Figure 2.4

To this

**3 Easy Ways to Get Started with MB Trading**

- **Join a Webinar**
  See how our pros trade with live webinars and training.
  ![Sign Up for Free Webinars](image)

- **Try a Real Time Demo**
  Experience all MB Trading has to offer with a free, live demo.
  ![Set Up a Free Demo](image)

- **Open a Live Account**
  Get approved for a live account and begin increasing your bottom line.
  ![Open a Free Account](image)

Figure 2.5
Figure 2.6 is a pop-up with five separate calls-to-action. In this case, to increase clarity, we added a sub-headline (Figure 2.7) and reduced the number of calls-to-action to two. The result was a 32% lift.
Figure 2.8 shows a page with many calls-to-action. In our treatment (Figure 2.9), we actually kept all of the calls-to-action. The change involved moving them above the banner, which caused visitors to encounter them earlier in the sequence of their interaction with the page. We also added a clarifying sub-headline and changed the color of the banner so it did not immediately draw the eye away from the calls-to-action. The result was a lift in conversion of 181%.
These examples show there are a variety of ways to improve clarity through design. However, if you work within the framework of the three design changes discussed above, it will be easier to identify the steps that ought to be taken. Of course, you can only be sure of a page’s improved clarity through testing.

But what about our marketing copy? How can we increase clarity through the written portions of our pages?

Crafting Copy for Multiple Personas

Daniel Webster made an important point we can use to guide changes in our copy: “Mind is the great lever of all things; human thought is the process by which human ends are ultimately answered.”

We can expound on that in a second principle to follow: We must realize that even as the lever moves in degrees, the sale moves in stages. The marketer must match the message to the stage. We achieve this by synchronizing geography with chronology.

As sequence is important in design, it is equally important in copywriting. Our words must be synchronized to the appropriate stage of the sales cycle, as well as associated with the correct location on the page.

We accomplish this with another key action: To enable a type of synchronization that serves multiple personas, closely align your copy within each competing section with the different stages in the buying cycle and relevant, distinguishable categories of interest.

The essential tension of marketing to multiple personas is that you have several different messages lumped together in one area. Normally, this is a recipe for disaster, but design tactics can help us split the page into multiple distinguishable sections. The task for the copywriter is to fill these sections with equally distinguishable copy that meets the visitor where they are in the sales process. Let us explore a few examples.

Figure 3.1 depicts the three content boxes that were present in the control page of our initial experiment. These sections are clearly distinguishable in the design. However, the copy does a poor job communicating each message to the desired audience. Our treatment (Figure 3.2) instead uses language specific to the stage of the buying process the visitor is in. They can quickly figure out where they belong. The result was a 331% increase in conversion. We then rewrote just the far right box’s copy to be even more specific to that persona’s situation (Figure 3.3) and produced an additional 50% increase.
Figure 3.1

From This

Figure 3.2

To This

Figure 3.3

Then This
Figure 3.4 presents a different situation. The page highlights the benefits of a sports event management software, paying special attention to each of the sports the software is prepared to handle: swimming, running, cycling and triathlons. Taking a different angle, our treatment (Figure 3.5) uses sport-generic language while still listing the sports the software was created for. The treatment was more tailored to the visitor’s stage in the buying process and produced a 21% increase in conversion.

As we dug deeper into our analysis of those results, we noticed another pattern. Traffic coming to the page from search engines converted at a 198% higher rate when landing on the treatment page, but traffic from the company’s partners closed at a 33% higher rate when landing on the control page. Armed with this knowledge, the company could then direct traffic to the appropriate page and increase its opportunity to convert traffic.

These examples show that when copy is sequenced to the correct stage of the buying process, and located in the right part of the page, dramatic lifts can be achieved.

**TYING IT ALL TOGETHER**

The marketer’s goal is not simplicity; the marketer’s goal is clarity. To enable clarity as it relates to the prospect’s understanding of the offer, focus on three types of page template adjustments:

- The number of conversion paths
- The presence of sub-headlines and headers for instructional guidance
- The sequence of the content

As the sale moves in stages, we must match the message to the stage. This is achieved by aligning the copy of each competing section with:

- The different stages in the buying cycle
- Relevant, distinguishable categories of interest

The task of marketing to multiple personas is one of the most difficult we face as marketers, but as we’ve discovered, there are principles we can look to for guidance and direction in this effort. Sometimes we may need to “break the rules” to achieve our goals, and that is acceptable – as long as the test results show improvement.
Our event management software can help you:

- **Running Events**
  See Jane Run increases their 5K registration by 200%.
  See how Active works for running events.

- **Cycling Events**
  Durango Fall Blaze Bicycle Tour says Active’s tools make them look like “wizards.”
  See how Active works for cycling events.

- **Swimming Events**
  Wheaton Swim Club completely eliminates overdue payments and paper.
  See how Active works for swim clubs.

- **Triathlon/Multi-Sport Events**
  Pat Griskus Triathlon Series saves significant time processing 100% online.
  See how Active works for multi-sport events.

Figure 3.4

Our event management software can help you:

- Get more participants
  On average, race directors get 43% more participants when they use our registration software and marketing services. See how.

- Manage events easily
  Get rid of busy work with software that manages every event detail and take advantage of free assistance from our 25-member, U.S.-based support team.

- Build lasting relationships
  Active’s tools and services make it easier to keep your athletes engaged in your events and introduce them to new offerings that will build your brand.

Figure 3.5
Before optimizing a page for multiple personas, you must first be able to identify those personas. Read how one company identified four personas within its target audience:
http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/search-marketing/identify-buyer-personas/

Learn about other experiments performed in our laboratory in the MECLABS Research Catalog:
http://www.meclabs.com/catalog

Learn more about the MECLABS methodology our researchers use:
http://www.meclabs.com/methodology

To learn about MECLABS Research Partnerships, visit:
http://www.meclabs.com/partnerships

To see how removing evenly weighted calls-to-action proved successful in previous experiments, watch the Web clinic replay, “Minor Changes, Major Lifts: How headline and call-to-action optimization increased conversion 45%.”

Read how one B2B company increased lead quality 130% by listening to customers in the MarketingSherpa case study, “Customer-centric Marketing: Learning from customers helps increase lead quality 130%, Sales-accepted leads 40%.”
http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/customer-centric-b2b-marketing

Read the special report, “No Unsupervised Thinking: How to increase conversions by guiding your audience,” to learn how to guide your audience through thought sequence.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/whitepapers/MEx-No-Unsupervised-Thinking.pdf

Learn how a B2B firm tailored content to segments of its audience to increase leads 124% in a MarketingSherpa case study: “Content Marketing: Targeted persona strategy lifts sales leads 124%.”
I once worked with a field marketing vice president who was calm, cool and collected for every presentation she prepared for.

Well, all except one.

The only presentation that ever seemed to rattle her nerves – and just ever so slightly – was the annual presentation to Sales leaders, justifying her upcoming budget (and, perhaps, existence).

“WE TALK TO THE CUSTOMER EVERY DAY…”

Let me first say, I am a huge proponent of Sales-Marketing alignment.

But today, just for today, let’s vent a little, shall we?

We’re among friends, so let’s be honest with each other. When things are going well, Sales receives the credit for making plan, making Club, for meeting and exceeding quota.

However, when things go south, Marketing receives the blame for not keeping the pipeline full, not generating enough leads, oh, and if they are generating enough leads, it’s not enough of the right people … these aren’t decision makers!

No matter how things are going, Sales tends to like to stick its nose in the Marketing plan, with the justification being, “We know the customer better. We talk to them every day.”

That is a hard claim to refute, but today on the B2B Lead Roundtable blog, I’m going to give you a little ammo.

KEYWORD STRATEGY RESEARCH

I just got back from MarketingSherpa Lead Gen Summit 2013 in San Francisco (MarketingSherpa and the B2B Lead Roundtable blog are both owned by MECLABS). Leading up to Summit, I had the privilege of reviewing all of the presentations to make sure they met MECLABS presentations standards.
I reviewed hundreds of slides, but the information from a single slide I’m going to share with you today really caught my eye.

Marie Wiese, President, Marketing CoPilot, ran an experiment with Grantek.com, a North American B2B systems integration company, to create a keyword strategy that would support lead nurturing.

The team created an initial list of 3,000 keywords, and culled it down to 50.

The keyword topic suggestions came from two sources:

- Sales-team suggestions
- Data-driven keywords

**The Results: Data trumps the golden gut**

Let's take a look at some of the keywords that were chosen, along with how they performed:

**Sales-Team Suggested**

- Manufacturing electrical energy consumption – 6.95% clickthrough rate
- Manufacturing infrastructure – 7.7%
- CPU data – 5.9%

**Keyword Strategy & Data-Analysis Driven**

- Machine guarding – 11.5% clickthrough rate
- Manufacturing information technology – 10.6%
- Machine safety – 11.0%
- Manufacturing data – 10.3%
- Plant safety – 13.5%
- Access and control/access and control technology – 19.1%
- Manufacturing cloud – 16.2%

**Key Learning: Use numbers to help make your case in the organization**

I had a lot of fun ribbing Sales in the beginning of this blog post. But, I don’t mean this at all as a negative statement about the Grantek sales team, or any sales team for that matter.
This is human nature. We all feel that we have a golden gut to some extent, especially when we’re interacting directly with customers.

But unless you’re Steve Jobs, you don’t. You have to realize potential customers, especially those that choose another vendor, may not always honestly tell you why. Heck, they may not even know why their organization did or did not buy your solution.

But, here is where things like data, metrics, analysis and tracking results can be so helpful.

While it’s easy to disagree with opinions, it is very hard to disagree with numbers.

Looking to improve your own internal standing with the Sales team, and get a better understanding of what really resonates with your potential customers? I’ll leave the final word on the subject to Marie.

“Every marketer has experienced that dreaded moment when trying to pitch a strategy to the sales team and opinion influences tactical execution. A sound keyword strategy allows you to develop content and inbound marketing tactics using data.

It’s hard to agree to spend time, money and resources on a white paper about fixing infrastructure when your data suggests you’d get better conversion by addressing access and control. Just because the sales team wants to sell infrastructure consulting, doesn’t mean that’s the best topic to generate leads and support lead nurturing.

Keyword strategies help you understand the difference between selling and buying and decide the right time for both.”

- Jessica Lorenz, Visual Storyteller

At MarketingSherpa Lead Gen Summit 2013, I had the privilege of sitting in on a session with Todd Wilms, Head of Social Strategy, and Adriel Sanchez, VP, Demand Generation, both of SAP, as they discussed how they use a business model called “social business” to help their teams across the globe engage local audiences.

So, what is social business exactly?

While it would seem intuitive that social business is a social media best practice, that assumption could not be further from the truth.

Or as Todd declared, “The difference between social media and social business is the difference between throwing a bullet and shooting it.”

According to Todd, social media, social media marketing and social business are three very distinct concepts.

Todd said SAP uses social business as a strategy that employs social media, social software and social networks to drive a mutually useful connection between people, information and assets.

“Social business is really how do you take all of those concepts of social media, all of the things you’ve been doing around social media marketing, and define them against business outcomes for your organization,” Todd explained.
SALES LEADS AS YOU KNOW THEM ARE CHANGING

Todd made the case for transforming to a social business model by describing how the very idea of the “lead” is changing at a faster pace than Marketing can keep up with.

“This idea of moving from ‘sell’ to ‘helping your customers buy’ is at the heart of social business. It’s a model that the customer is going to make the decisions already, they’re going to come to you when they are ready,” Todd said.

FROM STRATEGY TO PRACTICE

Adriel also mentioned as evolving buying habits exert more pressure on lead nurturing, today’s common lead nurture tactics – teleprospecting, webinars, trade shows, email, etc. – will need help from social media to remain effective.

“These tactics need help because they’re not giving you access to the full universe of people that are interested in buying your solutions,” Adriel said.

Here are three tips Adriel shared with the audience to help you use social media to aid your lead nurturing efforts.
Tip #1: Listen for what people aren’t telling you directly

Adriel explained SAP uses social listening tools to follow social media conversations by:

- Filtering for keywords that indicate lead-relevant activity
- Following key accounts directly
- Understanding the needs of your customers’ customer

This allows the team to sift through the massive amount of conversations to find those that may be potential leads with an added bonus ...

“Listening to those conversations on social media can give you incredible insights into the types of content that you can use to nurture those leads,” Adriel explained.

Tip #2: Seed the conversation with what you want to talk about

Adriel advised if you want to steer the conversation toward your solutions in the marketplace, your approach should be consistent, but also smart.

Here are some of the key strategies he revealed SAP uses to guide social conversation:

- Implement a pragmatic approach
- Reward top contributors
- Enterprise-wide advocacy management tool

Tip #3: Engage judiciously and in the right context

Adriel explained once you’ve identified lead-relevant conversations, the next challenge is engagement. Adriel also explained the context of how you engage in the social media channel is vital to success.

“You could be talking to the right people, have a great offer and terrific creative, and while that may work in email, it can fail in social media because the context is different.”

Here were some of his suggestions to help your company engage in the right context:

- Educate your sales force on how to engage in social selling
- Leverage your call center for inbound lead engagement
- Bring customers and prospects together in social channels
Adriel warned in regard to the contextual differences between engagement in social media and different channels, prospects in those different channels will likely have different thresholds for how they absorb marketing messages.

“The accepted norms in that channel are different and peoples’ tolerance for marketing-related materials is different.”
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i - f) - 2a \]

\[ e_{me} = rv(of + i) - (f + a) \]
B2B Marketing
“Lack of resources, as economic times force too few people to focus on too much work.”

That response is from a marketer discussing top obstacles to success from the MarketingSherpa 2012 B2B Marketing Benchmark Report. No matter what the economic trends are, B2B marketers — along with accountants, primary care doctors, stay-at-home moms and everyone else living in the year 2013 — perennially feel challenged by a lack of time and resources.

So, to help understand how marketers prioritize their challenges, we asked them ...

Q: Which of the following marketing challenges are currently most pertinent to your organization? Check all that apply.

To help you understand the chart, in a previous Benchmark Report question, we asked marketers to describe the process their organization uses to plan, execute and measure the performance of lead generation, qualification, scoring, nurturing, hand-off/management and funnel optimization. The choices were:

- Strategic — Formal process, thorough guidelines, routine performance
- Transition — Informal process, few guidelines, sporadic performance
- Trial — No process or guidelines currently

All B2B marketers are challenged by generating high-quality leads

As you can see in the chart, generating high-quality leads is far and away the top challenge identified in the Benchmark Report.

While some challenges varied in importance based on marketing maturity — for example, 62% of trial-phase marketers were challenged by generating a high-volume of leads versus only 43% for strategic marketers; 47% of strategic marketers were challenged by marketing to a lengthening sales cycle, while only 28% of trial-phase marketers responded similarly — the spread was much tighter for this challenge, ranging from 80% of trial-phase marketers to 75% of strategic marketers recognizing this challenge.
Generating high-quality leads
- Strategic: 75%
- Transition: 76%
- Trial: 80%

Generating a high-volume of leads
- Strategic: 43%
- Transition: 50%
- Trial: 62%

Generating perceived value in "cutting-edge" product benefits
- Strategic: 42%
- Transition: 41%
- Trial: 41%

Competing in lead generation across multiple media, from podcasts to paid search to webinars to print ads
- Strategic: 44%
- Transition: 40%
- Trial: 36%

Generating public relations "buzz"
- Strategic: 35%
- Transition: 39%
- Trial: 39%

Marketing to a lengthening sales cycle
- Strategic: 47%
- Transition: 36%
- Trial: 28%

Marketing to a growing number of people involved in the buying process
- Strategic: 30%
- Transition: 34%
- Trial: 41%

Methodology: Fielded June 2011, N=1,745
So, we all know what the problem is ... what is the solution?

Generating high-quality leads is an immensely difficult and complex problem to tackle, illustrated by the range of marketers recognizing this challenge. The ways to address it are equally varied and complicated. I don’t want to belittle the challenges you face every day in your job by touting an easy panacea — even if that tends to make for compelling article headlines that get shared widely across the Web.

My goal with today’s Marketing Chart of the Week is to have you walk away and ask this question of yourself and your team ...

**How well do we perform the lead management blocking and tackling?**

It’s easy to overlook. Everyone likes to focus on net new leads.

Let’s be frank, that’s one of the most fun areas of the job and it’s maybe even why you became a marketer. You get to forge partnerships, work with agencies on creative, even attend the Super Bowl if your budget and lead generation goals are big enough.

That would be all well and good if your only goal was generating mountains of leads. But, as you can see in the chart, that challenge is secondary to generating high-quality leads, because ...

**Sales doesn’t want leads**

Your CEO doesn’t want leads, either. Also, your shareholders absolutely do not care about leads.

They care about paying customers.

Therefore, contact information from someone who filled out a form, downloaded a white paper, signed up for an email, attended a webinar or fits a certain demographic profile in and of itself has no value.

It takes blocking and tackling. It takes lead management. It takes not just capturing the leads, but qualifying them, nurturing them and delivering them to Sales in an effective manner to create that value.

Yet, elsewhere in the Benchmark Report we found that only 22% of marketers find lead hand-off and management to be a challenge. More marketers see the challenge in pieces of the process like lead nurturing (40%), but less so in connecting all the pieces together that make for a successful process.

Perhaps that’s because blocking and tackling isn’t as popular as buzz-worthy tactics like social and mobile and QR codes.
Perhaps that’s because marketers feel that CRM and marketing automation systems will do all of the work for them.

While these tools can be effective, the hammer is only as good as the carpenter wielding it.

So, let’s end on this note. Ask yourself and your team if you are taking your lead management process for granted. Because, as this marketer responded in the Benchmark Report, the challenge will only become more difficult …

“The decision pipelines for higher-end products are becoming narrower and longer with more controls at the corporate level. The slower economy and company resistance to spending not only make budgets tighter but funnel management slower.”
Marketing Analytics
In the MarketingSherpa 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report, we asked marketers ...

Q: Which of the following website objectives is tracked by your marketing department?

- Traffic: 79%
- Conversion, click-through or other KPIs: 68%
- Sales: 68%
- Engagement metrics: 35%
- Brand awareness: 16%
- Product awareness: 14%

Source: © 2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2012, N=1,814
These numbers add up to more than 100%, which is good. It means the average marketer is tracking more than one metric.

In a perfect world, one might argue every single one of these metrics would be tracked by 100% of marketers. That is, marketers were tracking every aspect of their website’s performance, and using that to determine where the drop-off is in the sales process and where they should focus their optimization efforts.

Of course, we live in an imperfect world. You likely don’t have the bandwidth to track each and every metric that you would like, and therefore you must make decisions based on limited information. So, let’s take a quick, and also imperfect, look at the pros and cons of each of these objectives. After all, these metrics will serve you better when you factor in not only their abilities, but their limitations as well.

**Traffic**

**Pros**

- It’s easy. A free analytics platform can give you this data. You can get a basic understanding of what it means, even if you didn’t stay at a Holiday Inn Express last night. Perhaps that’s why this was the most popular metric to track, with 79% of marketers indicating they tracked it.

- It can help you get an idea of how your top-of-the-funnel marketing activities are performing.

**Cons**

- Unless you’re a media company, you likely don’t sell traffic. You are trying to sell a product, get a lead or solicit a donation. So, you can do things to boost this metric while hurting your company’s overall performance.

For an (extreme) example, if you promise a free iPad in a PPC ad, you will likely drive a lot of traffic to your website. Whether that is ultimately a wise business decision is another matter entirely.

Perhaps that’s why 44% of marketers who used traffic as an LPO objective considered it to have an only “somewhat significant” impact on improving website performance.
CONVERSION, CLICKTHROUGH OR OTHER KPIs

PROS

• This involves an actual action on the part of the customer. So, when you’re engaged in landing page optimization combined with A/B testing, you can use this knowledge to understand what messaging does and does not resonate with customers, and build a customer theory from those test results to help improve your marketing.

• This may be the KPI you or your department is measured on, so it hits close to home. For example, if your department is measured on number of leads generated, that may be the only important thing to you.

CONS

• As with the above, very few companies outside of the media industry actually make money on clicks or similar intermediate metrics.

• Just because you improve conversion with your landing page optimization, does not necessarily mean you will improve overall business performance.

“I’m running a test right now where we drive more traffic to get more leads on a landing page, and have increased leads by 100%. It’s a download of a PDF,” said Ben Huppertz, Senior Manager of Research and Strategy, MECLABS.

It would be easy to claim success if conversion is your only goal, but Huppertz brings up a good point.

“Some of the people may just become a lead to get the PDF. We call them garbage leads. So, the next step is measuring the money. While we increased the leads, we may not have increased the sales. Will these leads just be more work for Sales? Or actually result in more revenue?” he asked.

SALES

PROS

• You see this in quarterly earnings reports to Wall Street. That means it is very, very important to the CEO — which means bigger budgets and more success if you can optimize for this metric. Perhaps that’s why 83% of retail or e-commerce marketers told us they tracked sales.
• When customers vote with their wallets, it gives you the ultimate understanding of not just your marketing messaging, but the products as well. Getting back to those retail or e-commerce marketers, 36% told us that using this metric for website optimization helped them have an impact on the organization’s overall website performance — that was tops across all industries and objectives.

CONS

• If you have a complex sale, it can be extremely difficult to tie sales activity to the website. It can be very difficult for brick-and-mortar retailers, consumer packaged goods and other offline companies as well.

ENGAGEMENT METRICS

PROS

• See the “cons” under “sales.” If you have an offline product, this may be the best, or at least most resource-reasonable way to track website performance. As opposed to simple brand awareness, there is an actual customer action tied to it.

CONS

• I click a lot of “like” buttons. That’s just me. I’m a nice guy. But, it doesn’t mean I’ve bought anything from all of those companies. This may be good for Facebook’s stock price, but is it really helping yours? You’re making a big assumption that engagement is translating into a purchase action.

BRAND AWARENESS

PROS

• If you have an offline product and don’t use your website for activities that would promote engagement (and why not?), this may be your best bet. It’s also helpful to know if you have a new company or brand.

CONS

• While there is value to brand awareness — after all, people buy based on brands every day — I
can’t help but wonder if this was a metric cooked up by an agency or consultancy to justify a
budget when they couldn’t show any impact on sales. Perhaps that’s why only 7% of retail or
e-commerce marketers track this metric, and just 3% say that using this metric as a website
optimization objective has helped improve site performance.

PRODUCT AWARENESS

PROS

• This can be helpful to know if you have a new product or are a new company, especially if you’re
trying to penetrate an established market — 29% of marketers who used this metric did consider
optimizing for product awareness to have a somewhat significant impact on the organization’s
overall website performance.

CONS

• Only 14% of marketers use this metric. Also, 29% of those marketers said optimizing for
this metric had little or no impact on website performance. Just 3% of retail or e-commerce
marketers felt it had an impact.

Much like brand awareness, simple awareness alone, while a possible first step, does not drive a
purchase. After all, we’re all aware of the moon, but how many of us have visited?
When testing to optimize a webpage, there are multiple metrics we track and a number of goals we strive to reach. However, the same two key performance indicators (KPIs) with accompanying goals always seem to pop up.

1. **Increase clickthrough** – We want more people to like what they see on the page, click and go deeper into the funnel. People can’t convert if they don’t click.
2. **Increase conversion** – We want people to absorb the information on the page and hope that it motivates them to ultimately convert.

An intuitive thought process follows that the more people click, the more people will convert.

In theory, if we optimize one KPI, the other will follow.

After a recent test we ran at MECLABS, I’d like to share with you how a *decreasing clickthrough rate can actually be a good thing*.

**SETTING THE STAGE**

After using our Conversion Heuristic to analyze one of our Research Partner’s pages and directly monitor consumer feedback, we were able to determine that visitors were asking for a comparison chart.

Our early analysis also suggested this to be a necessary piece for the landing page, as the only prior way to find this information was to click through and hunt around the site.

So, in order to match user motivation for visiting the page, we designed some treatments that included adding the comparison chart to the landing page.

We ran the test, collected our data, and then saw the results.
Our treatments decreased clickthrough by more than 40%.

Almost half of the people who would have clicked on the control did not click on our treatments.

This was not good – until we looked at our conversion rates.

For all three of our treatments, conversion increased significantly.

By now, you’re probably wondering how a decrease in traffic was also met with an increase in conversion, given the two metrics often seeming reliant upon each other.

The decrease in clickthrough can be attributed to two words: curiosity clicks.

### Curiosity can inflate clickthrough rates

What do I mean by curiosity clicks?

Clickthrough traffic to the control was being artificially elevated because of these “curiosity clicks.”

These clicks came from people who were looking for information. They were curious and clicked through to look further for the information they wanted. Curiosity clicks can be a good thing and they can get people where you want them.

However, if clicking through to the next page still does not give the visitor the information they are looking for, they may exit the funnel altogether.
Our visitors were curious, clicked and were then probably disappointed not to find what they were looking for. On our treatment pages, they saw the information they were looking for directly on the landing page.

There was no need to move further into the funnel if that information didn’t suit their needs.

**TURN UP THE DIAL ON GIVING USERS THE INFORMATION THEY NEED**

Although we can attribute curiosity clicks to explain our decrease in clickthrough, what about our increase in conversion?

By providing the comparison chart directly on the page, we prequalified those who were entering the funnel. They knew what they were getting into and made an informed decision to enter the purchase funnel.

Because of this, they were more likely to convert.

Ultimately, this increase in conversion also meant more revenue, so we were able to move past the decrease in clickthrough.
c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a
eme = rv(of + i) – (f + a)
Appendix A: Marketing Research Charts of the Week
CONVERSION RATES ON ORGANIC TRAFFIC

Q: What is your organization’s conversion rate for organic traffic? Which single category best describes the type of organization you work for?

Week of October 29, 2013
From the 2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Conversion Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media or Publishing (online or offline)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Agency or Consultancy</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, Training, Association or Nonprofit</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology (software, hardware, telecom or IT)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing, Construction or Packaged Goods</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Personal or Financial Services including Banking</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail, E-commerce, Sales, or Wholesale Distribution</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Organic Traffic Conversion Rate by Industry

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=58
**Integrating Email and Search Marketing Tactics**

**Q: Which of the following SEO tactics has your organization used in the past year?**

Week of November 05, 2013

From the 2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEO Tactic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keyword and keyphrase</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta description tags</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title tags</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content creation</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL structure</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal linking</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogging</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media integration</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEO landing pages</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External link building</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitor benchmarking</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XML sitemap</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital asset optimization</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2013, N=1,025
**Which day is best to send emails?**

Q: How effective are emails sent each day of the week?

Week of October 08, 2013
From the 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>1 Least Effective</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Most Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>3% 7%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>4% 8%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>4% 11%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N266
**Have you kept up with new marketing developments?**

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

Week of November 26, 2013
From the 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pervasiveness of mobile smartphones and tablets</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of engagement metrics by webmail clients to deliver and place messages in users’ inboxes</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location-based marketing</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifications to privacy policy regulations</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamification of marketing programs</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber attacks on corporate and ESP subscriber databases</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=1,095
What is the only type of email your customers will actively miss?

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

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

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

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=53
**APPENDIX A: 2013 EMAIL MARKETING BENCHMARK REPORT**

**IT’S NOT TOO LATE TO OPTIMIZE ONE KEY ELEMENT OF YOUR HOLIDAY MARKETING**

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

Week of December 10, 2013
From the 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report

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

Source: ©2013 MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded December 2012, N=264

For permissions: research@meclabs.com
**Does A/B Testing Deliver a Positive ROI?**

Q: Did optimization or testing demonstrate ROI in 2011?

Week of October 15, 2013
From the *2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report*

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2012, N=789
### What Metrics Should You Track?

**Q:** Which of the following website objectives is tracked by your marketing department?

- Traffic: 79%
- Conversion, click-through or other KPI's: 68%
- Sales: 68%
- Engagement metrics: 35%
- Brand awareness: 16%
- Product awareness: 14%

Week of November 19, 2013
From the 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report

Source: © 2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2012, N=1,814
Which mobile tactics are most effective?

**Q:** Indicate the level of EFFECTIVENESS for the mobile engagement and relevancy tactics used by your organization.

Week of October 22, 2013
From the 2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobile Tactics</th>
<th>Very effective</th>
<th>Somewhat effective</th>
<th>Not effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Include video content</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide an easy, fast payment system to secure conversions</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage participation in surveys, trivia or games</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design simple mobile pages to load fast</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamically personalize mobile content</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimize message for specific OS and/ or device</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run loyalty/reward programs</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leverage mobile device tools</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualize message for the mobile experience</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment campaigns based on behavior and or/sales cycle</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

©2012 MarketingSherpa Mobile Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded August 2012, N=99
What is the biggest B2B marketing challenge?

Q: Which of the following marketing challenges are currently most pertinent to your organization? Check all that apply.

Week of November 12, 2013

From the 2012 B2B Marketing Benchmark Report

Methodology: Fielded June 2011, N=1,745
\[ c = 4m + 3v + 2(i-f) - 2a \]

\[ eme = rv(of + i) - (f + a) \]
APPENDIX B: CONTENT DIRECTORY
CONTENT DIRECTORY

The directory includes all of the latest, most useful content published by MECLABS through its brands, MarketingSherpa, MarketingExperiments and B2B Lead Roundtable. You can browse the titles and summaries of this content, and see the full case study, article, video or publication by visiting a content piece’s URL.

You can also view more content by visiting one of MECLABS’ websites:
MarketingSherpa.com – View additional case studies and how-to articles
MarketingExperiments.com – See the latest discoveries found in the MarketingExperiments laboratory
B2B Lead Roundtable Blog – Learn more about lead generation, lead nurturing, lead management and more

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

Testing and Optimization: Radical website redesign program improves lead gen 89%
Date: Tuesday, October 1, 2013
Summary: Testing persistently is key to making valuable new discoveries about your prospects. So read on to learn how Jacob Baldwin, Search Engine Marketing Manager, One Call Now, developed a testing program that increased lead capture 55%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0395

Social Media Marketing: How a small e-commerce site attracted 293,000 Facebook fans
Date: Thursday, October 3, 2013
Summary: This e-retailer collects product photos from customers and uses them to support its website and social media marketing. The images increased conversion rates 13% on product pages and helped attract more than 293,000 Facebook fans. See how the marketing team receives a steady supply of customer photos and makes them sell.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0396
Email Marketing: Online jewelry retailer grows total revenue by 51% with re-permission campaign
Date: Tuesday, October 8, 2013
Summary: Online retailer Limoges Jewelry was experiencing an unusual revenue slump in its email program. In response, the marketing team switched its ESP and implemented a re-permission campaign and welcome email. See how Limoges Jewelry marketers were able to launch the new series, growing total revenue 51%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0397

Email Marketing: Business voice system provider increases lead response rate by 100%
Date: Tuesday, October 15, 2013
Summary: See how ShoreTel inserted tongue firmly in cheek with its third and final email by using alligators in its email content, and saw its response rate swamped with an increase of 100%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0398

Social Media Marketing: An inside look at Neiman Marcus’ Pinterest and blogger relations strategies
Date: Thursday, October 17, 2013
Summary: See how fashion retailer Neiman Marcus created an exclusive product launch around Pinterest and used an editorial content strategy to gain 3,000 Pinterest followers in two weeks.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0399

Email Marketing: Koyal Wholesale uses social media integration to boost seasonal campaign revenue 16%
Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2013
Summary: It can be a common marketing misconception that in order to evolve an email program, radical new ideas must take the place of former tactics. In a happy marriage of new and old, wedding and events supplier Koyal Wholesale launched its new summer product line combining proven and untested content tactics. See how Koyal Wholesale integrated its products with social media content in its emails for a summer product email campaign, increasing revenue by 16%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0400

Lead Generation: How one additional form field decreased conversions 11% [Lead Gen Summit 2013 live test]
Date: Wednesday, October 23, 2013
Summary: To help lead generation marketers learn how to use A/B testing, we conducted a live test at MarketingSherpa Lead Gen Summit 2013 in which the audience even helped shape the test. In today’s case study, learn how to improve your A/B testing efforts in a unique, behind-the-scenes look that explores not only what we learned from the test, but also how we pulled off the entire project.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0401
E-commerce: Edible Arrangements’ countdown ad lifts same-day orders 8%
Date: Thursday, October 24, 2013
Summary: Think you have a great service that no one knows about? Even if it’s not new, it might be worth promoting anyway. Edible Arrangements tried it and increased sales. The e-commerce team increased same-day delivery orders on the Web 8% with simple promotion in a handful of channels. See where the team promoted the service, how, and where the campaign is headed.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0402

Social Media Marketing: UNC Health Care boosts weekly reach of Facebook page 2,576% with live chats
Date: Thursday, October 31, 2013
Summary: Read how UNC Health Care brought health information to its Facebook page with a live chat series between medical professionals and fans. Learn how it found an audience for this content, and also a unique way to connect while driving Facebook Likes up 140% and weekly reach up 2,576%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0403

Event Marketing: Travel company’s name-your-own-price campaign increases Facebook reach 800%
Date: Thursday, November 7, 2013
Summary: Discover how Bonvoy Adventure Travel marketed its flex pricing plan with a one-day live event in New York City to put its team right in front of consumers, boosting Facebook reach 800% and increasing direct traffic to the company website by 775%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0404

Email Marketing: E-commerce company’s behavior-based marketing tactics increase CLTV 416% in 14 months
Date: Friday, November 8, 2013
Summary: For Jermaine Griggs, Founder, Hear and Play Music, communicating with customers through email was a critical part of his marketing efforts. By embracing behavior-based marketing tactics, Jermaine achieved an increase in lifetime customer value (CLTV) of 416% in 14 months simply by harnessing the power of personalized marketing strategies. In this video excerpt, learn about behavior-based marketing, and how Jermaine applied it to Hear and Play’s CRM system.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0405

Marketing Automation: Implementation drives $550,000 in net new revenue at Crain’s
Date: Wednesday, November 13, 2013
Summary: This case study covers how Crain’s Business Insurance implemented automation for the first time, and goes into detail through the entire process from vendor selection to lead scoring. Read on to find out what the team did, and see the impressive results across a number of metrics.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0406
Appendix B: Content Directory

Inbound Marketing: Tech brand increases online sales 271% with original content and influencer outreach
Date: Thursday, November 14, 2013
Summary: Learn how Afinia, a new and unknown company in the space, developed its desktop 3D printer to become a major player in an established industry through a hands-on social media approach, website content that features its customers, and a major appeal to the education community.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0407

Email Marketing: E-commerce site increases online ticket purchases by 66% with relevant content
Date: Tuesday, November 19, 2013
Summary: After Eventful won E-commerce Best in Show in MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2014, presented by ExactTarget, we interviewed Paul Ramirez for this updated case study about the Web service’s winning campaign, elements of which were described previously in a MarketingSherpa case study from February of last year. Eventful displayed email marketing excellence in not only its solid results, but in creative and audience-centric approaches to challenges.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0408

Email Marketing: How CNET re-engaged inactive subscribers
Date: Tuesday, November 19, 2013
Summary: Every email marketer has the goal of building a good quality list. However, having a large number of people on an email list does not mean it’s a quality list. Keeping email subscribers engaged and active is vital to any email marketing campaign. Read to learn how Diana Primeau, Director, Member Services, CNET, discusses the importance of cutting out disengaged users from your email list that you can use to aid your data hygiene efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0409

Multichannel Marketing: IT company’s zombie-themed campaign increases CTO 3% at president, owner level
Date: Wednesday, November 20, 2013
Summary: Discover how SunGard was able to bring direct mail and social media into an email campaign and increase engagement with a target audience meeting very specific criteria, and even included a successful retargeting element in the campaign as well.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0410

Cause Marketing: Multichannel marketing for medical center raffle grows email list 89%
Date: Thursday, November 21, 2013
Summary: Read on to learn how Tucson Medical Center utilized nearly every medium under the sun to market the first year of a unique fundraising campaign, reeling in 62,000 unique visitors to its website and growing its email list by 89%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0411
Email Marketing: 24% higher CTR for CareerBuilder’s responsive design  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 26, 2013  
**Summary:** In this case study, discover how the nation’s largest online employment site lifted clickthrough rates 24% by making one of its emails “responsive.” Now the team is using the tactic in other email programs and seeing similar results.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0412

Multichannel Marketing: Direct mail, phone and email combine to lift executive briefing calls 50%  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 27, 2013  
**Summary:** Discover how Blue Pillar, a critical power technology company, upped its game with a baseball-themed campaign, putting physical mail, phone calls and email into play to knock in 15 executive briefings with 22 health care systems – all starting with a miniature wooden bat.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0413

Email Marketing: Copyblogger’s email list grows by 400% using free paywall to access “MyCopyblogger” content  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 3, 2013  
**Summary:** With the goal of increasing its list and nurturing leads, see how MyCopyblogger increased email sign-ups by 400%. The attached paid training program, Authority, had thousands of members after less than two months.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0414

Content Marketing: E-commerce site moves beyond promo email, boosts opens with social media content  
**Date:** Thursday, December 5, 2013  
**Summary:** Stretching out of the promotional track, Calendars.com built a new monthly newsletter around blog and social media content. In this case study, see how integrating the Calendars.com Pinterest, Facebook and blog content into new “Flip Day” sends celebrating the first of the month allowed a brand-loyalty building conversation with subscribers. Read on to find out how this campaign resulted in up to a 71% monthly increase in year-over-year open rates.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0415

E-commerce Marketing: 540% higher revenue-per-email for automated send  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 10, 2013  
**Summary:** A custom clothing site decided to build relationships with its email program, and to do so, it tested an autoresponder with hand-picked product suggestions. The result: 540% higher revenue-per-email in the first test. See how the team selected targets and expanded the program to other segments.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0416
Customer-centric Marketing: Adding fun to B2B
Date: Wednesday, December 11, 2013
Summary: This case study features the efforts of MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2014 honorable mention and cleaning equipment company, Tennant. Read on to see how this global B2B organization infused both humor and imagination to craft a campaign that shifted the culture of its marketing department moving forward.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0417

E-commerce: Site reverses Google penalty, utilizes guest posting to achieve its highest SEO rankings ever
Date: Thursday, December 12, 2013
Summary: Read about the steps Electric Fireplaces Canada (EFC) took to reverse its Google penalty to nab its highest SEO rankings ever. Discover how EFC gave its link profile some much needed TLC and successfully implemented a guest posting campaign with industry influencers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0418

Email Marketing 2013: The top 10 MarketingSherpa articles for your New Year’s marketing resolutions
Date: Tuesday, December 17, 2013
Summary: As 2013 comes to a close, we’ve collected 10 MarketingSherpa email case studies and how-to articles that display the best marketing efforts of this past year. These articles show marketers are integrating new aspects into their email content, with personalization becoming increasingly prevalent in email programs. Browse the articles, tactics and advice from practitioners for your 2014 marketing resolutions.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0419

B2B Marketing 2013 Wrap-up: Multichannel, direct mail, social media and more
Date: Wednesday, December 18, 2013
Summary: To conclude this year’s newsletter offerings, we have three topics that have influenced B2B marketing in 2013 and also three additional areas that B2B marketers should either keep an eye on, or even actively include in their 2014 marketing strategy.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0420

Inbound Marketing: The top 9 MarketingSherpa case studies and how-to articles showcasing 2013 trends and tactics
Date: Thursday, December 19, 2013
Summary: The articles featured in today’s final MarketingSherpa Inbound Marketing Newsletter of the year highlight trends and actionable tactics from MarketingSherpa case studies and how-to articles of 2013. See steps for improvement in the next 12 months from knowledgeable experts and industry leaders.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0421
B2C Marketing: Top takeaways of the year on mobile optimization, retargeting and behavior-based personalization
Date: Thursday, December 26, 2013
Summary: To celebrate the final MarketingSherpa Consumer Marketing Newsletter of the year, we’ve bundled up our most buzz-worthy B2C pieces of 2013. We recapped our most shared articles, garnished with the year’s top takeaways covering mobile optimization, retargeting and behavior-based personalization.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0422

MarketingSherpa How-To Articles

Marketing Careers: Why gut instincts are only artificial marketing brilliance
Date: Friday, October 4, 2013
Summary: At some point in your marketing career, you’ve had a moment where you suspected that your customers might respond better, so you made some changes and failed miserably. The truth is you’re not alone according to recent research, so read on to learn why gut instincts are really just artificial marketing brilliance.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0423

E-commerce: Why a forced checkout registration is never a good idea
Date: Tuesday, October 8, 2013
Summary: Unless your brand enjoys the near cult-like following of Apple or Coca-Cola, then it’s likely your website will play host to visitors with much lower motivation. So read on to learn how customer motivation impacts purchase decisions and why a forced registration during checkout is never a good idea.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0424

MarketingSherpa Lead Gen Summit 2013 Wrap-Up: Top 7 lead capture, qualification and nurturing takeaways
Date: Wednesday, October 9, 2013
Summary: MarketingSherpa Lead Gen Summit 2013 included two days filled with brand-side case studies, industry perspectives and live optimization of attendees’ lead capture forms and pages, with the event bookended by two MECLABS workshops. This wrap-up examines key takeaways for both consumer and B2B marketers, and offers the chance to view presentation slides and more reporting from the event.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0425

Content Marketing: How to manage a change in content on your blog
Date: Friday, October 11, 2013
Summary: There are plenty of great content marketing resources to help you start a new blog from scratch. But, what happens when your company undergoes a change in content? Read on to learn insights into how you can manage a change in content on your company blog effectively.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0426
Why Social Media is the New Customer Service Hotline

Date: Tuesday, October 15, 2013
Summary: Many large companies are still not placing enough importance on social media as a customer service channel that more customers have come to expect. But, there is hope as some big brands are starting to use social media to truly enhance the customer service experience. So read on to learn more about how you can use social media to better serve your customers.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0427

Lead Generation: 3 questions every marketer should ask themselves about incentive

Date: Friday, October 18, 2013
Summary: It’s all too often that we simply forget to thoroughly examine one key element for success – the incentive we’re offering. So, in this MarketingSherpa Blog post, we wanted to examine three questions every marketer should ask themselves about lead gen form incentives that you can use to tip the balance to your advantage.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0428

Content Marketing: 7 copy editing tips to improve any content piece

Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2013
Summary: Creating intriguing and relevant content is key to successful content marketing, yet improving your content through copy editing is often an afterthought with grave consequences as critics look to make your mistakes viral and readers begin to look elsewhere for polished information. Read on for seven copy editing tips you can use to cut down on errors that will help you deliver high-quality content to your audience.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0429

Email Marketing: 3 award-winning lessons about relevance

Date: Friday, October 25, 2013
Summary: Are you still struggling with delivering relevant emails to your audience? Well, you should be. It’s really hard. So to get your creative juices flowing, here are three examples from this year’s winners for MarketingSherpa Email Awards 2014, presented by ExactTarget.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0430

Is Social Media Better for Building Product Credibility?

Date: Tuesday, October 29, 2013
Summary: There’s an interesting dichotomy in e-commerce when it comes to product reviews. Most Americans trust personal recommendations at a much higher rate than reviews from strangers. Yet, e-commerce stores offer consumer ratings but not friend and family recommendations via social media. Read on to learn more about a testing strategy to consider to close the gap in using social media to build product credibility.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0431
Email Deliverability: 8 tactics help you overcome rising B2B challenges  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 30, 2013  
**Summary:** There are plenty of layers to permeate when it comes to deliverability. In the B2B market, those layers thicken. You bear a bulk of ongoing challenges including a longer sales cycle, complex reputation score hurdles and high employee turnover, resulting in multiple inactive email addresses. When you read about deliverability overall, most tips and tricks are designed for the B2C marketer. However, in this how-to article, we’ve tailored tactics specifically for deliverability in the B2B realm.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0432

Social Media Tips: 5 easy steps to set up a Facebook business account  
**Date:** Friday, November 1, 2013  
**Summary:** Setting up a Facebook page for your business can be difficult for small business owners and entrepreneurs with minimal social media experience. Read on to learn how you can set up a Facebook page in five simple steps.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0433

Multichannel Marketing: 6 challenges for planning complex campaigns  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 5, 2013  
**Summary:** Multichannel marketing is difficult to do as complex campaigns involve lots of coordination to keep the messaging consistent. Read on to learn more about six challenges for planning complex campaigns that will hopefully aid your marketing efforts.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0434

Internal Email: 6 scientifically proven ways to succeed in office politics  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 5, 2013  
**Summary:** These insights are from an interview with Robert Cialdini as well as the book he co-authored with Email Summit 2014 keynote speaker Noah Goldstein titled, “Yes! 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be More Persuasive.” These compiled excerpts demonstrate ways to make people say “yes” to your messaging and management.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0435

E-commerce: 3 tactics retailers are rolling out for the holidays  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 12, 2013  
**Summary:** This holiday season might be another tough one for retailers as competition heats up sooner than usual to grab every inch of available market share. So read on to learn three tactics retailers some are using to stand out among the crowd.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0436
Search Marketing: Can your marketing team identify your buyer personas?
Date: Friday, November 15, 2013
Summary: Developing a strategy to identify the personas of your customers can be daunting. Read on to learn how Jacob Baldwin, Search Engine Marketing Manager, and Christina Brownlee, Director of Marketing Communications, both of One Call Now, identified four different personas applicable to a wide variety of verticals within their target and how they related these personas to their marketing team.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0437

What the Country Music Awards Can Teach Us About Social Engagement
Date: Friday, November 22, 2013
Summary: Setting goals that encourage brand awareness and drive engagement are key best practices for any website to become successful. Read on to learn more about what an annual Country Music Awards show can teach marketers about social engagement.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0438

E-commerce: 10 case studies to help you excel in content marketing, social media and website optimization
Date: Tuesday, November 26, 2013
Summary: Customers relish in the convenience and ease of online shopping, but those on the other side of the screen know the process isn’t so effortless. So read on for insights from 10 case studies that you can use to aid your marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0439

Email Marketing: 3 reasons I was sucked into a Pandora win-back campaign
Date: Tuesday, December 3, 2013
Summary: After a year of experience at MECLABS, Rebecca Strally, Optimization Manager, prides herself on being immune to catchy subject lines, blasted discount sends and tricky calls-to-action. But, with the right message sent at the right time, even a skeptic can still be won over. Read on to learn three reasons why Rebecca was sucked into a Pandora win-back campaign.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0440

#TwitterTips: 5 steps for a successful 140-character conversation on Twitter
Date: Friday, December 6, 2013
Summary: Tweets are limited to 140 characters, which allows readers to easily digest your content. But putting out amazing content in such a tight space can be a challenge. Read on to learn five steps you can use to start a successful 140-character conversation.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0441
Marketing Careers: 3 tips to help your networking efforts
Date: Tuesday, December 10, 2013
Summary: Marketers invest a lot of energy in building strong customer relationships. Understandably, that leaves little time for personal brand building or networking. Read on for three tips that you can use to improve your networking skills.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0442

Transparent Marketing: 3 marketing lessons from the fast-food industry
Date: Friday, December 13, 2013
Summary: Some fast-food chains have started to move toward marketing tactics to build brand equity on unique offerings, transparency and customer testimonials. So before you start thinking of where to go for your next meal, read on for a look at three restaurant chains that have embraced a brave new world of marketing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0443

Content Marketing: Finding the Goldilocks zone in your blogging
Date: Tuesday, December 17, 2013
Summary: The Goldilocks zone on a blog is the ideal zone where the conditions of voice and benefit exist in just the right amounts so an audience can flourish. But, it’s not easy to find. Read on to learn more about the two key elements to consider when searching for the Goldilocks zone on your company blog.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0444

Email Marketing: 3 resources to help you close the automation gap
Date: Friday, December 20, 2013
Summary: Some of your marketing peers have noticed when it comes to using triggered emails, there’s an interesting gap between the perception of how marketers should use automation and how they actually are using it. Read on for three resources you can use to help your marketing team close the automation gap.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0445

Top MarketingSherpa Blog Posts of 2013: 10 lessons in social media, content and email marketing
Date: Friday, December 26, 2013
Summary: In 2013, the MarketingSherpa Blog covered a lot of lessons for marketers learn and apply to their efforts. Marketers found the most value in social media, content marketing and email marketing articles. Read on to learn 10 lessons the most-tweeted posts of the year.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0446
MarketingSherpa Research Charts of the Week

Marketing Research Chart: Which day is best to send emails?
Date: Tuesday, October 8, 2013
Summary: You’ve researched the content or promotion that would be most appealing to your audience. You worked with a professional writer or designer to create the email, or perhaps created it yourself. Essentially, you put in all of the hard work to make your email marketing send effective. But now, your marketing technology expert is ready to set the send in your ESP and has a question for you: “What day should I set it for?” Read on to see which days are most effective to send emails, according to your peers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0447

Marketing Research Chart: Does A/B testing deliver a positive ROI?
Date: Tuesday, October 15, 2013
Summary: Which call-to-action button works best? Should I use a long or short headline? What color should my CTA buttons be? Much like asking “What is the best meal on your menu?” there is not one single correct answer for the above questions, there is only the answer that is best for your unique company with your unique customers. To get that unique answer, marketers can use A/B testing to see what really works for their customers. In this week’s chart, we explore the financial side of A/B testing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0448

Marketing Research Chart: Which mobile tactics are most effective?
Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2013
Summary: Walking to the BART station at 6 a.m. from my hotel after Lead Gen Summit 2013, I got to see it in person – people camped out in front of an Apple store. The world’s gone mobile – 60.7% of the world according to eMarketer. This leaves the savvy marketer asking, “Which mobile tactics are most effective?” This week, we will explore this topic in the MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0449

Marketing Research Chart: Conversion rates on organic traffic
Date: Tuesday, October 29, 2013
Summary: If a prospective customer searches for a term in a search engine, and then clicks through an organic result to your website, they are extremely likely to convert, right? After all, they’re highly motivated... they just searched for that term! To get an answer to that question, we asked marketers from different industries for their conversion rates from organic traffic. Read on to see what they had to say.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0450

Marketing Research Chart: Integrating email and search marketing tactics
Date: Tuesday, November 5, 2013
Summary: In this Chart of the Week, we asked your peers which SEO tactics they are prioritizing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0451
Marketing Research Chart: What is the biggest B2B marketing challenge?
Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2013
Summary: Blocking and tackling. It’s not as sexy as scoring touchdowns or launching flashy new lead generation campaigns, but effective blocking and tackling often separates the champions from the also-rans. In this week’s chart, we’ll take a look at the blocking and tackling of the B2B world – lead management.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0452

Marketing Research Chart: What metrics should you track?
Date: Tuesday, November 19, 2013
Summary: If you are engaged in landing page optimization, the metric you are optimizing heavily influences the success of your optimization efforts. In this Chart of the Week, we’ll take a look at what metrics marketers are using to measure the effectiveness of their websites.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0453

Marketing Research Chart: Have you kept up with new marketing developments?
Date: Tuesday, November 26, 2013
Summary: As you’re finalizing your 2014 plans, campaigns and budgets, use this MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week to take a look one year back. What were your email marketing priorities? Did you deliver on them? Read on to see the email developments that were important to 1,095 marketers in this week’s chart.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0454

Marketing Research Chart: What is the only type of email your customers will actively miss?
Date: Tuesday, December 3, 2013
Summary: There’s one type of email your customers actually, actively want from you that 40% of consumer marketers are not using. Read this MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week to discover what that email is.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0455

Marketing Research Chart: It’s not too late to optimize one key element of your holiday marketing
Date: Tuesday, December 10, 2013
Summary: This late in the season, there is one element that can still help you hit your numbers this year and also focus your emails on the unique holiday shopper that is the 2013 consumer. This week, we will take a MarketingSherpa look at email campaign element testing and optimization.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0456

Marketing Research Charts: The 10 most popular MarketingSherpa charts of 2013
Date: Tuesday, December 17, 2013
Summary: What are the key pieces of marketing industry information you need to be successful in 2014? We found information on email, content and mobile marketing. Read on for 10 key lessons from our marketing industry research that can help as you finalize your 2014 marketing plans.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0457
MARKETING SHERPA WEBINARS

Marketing Automation: 200% increase in lead volume
Date: Wednesday, October 2, 2013
Summary: “We need to be the help department, not the marketing department,” Keith “KC” Lincoln, Vice President of Marketing, SmartBear Software, said in this MarketingSherpa webinar. Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, sat down with Lincoln to discuss how marketing automation has improved the effectiveness of marketing strategies at SmartBear, as well as the process Lincoln went through to choose the right marketing automation vendor for his organization’s needs.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0458

Lead Generation: How to empower your program like Siemens Healthcare
Date: Wednesday, October 16, 2013
Summary: Debbie Pryer, Program Manager, Siemens Healthcare, is responsible for lead generation and management for more than 1,500 end users. In the healthcare segment of Siemens, service engineers are out in the field interacting directly with customers to repair medical equipment. Pryer’s big challenge when she came to Siemens was to align Service and Sales after a lead gen program was generating too many leads with a high rejection rate, creating distrust between the two departments.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0459

Best in Show: Top takeaways from Lead Gen Summit 2013
Date: Wednesday, November 6, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar, learn the top takeaways from this event to apply to your own marketing efforts. Pamela Markey, Sr. Director of Marketing, and Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, both of MECLABS, moderated sessions at the Summit and now have provided 30 minutes of highlights from two days of case studies, industry deep dives and the Summit live test.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0460

B2B Social Media Marketing: DocuSign’s targeted LinkedIn InMail strategy creates 3 large pipeline opportunities
Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar, we featured marketers who think outside of the inbox. Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, sat down with Meagen Eisenberg, Vice President of Demand Generation, DocuSign, and discussed a campaign where B2B social media marketing merged into the email marketing channel.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0461

Value Proposition: How to turn a shiny new value proposition into a high-performing page
Date: Wednesday, December 4, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar, watch as Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, and Tony Doty, Associate Director of Optimization, both of MECLABS, discuss how to turn your value proposition into a high-performing landing page.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0462
MarketingExperiments

Lead Generation: Capturing more leads with clear value prop communication
Date: Thursday, October 3, 2013
Summary: At Lead Gen Summit 2013, Jon Ciampi, Vice President of Marketing, CRC Health, revealed how understanding customer motivations, driving traffic, and clearly communicating the value proposition all helped his company capture a higher quality of leads.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0463

Online Testing: How a pop-up chat test increased conversion 120%
Date: Monday, October 7, 2013
Summary: When it comes to using pop-ups, many marketers turn to them as a tool for solving issues of engagement. But, are pop-ups effective for lead generation? Read on to learn more about a recent pop-up chat test that increased conversion 120%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0464

Testing and Optimization: Looking past conversion rates for customer insights
Date: Thursday, October 10, 2013
Summary: Performing a radical redesign can be a daunting endeavor. You really can’t tell what changes are helping or hurting your conversion rates when you look at the data. But, what if you were to look into your data beyond conversion rates? What you find might surprise you. Read on for tips for changing your testing approach and looking past conversion rates for customer insights.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0465

Email Marketing: Promotional vs. letter-style test increases conversion 181%
Date: Monday, October 14, 2013
Summary: At the heart of email marketing campaigns, it seems as if a tug-of-war exists between gaining attention and engaging in conversation. So, read on to learn more about how the MECLABS research team tested a promotional-style email against a letter-style email that resulted in a 181% increase in conversion.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0466

Analytics and Testing: Understanding statistics symbols and terminology for better data analysis
Date: Thursday, October 17, 2013
Summary: When you’re immersed in data on a daily basis, it becomes all too easy to forget that everyone is not fluent in statistical terminology. In today’s MarketingExperiments Blog post, I wanted to share three statistical concepts every marketer should understand. My goal here is not to give you a Ph.D. in statistics, but rather, I want to try and demystify a few common symbols used in statistical reporting you can use to aid your team’s next discussion of test results.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0467
Web Analytics: What browser use can tell you about your customers  
**Date:** Monday, October 21, 2013  
**Summary:** What does this report tell me about my customers? Gaining insight from your metrics is not always easy, especially when it comes to interpreting metrics that simply don’t seem like significant providers of insightful customer intelligence. Read on to learn what browser use can tell you about your customers.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0468

**Why Fear and ROI Should Never Drive Your Testing**  
**Date:** Thursday, October 24, 2013  
**Summary:** Going into my first test on a webpage, I wanted to ensure I got a positive result. The last thing I wanted to do was put countless hours of time and effort into a test plan, only to receive results that were not favorable to my recommendations. Read to learn why fear and ROI are bad drivers for any testing program.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0469

**Validity Threats: 3 tips for online testing during a promotion (if you can’t avoid it)**  
**Date:** Monday, October 28, 2013  
**Summary:** Promotions can be a great tool to drive traffic to your site and increase revenue. But, how do promos really impact your testing? Read on to learn three tips for testing during a promotion.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0470

**Email Marketing: Simple design change to incentive raises clickthrough rate from the dead by 48%**  
**Date:** Thursday, October 31, 2013  
**Summary:** Increasing conversion through testing can seem almost indistinguishable from magic when done right. Read on in today’s MarketingExperiments Blog post to learn how a change in color emphasis increased conversion 48%.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0471

**E-commerce: Category page test increases order rates 20%**  
**Date:** Monday, November 4, 2013  
**Summary:** Category pages play a key role in e-commerce, yet they are often left to the mercy of limited testing and limited, if any, best practices. Read on to learn more about how the MECLABS research team ran a category page test that increased order rates 20%.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0472

**A/B Testing: Collaborative test planning can help you avoid “I told you so” testing**  
**Date:** Thursday, November 7, 2013  
**Summary:** Marketing and testing strategies often have a tendency toward being driven by the HIPPO (highest paid person’s opinion). However, a key problem with that is the customer is an afterthought, or in the worst case, never considered at all. Read on to learn how collaborative test planning can help you keep your testing customer focused.  
**URL:** http://mecla.bs/digest0473
Email Marketing: 6 bad habits to avoid when testing emails
Date: Monday, November 4, 2013
Summary: Email campaigns are different than other elements of a marketing mix including digital and traditional channels. They often have different goals, best practices, and bad habits to avoid. Read to learn more about six bad habits to avoid when testing email.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0474

Landing Page Optimization: 3 template design changes to help you serve multiple customer types
Date: Thursday, November 14, 2013
Summary: Optimizing your landing pages for multiple buyer personas becomes a difficult undertaking when conversion optimization principles often call for a focus on a single customer type. Read on to learn three template design changes you can make to help you serve multiple customer types.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0475

Marketing Analytics: What annotation data can tell you about video subscribers
Date: Monday, November 18, 2013
Summary: Over the past year, plenty of charts, projections and infographics have all shown video content heading in the general direction of growth as more users engage video content online than ever before. Read on to learn more about what YouTube annotation data can tell you about your subscribers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0476

Interpreting Results: Absolute difference versus relative difference
Date: Thursday, November 21, 2013
Summary: Marketers are not always data-savvy mathematicians, and sometimes the full understanding of the math behind our campaign results (and for the purposes of this post, split tests) is overlooked, or simply taken at face value. One question that often arises among marketers, even after running many A/B split tests, is “What’s the difference between relative and absolute difference?”
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0477

Marketing Analytics: How dual control testing can help curb doubts in your data
Date: Monday, November 25, 2013
Summary: In online testing, there are plenty of things that can make your tests look conclusive when they are actually flawed. So read on to learn how using a double control can help boost confidence in your data.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0478

A/B Testing for Fun and Profit [Subject Line Writing Contest]
Date: Monday, December 2, 2013
Summary: If you’ve read the MarketingExperiments Blog for any length of time, you know that A/B testing and conversion optimization can be a very profitable endeavor. Read this post to learn how our audience had the chance to win a ticket to MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2014 in Las Vegas by writing a winning subject line.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0479
Email Marketing: One question to ask yourself before you write another subject line  
Date: Thursday, December 5, 2013  
Summary: Being relevant to customers is hard enough and staying relevant means testing your way into a message that resonates. Read on to learn about the one key question you should ask yourself before you write another subject line.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0480

Email Marketing: Subject line test increases clickthrough rate 18%  
Date: Monday, December 9, 2013  
Summary: The effectiveness of a subject line is crucial to the success of any marketing email. To improve subject line effectiveness and to better understand your customers’ needs, you can test your emails. In this post, see how our marketers at MECLABS increased clickthrough 18% and discovered what appeals to our audience.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0481

LPO: 2 types of security seals that can help you reduce customer anxiety  
Date: Thursday, December 12, 2013  
Summary: Customer anxiety is essentially a negative element on your landing page that reduces the likelihood that potential customers will take a desired action. It’s no surprise that experiments with our Research Partners have found that third-party privacy and security seals help reduce customer anxiety and improve conversion. Read on for two types of security seals that can help you reduce customer anxiety.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0482

Blog Analytics: How do you measure the company blog’s performance?  
Date: Monday, December 16, 2013  
Summary: Measuring the performance of your company’s blog is not easy. By design, blogs don’t give up customer behavior secrets as easily or as comfortably as a landing page. Read on for insights from the MECLABS research team for metrics you can use to measure your company’s blog performance.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0483

Email Marketing: 4 tips for testing subject lines to help you win the inbox battle  
Date: Thursday, December 19, 2013  
Summary: When it comes to email marketing, the subject line along with the sender’s name often are required to do all of the heavy lifting for recipients to even consider opening the email and see the offer or information communicated within. Read on to learn four tips for testing subject lines that you can use to aid your email marketing efforts.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0484
Web Analytics: More clicks doesn’t always mean more conversions
Date: Monday, December 23, 2013
Summary: Clickthrough and conversion rates are often two metrics we track as measures of success in our testing efforts. It would almost seem that these two metrics share an intuitive dependency, which is simply not the case. In this blog post, learn why more clicks does not always mean more conversions.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0485

Copywriting: Is your landing page missing the “why” factor?
Date: Thursday, December 26, 2013
Summary: One of the most critical elements of copy needed for a product is the “why” factor. It’s the reason a customer needs to consider if your product is right for them before they make a purchase. In this experiment recap, learn how marketers at an auto repair company increased purchases 36% by testing the copy on their landing page to discover their “why” factor.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0486

Conversion Rate Optimization: 3 takeaways from 2013
Date: Monday, December 30, 2013
Summary: The end of the year is an important moment to stop and reflect on the year that has passed as they seem to come and go now faster than ever before. Read this post for three lessons from 2013 you can use to aid your own marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0487

Marketing Experiments Web Clinics

Are Letter-Style Emails Still Effective? New research reveals how customers read emails today
Date: Thursday, October 3, 2013
Summary: When you think of email campaigns today, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed by the war for attention being waged in everyone’s inbox. Watch this Web clinic replay to learn about three key principles every marketer should know for crafting effective email messages.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0488

Category Pages that Work: Recent research reveals design changes that led to a 61.2% increase in product purchases
Date: Thursday, October 17, 2013
Summary: Category pages are a standard for websites offering multiple products, yet they often take a backseat in testing and optimization. Watch this Web clinic replay to learn more about how design changes to a series of category pages led to a 61.2% increase in product purchases.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0489
Optimizing for Multiple Personas: How a recent test “broke the rules” of optimization and drove a 331% conversion lift
Date: Thursday, October 31, 2013
Summary: Category pages are a standard for websites offering multiple products, yet they often take a backseat in testing and optimization. Watch this Web clinic replay to learn more about how design changes to a series of category pages led to a 61.2% increase in product purchases.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0490

Are You Missing Copy on Your Page? How adding the right paragraph generated a 36% lift
Date: Thursday, November 14, 2013
Summary: The guiding principles of conversion optimization often call for sharpening the focus of your messaging to appeal to a single customer persona. But, how do those principles apply to elements of copy and design that serve multiple visitor types with different needs and interests? Watch this Web clinic replay to learn about how design and copy changes “broke the rules” of optimization and led to a 331% increase in conversion.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0491

Subject Lines that Convert: A review of 100+ successful subject lines reveals what motivates people to open (or delete) an email
Date: Wednesday, November 27, 2013
Summary: When you think of email campaigns today, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed by the war for attention being waged in everyone’s inbox. Watch this Web clinic replay to learn about two approaches you can use to increase customer interest in your subject lines.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0492

The Top 5 Marketing Discoveries in 2013: The last 50,000 hours of research distilled into 60 minutes
Date: Thursday, December 19, 2013
Summary: While 2013 was a great year for featuring new discoveries to help you do your job better, the sheer volume of actionable takeaways and key principles can be overwhelming for marketers in the trenches struggling to keep pace. In this MarketingExperiments Web clinic, the MECLABS research team reviewed the top five discoveries of 2013 and how you can use those insights to aid your marketing efforts in the upcoming year ahead.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0493
B2B Lead Roundtable

Mobile Marketing: What 4 top B2B companies can teach us about mobile
Date: Monday, October 7, 2013
Summary: We are all hearing time spent on mobile devices will surpass desktops, a trend already happening in B2C marketing that is quickly making its way to B2B marketing. Read on to learn more about what four top B2B Fortune 500 companies can teach us about mobile marketing that you can apply to your mobile marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0494

Lead Generation: Who knows the customer better – Marketing or Sales?
Date: Monday, October 14, 2013
Summary: It’s human nature to feel that we have a golden gut to some extent, especially when we’re interacting directly with customers. But in today’s marketplace where data, metrics, analysis and tracking results can help you drill down on customer behavior, the era of the golden gut has come to a close. So, read to learn more about how Marie Wiese, President, Marketing CoPilot, ran an experiment with Grantek.com, a North American B2B systems integration company, to create a keyword strategy that would support lead nurturing far beyond any marketing intuitions.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0495

Customer Relationship Management: 5 steps for finding the right vendor for your data hygiene
Date: Monday, October 21, 2013
Summary: The quality of your database represents the quality of your customer and prospect relationships. Read on to learn more about five steps you can use to the right vendor for your data hygiene needs.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0496

B2B Marketing: What an 11% drop in conversion taught a live audience about lead gen
Date: Monday, October 28, 2013
Summary: There’s a paradox that exists in lead generation. Marketers typically want more information about their leads. This translates to more form fields on a lead generation form. So how do you balance lead quality and quantity in your form fields? Read on to learn more about what a 12% drop in conversion can teach you about lead generation.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0497

Lead Nurturing: How a social business strategy can help you move from selling to helping your prospects
Date: Monday, November 4, 2013
Summary: Leads as we know them are changing rapidly in the marketplace as prospects do their own research and make buying decisions before they interact with your organization. This change is having an impact that makes communication with potential prospects increasingly difficult. Read on to learn how Todd Wilms, Head of Social Strategy, and Adriel Sanchez, VP, Demand Generation, both of SAP, use a business model called “social business” to help their teams engage local audiences across the globe.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0498
B2B Mobile Marketing: 3 ideas on where to spend your next mobile budget  
Date: Monday, November 11, 2013  
Summary: Mobile devices have come a long way and their evolution continues to add new challenges for digital marketers. So read on for three smart spend ideas you can use to aid your mobile marketing efforts.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0499

Email Deliverability: Is Gmail’s tabbed inbox a B2B challenge?  
Date: Monday, November 18, 2013  
Summary: Just when you think you have this whole deliverability thing down, another challenge rises to the surface. This time, it’s in the form of Gmail’s tabbed inbox. Tom Sather, Senior Director of Research, Return Path, explained the idea of a market-specific email platform is fading. Sather referenced research published by Gartner that predicted “at least 10% of enterprise email seats will be based on a cloud or software-as-a-service model.” Read on for more insights on how Gmail’s new tabbed inbox can affect your B2B marketing efforts.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0500

B2B Marketing: 3 simple tips for creating PPC ads  
Date: Monday, November 25, 2013  
Summary: PPC ad campaigns can be tough when you consider character limits and the different strategies needed to craft ads for a highly targeted audience on social media sites versus search engines ads where keywords strategy comes into play. These challenges can make PPC copywriting seem more like an art, but there a few tips you can use to distill those difficulties down to some across-the-board basics. Read on to learn three tips for PPC ad copywriting you can use to aid your copywriting efforts.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0501

B2B Marketing: 6 essentials for testing your teleprospecting  
Date: Monday, December 2, 2013  
Summary: For years, marketers have been testing messages on emails, websites and pay-per-click ads to determine which ones drive the most sales. But what about teleprospecting? Chances are, some of your call centers are already testing informally to figure out how to resonate with customers. Read on for six essentials for testing your teleprospecting that you can use aid your marketing efforts.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0502

Email Marketing: How do you create excitement around the content you have?  
Date: Monday, December 9, 2013  
Summary: Marketers who are just starting out in content marketing often struggle to find valuable, compelling content for potential customers. Watch the video clip to learn more on creating excitement around your content from Joe Pulizzi, Founder, Content Marketing Institute.  
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0503
3 Important Lessons for Lead Gen and Life
Date: Monday, December 16, 2013
Summary: People look to Brian Carroll, Executive Director of Revenue Optimization, MECLABS, as an expert at lead generation because he wrote a book and speaks about it. But even he is constantly learning and constantly discovering how much more he has to learn. Read on for three important lessons for lead gen that Brian has discovered from his experiences in 2013.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0504

Lead Generation: 2 questions every marketer should ask themselves about prospect motivation
Date: Monday, December 23, 2013
Summary: The most important factor to keep in mind when creating your landing page is your prospects’ motivation as highly motivated prospects can make for highly motivated leads. The caveat here, however, is the prospects who are not highly motivated are the ones you need to worry about convincing. Discover two questions every marketer should ask themselves about prospect motivation.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0505

2013 Year in Review: Top 6 focus areas for B2B marketers this year
Date: Monday, December 30, 2013
Summary: As 2013 wraps up, we wanted to take a minute to reflect on the top lessons and insights we’ve discussed this year. Read on for six top focus areas for 2013 to apply to your efforts in the New Year.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0506

Video Presentations

E-commerce: Harnessing the power of email automation and behavior-based marketing to increase conversions
Date: Thursday, October 10, 2013
Summary: Watch this video replay from Email Summit 2013 featuring Jermaine Griggs, Founder, Hear and Play Music, and his presentation, “How an Online Music Teaching Company Harnessed the Power of Email Automation and Behavior-based Marketing to Increase Conversions.” In his presentation, discover how Griggs’ transitioned from using his CRM system as what he called a “glorified autoresponder,” to a CRM system based on behavior, and personalized for each customer’s unique needs.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0507

Win-back Campaigns and List Cleansing: How CNET re-engaged 8% of its email list
Date: Tuesday, October 29, 2013
Summary: In this full free replay of an Email Summit 2013 case study, Diana Primeau, Director, Member Services, CNET, recalled the scary part of cleaning her list: deleting large numbers of users and watching the list shrink. Giving users a chance to re-engage with an opt-in list or switch lists can lengthen the relationship with that customer.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0508
About MarketingSherpa LLC

MarketingSherpa is a primary research facility, wholly-owned by MECLABS, dedicated to determining what works in marketing via exclusive case studies, surveys, and results data analysis. Then we publish what we learn so our community of marketers and weekly readers can improve their results and train their teams.

Praised by The Economist, Harvard Business School’s Working Knowledge Site and Entrepreneur.com, Marketing Sherpa is distinguished by offering practical, results-based marketing information researched and written by a staff of in-house reporters.

Marketing Sherpa features:

- **Best Practices**: 1,000+ brand-side marketer case studies and 3,500+ creative samples
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- **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.

The task of marketing to multiple personas is one of the most difficult we face as marketers, but as we’ve discovered, there are principles we can look to for guidance and direction in this effort. Sometimes we may need to “break the rules” to achieve our goals, and that is acceptable – as long as the test results show improvement.

Needs do not matter to customers unless those needs are also wants. Our goal as marketers is not to simply present a way to meet a need, but to actually help the customer want what they already need.

Empathy is the foundation of every good marketer. When you encounter a successful salesperson or marketer who has never had any formal education or practice in marketing, the fundamental skill they display is empathy – the ability to understand how their prospects are feeling and what is motivating them.

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