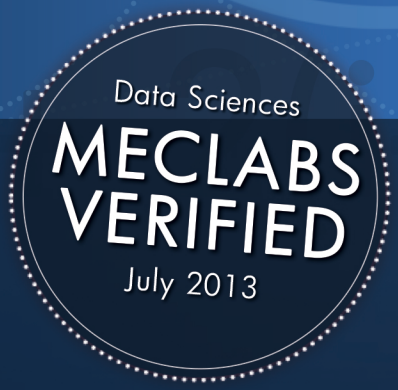

Quarterly Research Digest

Second Quarter 2013

THE MECLABS QUARTERLY RESEARCH DIGEST

Volume I, Issue 2 *The Second Quarter of 2013*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all the Research Partners who have teamed up with us to conduct these experiments. For more information about Research Partnerships, please visit meclabs.com/partnerships. Additionally, we want to show our appreciation to all the sources and vendors who have contributed to our articles and publications.

EDITORIAL STAFF

CONTRIBUTORS

From the Executive Editor

Dear Reader:

Marketers are bogged down in a sea of claims. One "expert" claims you must "do this"; another claims you must "do that." We are constantly being pushed, "If we don't launch a social media program, our competitors are going to devastate us. … If we do not get the latest analytics package, our organization is going to fall behind. …" On and on it goes.

Marketers are overwhelmed. How can we cut through all the claims and discover what really matters? We need science to constrain our art. This is the reason for the ***MECLABS Quarterly Digest***. It contains the results of rigorous experimentation and research. It helps to ground our many efforts with solid, careful, evidence-based findings.

This *Digest* is designed to make it **simple for you to scan and find** the experiments and case studies that are especially useful. It is also **complimented by a directory** of all the content produced in Q2 of 2013 including:

- 27 MarketingSherpa Case Studies
- 32 MarketingSherpa How-to Articles
- 13 Charts of the Week, from 6 Benchmark Reports
- 5 MarketingSherpa Webinar Video Replays
- 30 MarketingExperiments Articles
- 5 Web Clinic Video Replays
- 12 B2B Lead Roundtable Articles
- 5 Video Presentations

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

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

Flint McGlaughlin
Managing Director, MECLABS

P.S. If you conduct an interesting experiment, we would love to learn from 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 Digest***.

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2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report

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

Case Studies

How-To Articles

Index of Content by Type

Chart of the Week

Web Clinics

How To Use This Digest

Dear Marketer,

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

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

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

- **MarketingExperiments** – The most popular post of each month, as featured in the MarketingExperiments Best of the Month newsletter
- **MarketingSherpa** – The most-shared case study or how-to article of each week, as featured in the MarketingSherpa Best of the Week newsletter
- **B2B Lead Roundtable Blog** – The most-tweeted post of each month

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

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

- **Marketing Research Charts of the Week** – A section dedicated to MarketingSherpa's benchmark studies, where we include all the research featured in the weekly MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week newsletter.
- **MECLABS Content Directory** – This comprehensive directory allows you to scan through the titles and summaries of every piece of MECLABS content to find additional works that could help your marketing efforts.

How To Use This Digest

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

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

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

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

Happy reading,

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

Site Optimization

Major Experiment Briefing

The Usability Myth

4 surprising discoveries we learned after testing the most common usability principles

- Content created by Austin McCraw, Jon Powell, Paul Cheney, Shaun Metzger
- Research conducted by Gaby Paez, Adam Lapp, Nathan Thompson, Kyle Chapman, Nicholas Borszich, Boris Grinkot, Paul Clowe

Usability was a discipline that began before the Internet invaded (and drastically changed) nearly every part of our daily work life. It had to do with ergonomics and product design, and as the Internet grew, some of those usability experts began advising on how webpages ought to look and function. In other words, they sought to carry over the usability principles they learned through rigorous psychological testing of human interaction with physical objects and applied them to the design of websites and individual pages.

But is this thinking flawed? Can we transplant these general principles of usability from the real world to the digital world? Does following usability rules really help to improve the effectiveness of a website? In all, how much stock should the marketer take in the "usability" of a website?

As we have seen from test to test, often it's our assumptions that hinder the performance of our pages the most.[i] So, as we often do at MECLABS, we put usability to the test.

An Experiment: Do valid usability principles necessarily translate to web design?

The experiment, Test Protocol (TP) 1283 was conducted in partnership with a leading European cosmetics company.[ii] The goal was to increase conversion on its "body" category page, from which users navigated to the specific body products they desired. The test we ran was a variable cluster test that included five total pages being tested: the control page and four redesigns of the control page.

To give a little context, the control page was already the result of careful testing by the company, which has many years of experience with direct marketing.[iii] So this page was already producing well, and had never been beaten in a test. You can see the control page in **Figure 1.1**. Now let us take a look at the treatments.

Treatment #1 (**Figure 1.2**) was a redesign of the page that replaced the list of product categories with an interactive configurator.[iv] Using the configurator, Web users could filter results by category, desired result and product line. Each of these would further refine the user's search, helping them locate the exact products they wanted.

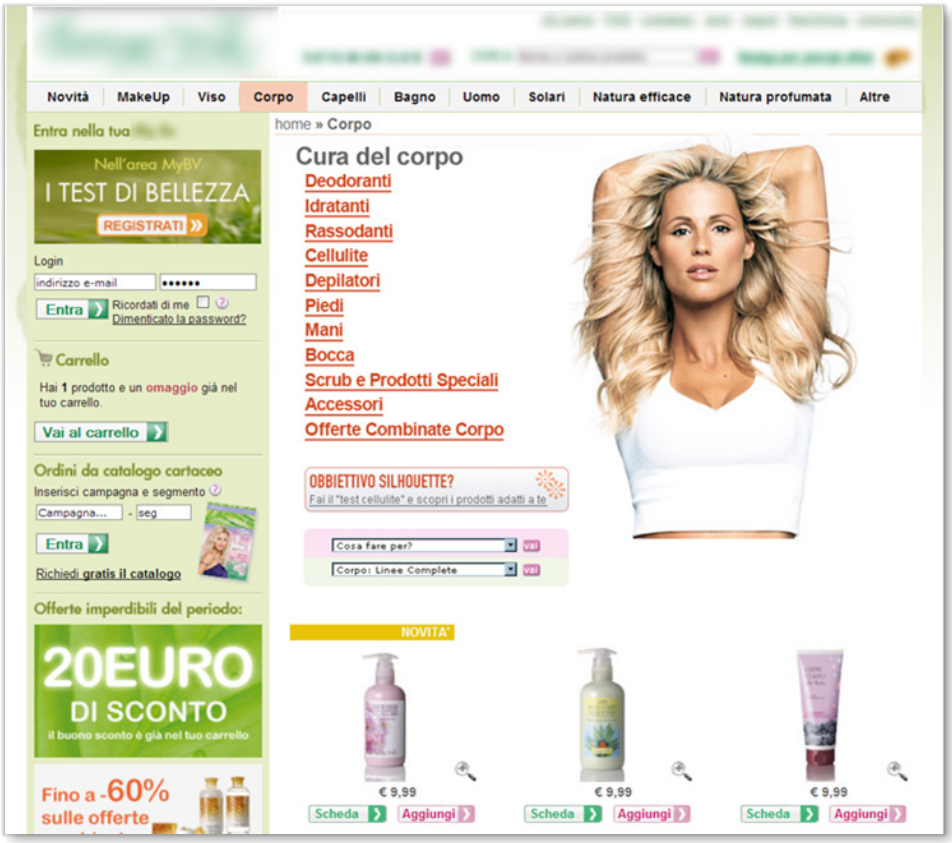

Figure 1.1

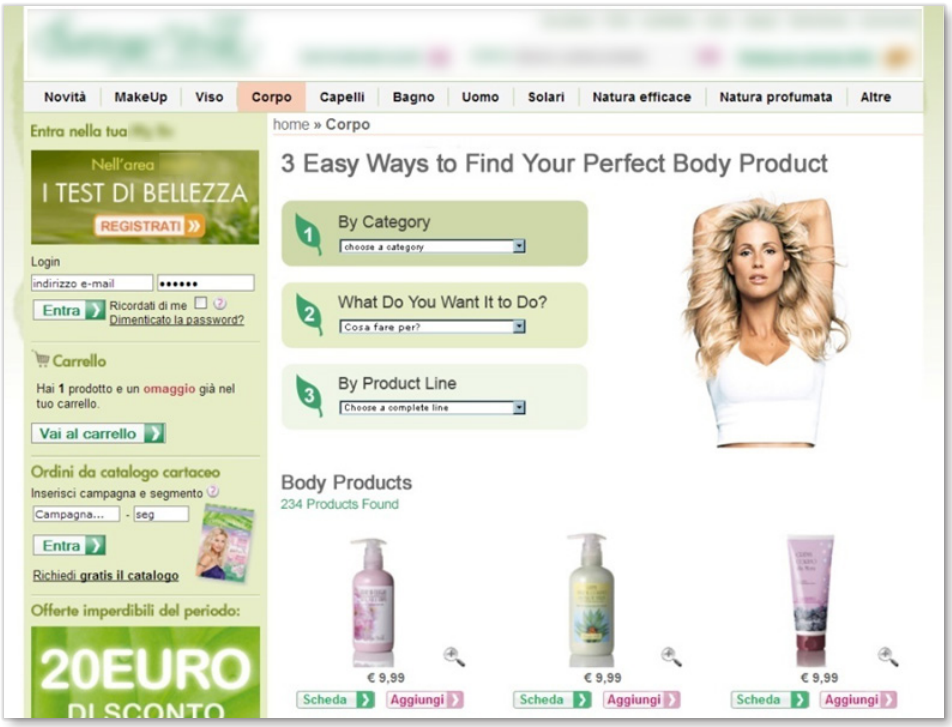

Figure 1.2

Treatment #2 (**Figure 1.3**) is a redesign of the page that simply turns the category list featured on the control page into nine aesthetic squares filled by the category name and an image to help the user quickly delineate which category they desire.[v]

Treatment #3 (**Figure 1.4**) is a more radical redesign, because we actually eliminated the page.[vi] Rather than redesign the list, we simply removed it and placed the list as a drop-down menu on the "Body" navigation link.

Treatment #4 (**Figure 1.5**) built upon the concepts of Treatments #2 and #3 and involved replacing the page with a drop-down menu, but also including images of the products in the menu.

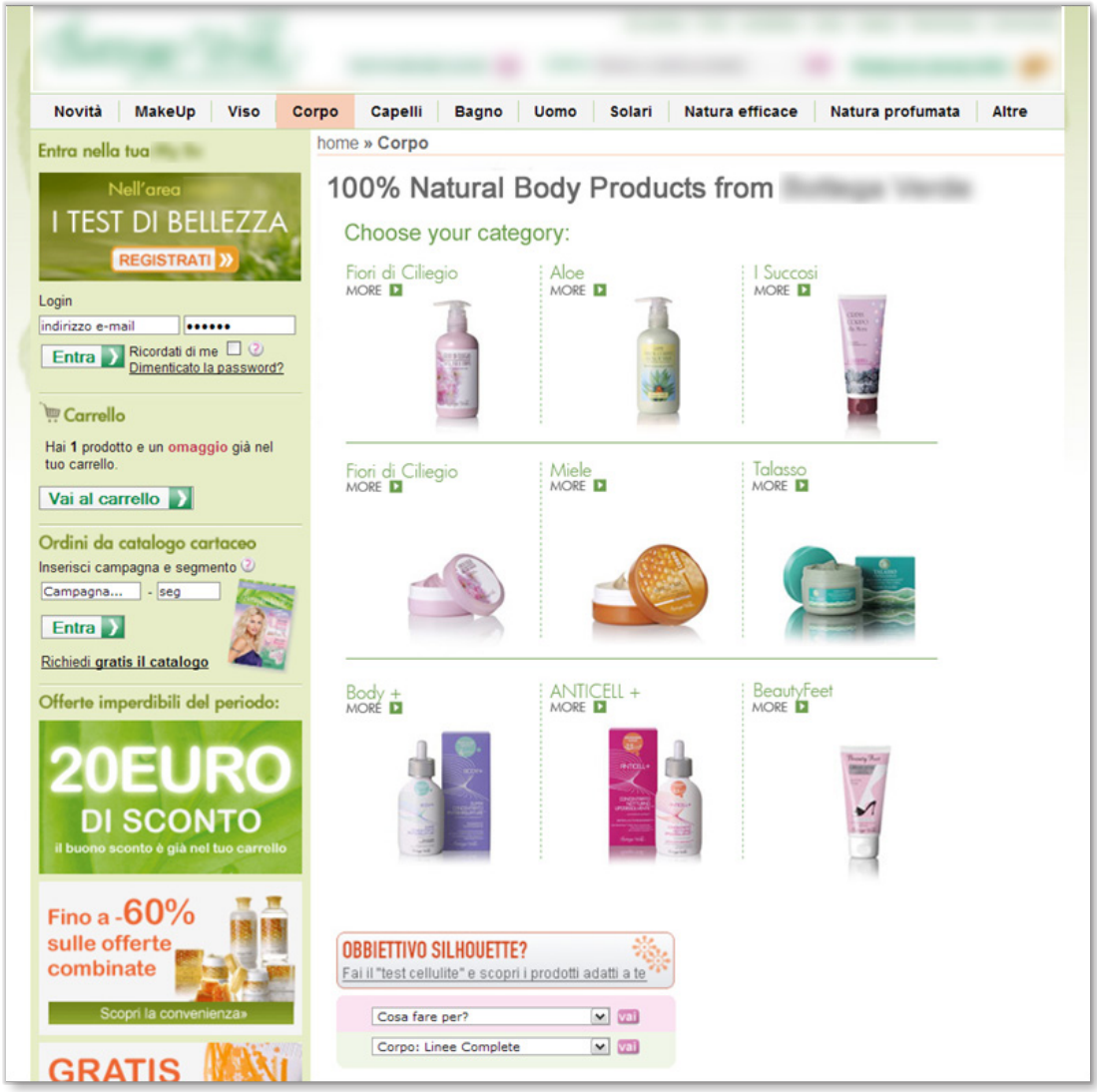

Figure 1.3

Figure 1.4

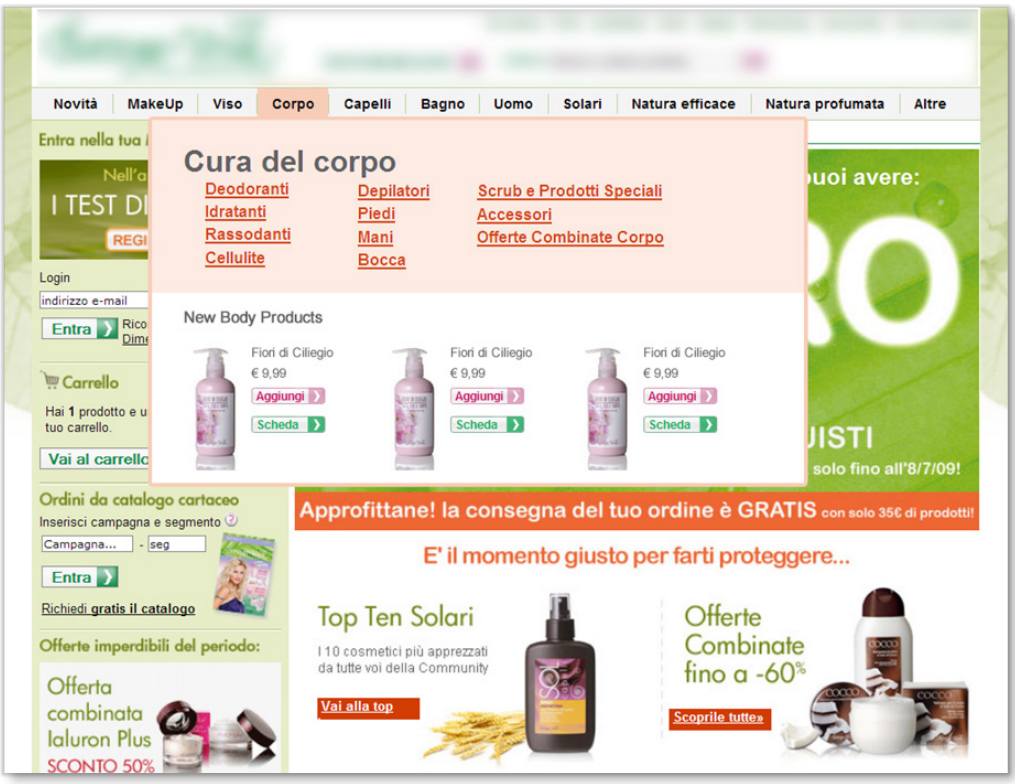

Figure 1.5

So what do you think the results were? What does your usability gut tell you? **Well, believe it or not, Treatment #1 outperformed the control by 20%. All other treatments produced a 5% lift.**

But why such a large difference? What separates Treatment #1 from the others? What does this result tell us about usability in regard to webpage design? Based on this experiment and the 10,000 other conversion paths we have tested, we have discovered four essential key principles in regard to understanding the role of usability.

The Usefulness of Usability

First, marketers need to understand that **(1) focusing on usability can hinder an effective approach to optimization. It often undermines the micro-yes approach and can ultimately hinder results.** This is significant, as it flies in the face of years of supposed "best practices" for Web design.[vii] But you will see this principle play out in the experiments dissected below, as indeed it is proved to be true in the experiment we just examined.

Further, what we have learned is **(2) an overemphasis on "usability" confuses the means with the end. The goal of our website is not "usability," but rather "buyability."** When we make the usability of our website prominent, it is often because we believe that the easier it is to use, the higher conversion we will see. This is not the case. Or rather, this is not *necessarily* the case. A site's buyability, its ability to facilitate conversion and purchasing, is not the same as its usability.

With that said, **(3) usability, when viewed properly, can be a valuable tool for helping marketers identify hidden psychological costs in their conversion processes.** Lest it appear this article is intended to bash usability and the experts who have spent years of their lives studying this truly important science, it is vital to note that usability is not useless to the marketer and Web designer. Indeed, it is a tool that we must use as part of our repertoire, but it is not the only tool we must use.

Usability can help us build the hypothesis on which we base our experiments and tests, but it is not the ultimate standard for the efficacy of the page.[viii] **The efficacy of the page is a determination made not by usability expert, but by the customer.** The customer has the ultimate vote, and the customer votes with their behavior.

Finally, and probably most important – **(4) all usability claims must be tested.** If the ultimate standard of a page's efficacy is measured by how well it facilitates a visitor to take the action we desire them to take, then all usability claims must be tested. They do not get grandfathered into Web design best practices. The highest converting page is the highest converting page regardless of what the principles of usability have to say about the designs.

With these crucial principles in mind, we will now walk through **four interesting discoveries** we made while testing some of the most common "rules of usability."

Four Discoveries Made When Testing the "Rules of Usability"

Discovery #1: Short Is Not Always Sweet

Often marketers are told, *"Keep it short … cut the copy and keep the most important points of the message near the top." Or "… the material that's the most important for the users' goals or your business goals should be* ***above the fold****."*

These principles are effective in some cases, as you can see in **Figure 2.1**. In this experiment, as the length of the page decreases the conversion rate increases. However, is this always the case?

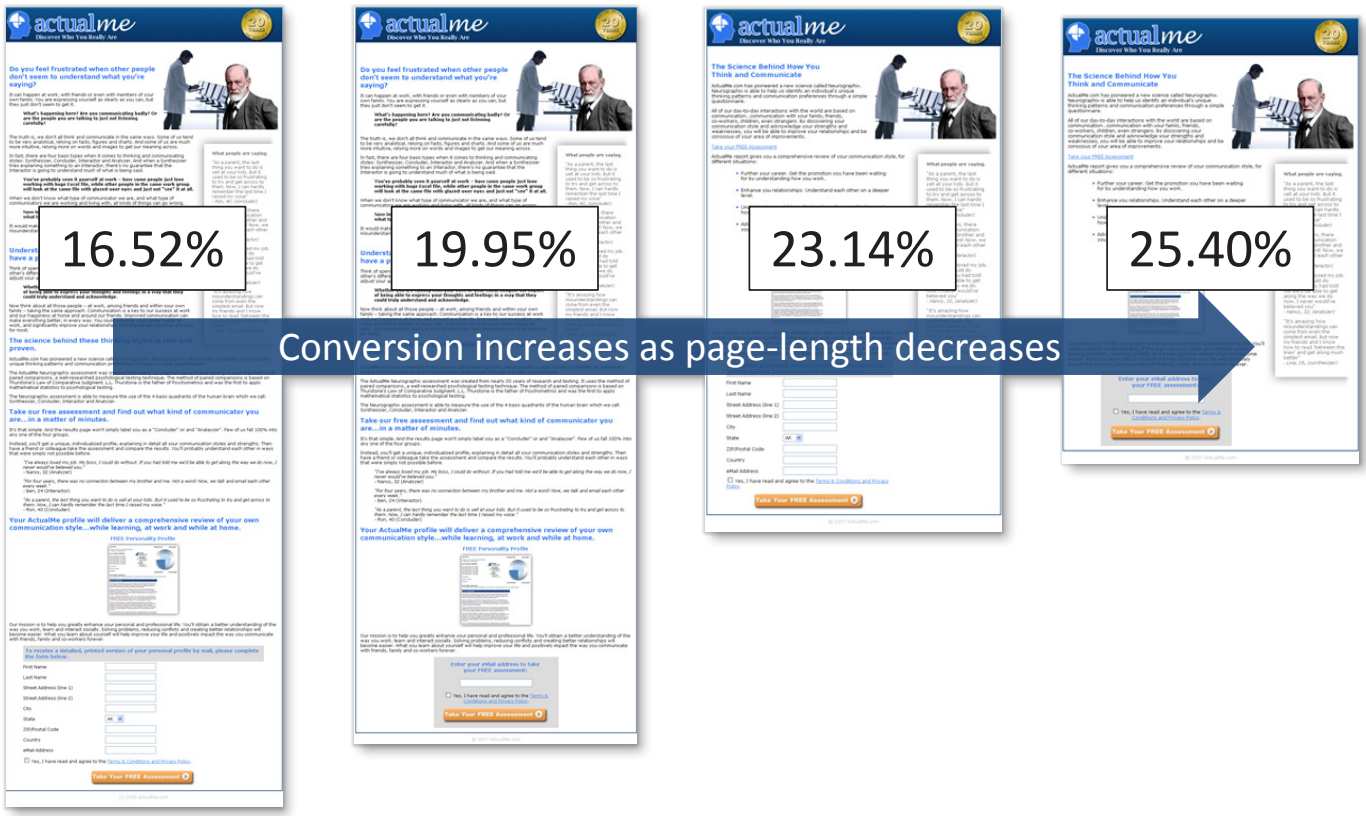

Figure 2.1

No. Let's investigate an experiment that defies the usability expectations in this area.

In this experiment, TP1662, we sought to increase the total number of new patients produced by a landing page for a mental health rehabilitation facility. The control page (**Figure 3.1**) adhered to common usability practices. The form and call-to-action were above the fold. The most important information was near the top. The question we posed, then, was, "How would conversion be impacted if we created a single-column, long-from page with the call-to-action at the bottom?"

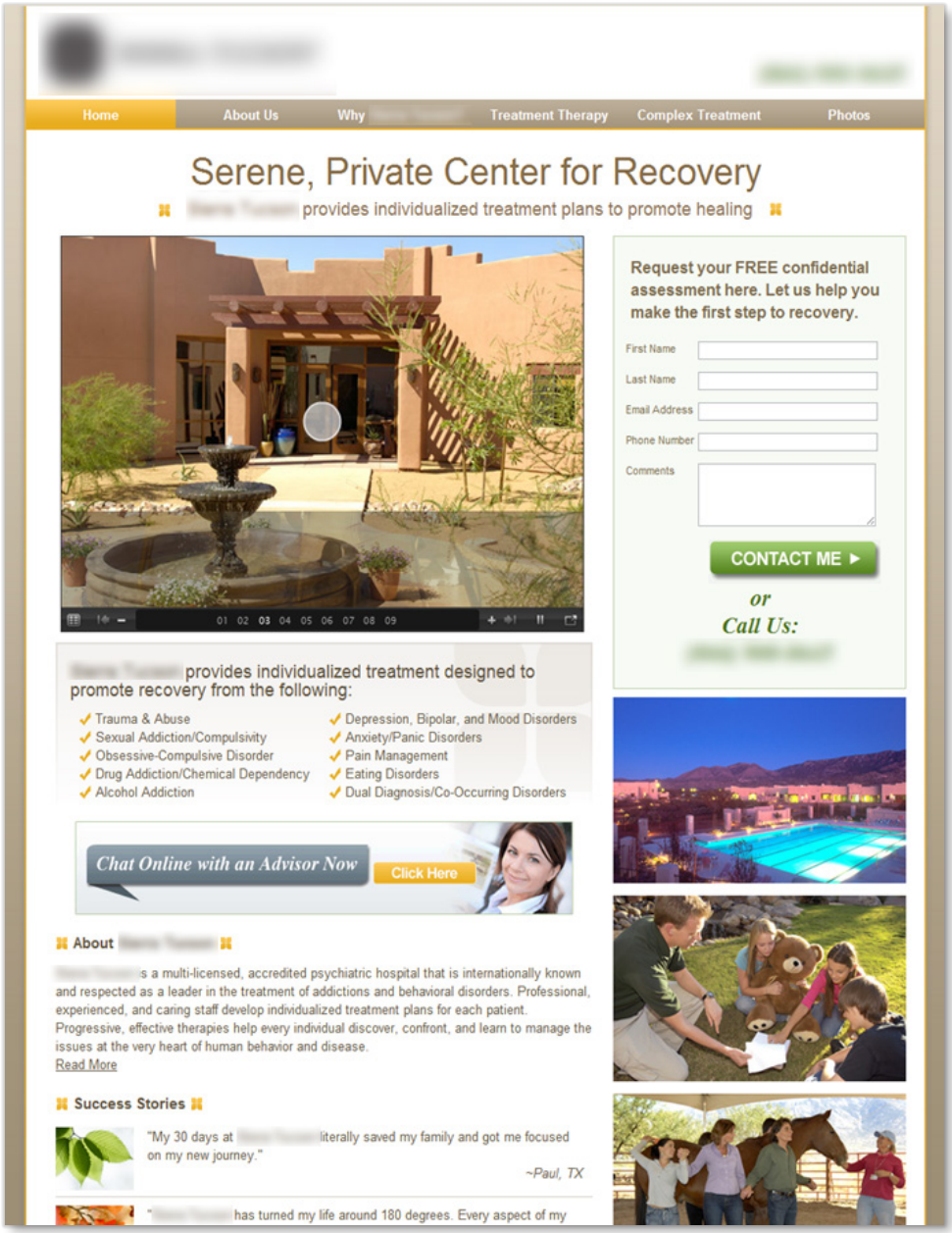

Figure 3.1

We designed a treatment page (**Figure 3.2**) that was nearly twice the length of the control, with no way for the user to respond to the information until they reached the bottom of the page.

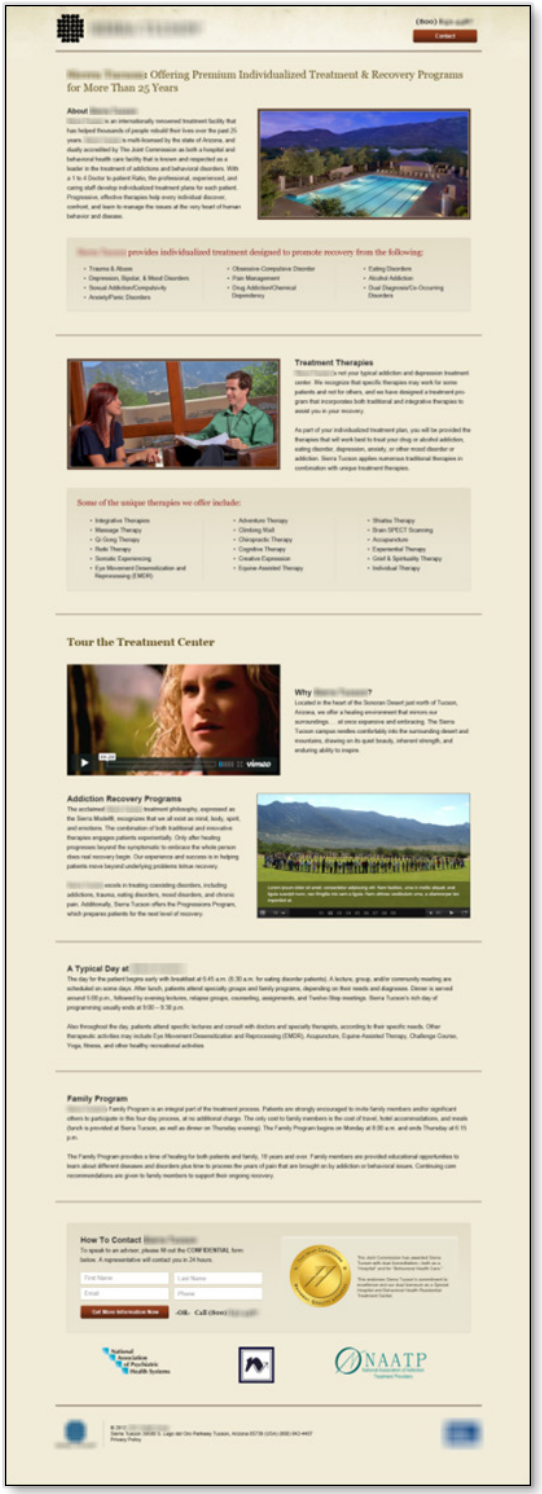

Figure 3.2

You can see a side-by-side comparison in **Figure 3.3**.

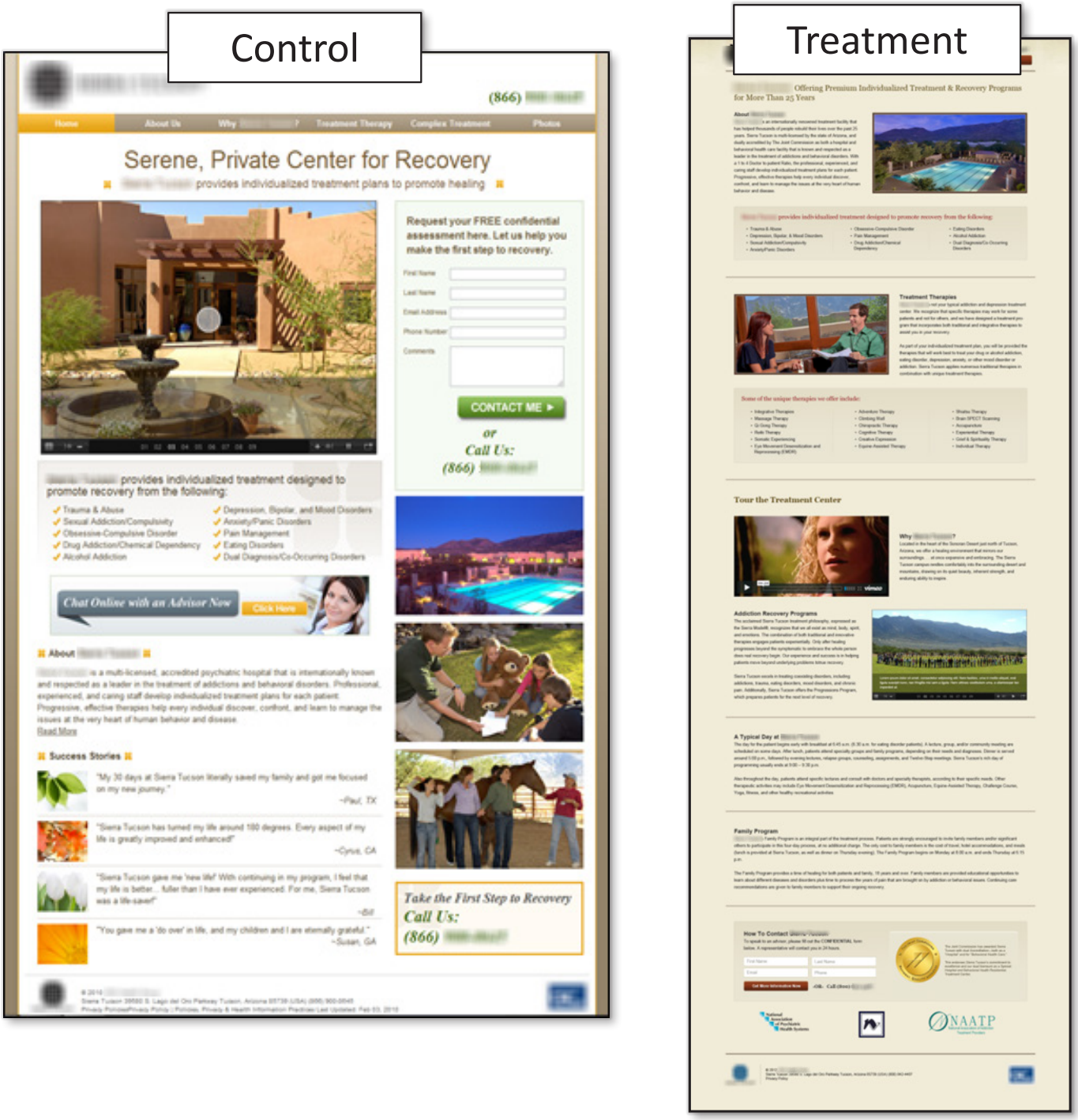

Figure 3.3

What is essential to see here is that **the long-form treatment outperformed the control page by 220%** (see **Figure 3.4**). In this case, "keeping it above the fold" actually hurt conversion. And by moving the call-to-action to the bottom of the page, at the right moment in the thought sequence, the treatment tripled response.[ix]

220% Increase in Total Conversion

The treatment page increased the rate of conversion by 220%

Design	Conversion Rate
Control	0.78%
Treatment	2.48%
Relative Difference	**220%**

Figure 3.4

There are **two key principles** related to page length that can be extracted from this experiment:

The first principle is this: **(1) We control the chronology on the mind with the geography of the page. Many times, it is necessary to guide the visitor through a significant amount of information before they are ready to make a decision.**

As you are designing a webpage, you must design it to synchronize with the ideal thought sequence of a prospect interacting with that page. **As marketers, we are not in the business of making claims; we are in the business of helping foster conclusions.** Prospects should be drawing a conclusion about our product and our company based on the clues and the information we provide on our pages. Therefore, we must structure our content in a way that matches their thinking pattern and guides them through the information very carefully.[x]

Next, marketers must understand the principle that **(2) generally, there is a direct relationship between the cost/complexity of the offer and the amount of information that is required to achieve a conversion**.

So, if we are to structure our page based on what best helps the prospect reach the conclusion we want them to draw, there will necessarily be different ways we go about doing this, because intended conclusions are not always the same. In situations where the cost or complexity of the offer is high, longer

pages often produce stronger responses. We have seen this over and over in our research. Our ingrained usability thinking tells us people won't read longer pages, but this is only nearly correct. **The only people who will actually read a long-form page are the right people, those with an acute need who are trying to make an informed decision about your product or service**. Not coincidentally, these are the exact people you want to read your page.

Discovery #2: Navigation Is Not Always Necessary

The prominent viewpoint on site navigation is that, *"users want to have control. … Navigation is arguably the most important part of your website, aside from the content." And that websites must "give users complete control … by allowing them to navigate located information and direct where they are at all times …" Is this true?*

Arguably, this might be the most counterintuitive discovery in this article, in terms of contradicting common usability principles. **Navigation is not always necessary**, and, indeed, removing navigation can increase conversion. Let's look at four examples of this.

In **Figures 4.1**, **4.2**, and **4.3**, you see three landing pages we redesigned. As part of this redesign, we completely removed the navigation from the pages. The results were 155%, 548%, and 24% lifts, respectively.

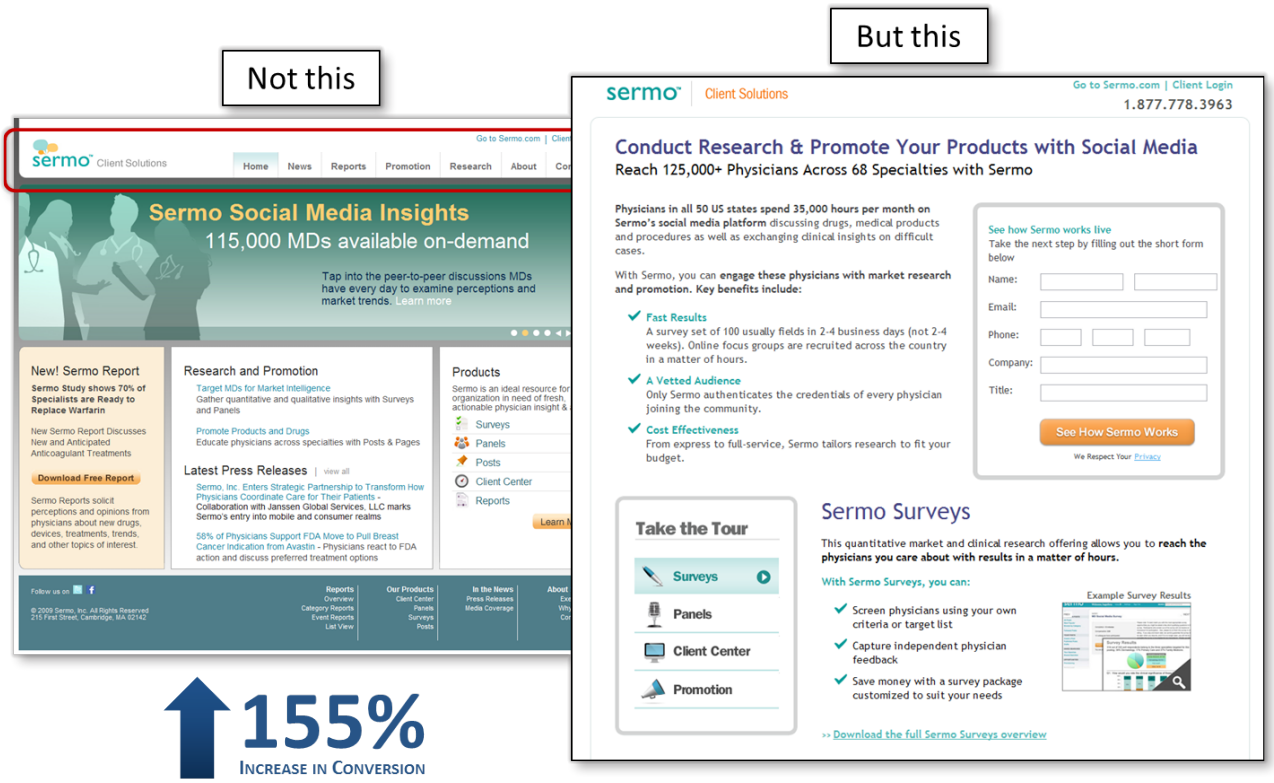

Figure 4.1

Figure 4.2

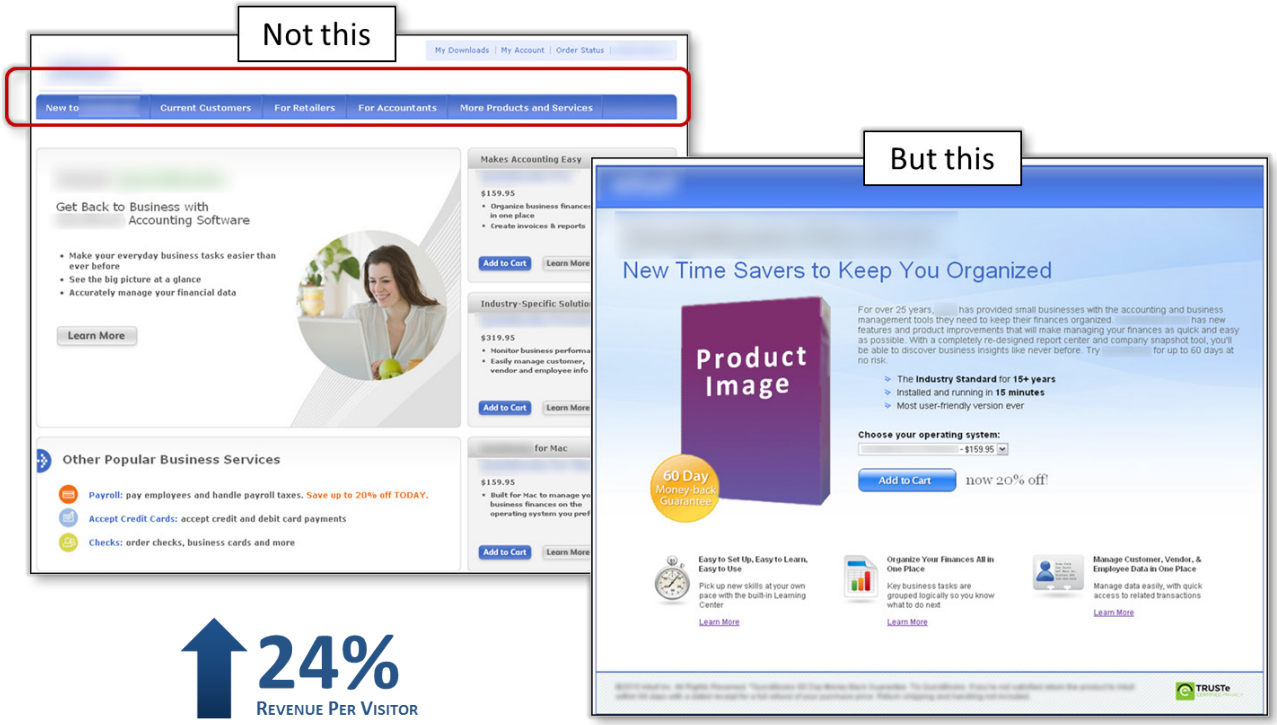

Figure 4.3

Figure 4.4 is the most fascinating case, because, as you will notice, the only change to the page was the removal of the navigation. Everything else stayed the same. **The navigation-free treatment outperformed the control by 56%.**

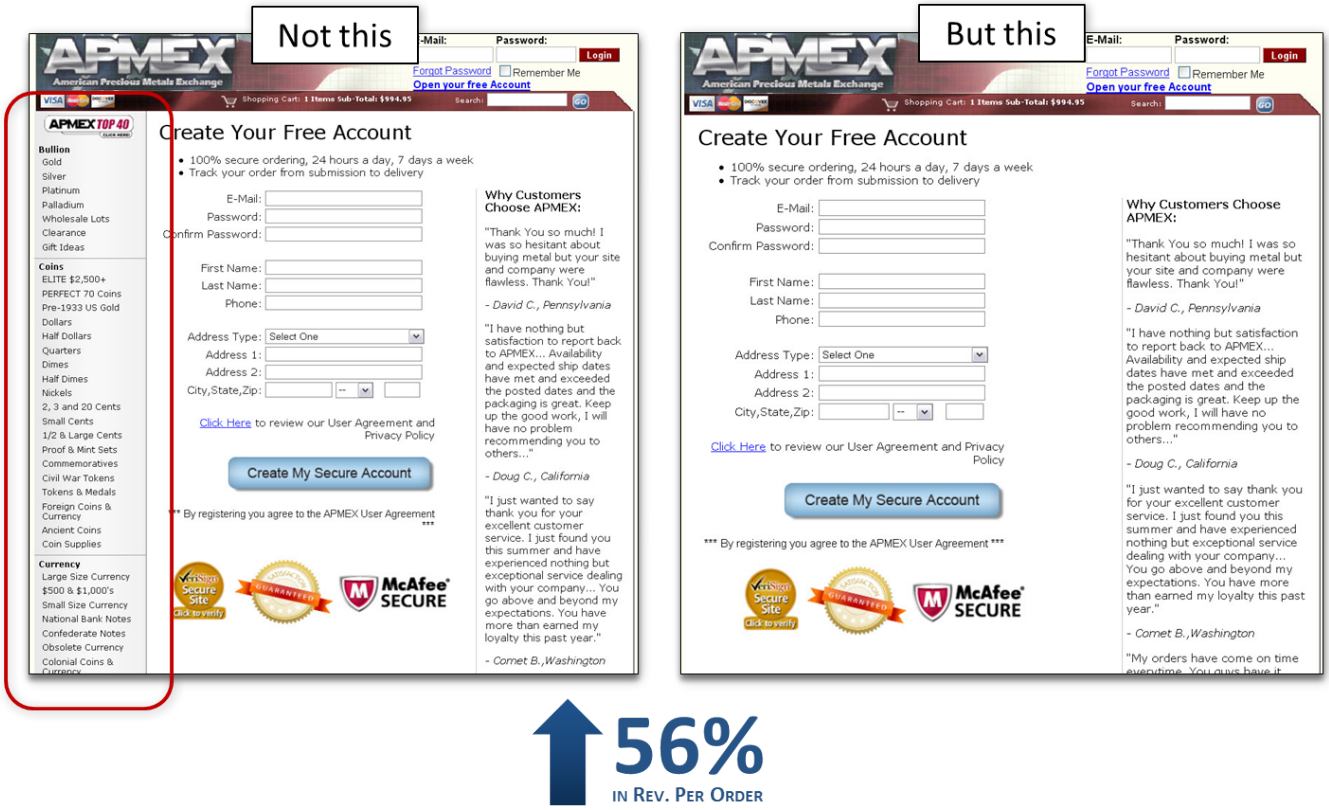

Figure 4.4

So what are we to make of this? Well, it leads to **three key principles** to guide us.

First, **(1) navigation necessarily presents a series of competing options and will almost always diffuse attention**. Our research has consistently shown competing options on a page will negatively impact conversion.[xi] A navigation bar is by nature an array of competing options. This principle must be understood in conjunction with second key principle: **(2) Navigation should be utilized as a channel-like tool to help the customer move toward an offer, not away from one**.

Simply put: navigation is not always necessary. If the customer has arrived at the offer you want them to consider and accept, you likely have little reason to give them the opportunity to navigate away from the offer. No longer should we think about navigation as an ever-present necessity, but rather a tool we can use to help users make their way toward an offer, not away from one.

What this translates to is that **(3) for the average site, navigation should be emphasized on directory pages (homepages, category pages, etc.), and deemphasized on destination pages (product pages, lead forms, etc.)**.

This is the most actionable takeaway from this discovery. Most likely, your site includes a full or nearly full navigation bar on every page of your site. This principle tells you that on destination pages, you ought to scale back or eliminate the navigation to increase conversion. Of course, to find the ideal level of navigation, you must test and allow your prospects' behavior to dictate your decisions.

Discovery #3: Options Are Not Always Helpful

Another thing that marketers hear often is *"The more choices, the better." For customers, "Having choices is considered a good thing. We are used to choices and we value dearly if we can be in control … when people have no choice, life is miserable. As your start adding options, you increase wellbeing."* Is this true? We believe that testing is the only way to find out.

TP1213 was an experiment we ran for an integrated software solutions company that wanted to increase free trial sign-ups for a CRM solution offered on its website. Take a look at the differences between the control and treatment pages in **Figure 5.1**. The redesign is fairly straightforward. We eliminated two of the three calls-to-action at the bottom of the page, as well as the call-to-action in the image on the left of the page. What was the result?

Figure 5.1

The treatment outperformed the control by 78% (see **Figure 5.2**). Interestingly, by actually reducing the number of choices, we were able to improve the overall conversion on this page.

78% Increase in Conversion

The simplified design contributed to a 77.94% conversion gain.

Path Design	CR
Control	1.71%
Treatment	3.05%
Relative Difference:	**77.94%**

Figure 5.2

Here is the key principle to understand: **(1) When possible, marketing collateral should NOT lead a prospect to a set of potential options, but rather to "the one" option. Beware of unsupervised thinking**.

You don't want prospects to slow down and attempt to make meaning of your content and offers for themselves. You want to help make the meaning for them, so that they move ever faster toward the inevitable conclusion of the purchase. **People don't need many options; they need the right options.** Unnecessary options check momentum, and when you lose momentum, you lose that which pushes them past the hesitations and natural frictions in the process. When you allow unsupervised thinking, prospects must weigh competing options on their own, and this will cost you.

Discovery #4: Minimal Is Not Always Optimal

Finally, one of the most prevailing usability clichés, *"[Websites should have an] aesthetic and minimalist design … a minimalist design draws the users to focus on the main subject at hand without being distracted by irrelevant images or text."*

Minimalism is a popular aesthetic movement. It is beautiful, and we prefer it for most of the design work we do here as a matter of taste. However, taste is not a rule that one should design by when it comes to marketing collateral. We will now revisit the initial experiment we explored in this article to further investigate this matter.

In **Figure 6.1**, you see the winning page from the experiment (Treatment #1) next to one of the treatments that did not perform as well (Treatment #2). It is clear that Treatment #2 is more minimal in design than Treatment #1, yet it was outperformed by 14%.

Figure 6.1

Treatment #3 (**Figure 6.2**) was the most minimal of the designs, eliminating the page entirely and instead presenting the options in a drop-down menu. But Treatment #3 did not improve conversion. **In fact, the winning page was the most complex of all of the treatments**, featuring a three stage configurator and a full product list with images below that.

Figure 6.2

What do we make of this? There are two key principles. First, **(1) we do not optimize webpages; we optimize thought sequences.**[xii] **Our goal is NOT to minimize complexity on the page, but rather confusion in the mind (i.e., psychological effort)**.

Complexity is nothing more than an external state of existence. Something is simple or it is complex. Confusion, on the other hand, is an internal condition. It is the result of the inability to make the appropriate connections in the mind, but the cause is not always complexity. Information presented in the

wrong order can create confusion. A lack of information can create confusion. **Occasionally, in our effort to reduce complexity, we intensify confusion** because we don't understand how the mind is working its way through the mental journey necessary to come to a conclusion.

Further, what the marketer must also understand is that **(2) minimizing the confusion in the mind will at times include adding elements to the page design**. For instance, you might have to add one or more of the following elements to a page to help bring clarity to a conversion process:

- Interactive Tools
- Statements of Value
- Anxiety Reducers
- Micro-Steps
- Eye-path Guides
- Qualifying Friction

As we have iterated many times in our articles and workshops: clarity trumps persuasion. **Clarity is the inverse of confusion, and not necessarily achieved by a lack of complexity.**[xiii] What is complex is complex by its very nature. Our task as marketers, then, is to explain complex subjects in such a way that we achieve clarity, even if that makes our pages longer or less minimal than our taste would prefer. We may need to employ some or all of the above page elements to bring about clarity, but any step taken to increase clarity is worth taking, as it will increase conversion.

In optimization, you can only do three things to a page: You can take away, you can add, or you can change. Those are your only options. You can remove copy/content/elements. You can add them. Or you can change them.

When adding generates greater clarity, it is the right thing to do. When taking away produces greater clarity, then it is the right thing to do. When changing helps intensify the value proposition, explain the offer's exclusivity, or bring clarity or credibility, then it is the best thing to do.

We Must Transcend Best Practices

If we hear a design rule at a conference, or read about it in a blog, or hear it from a colleague, etc., we tend to file it away and measure up any and all page design decisions against it. We come to the table with a list of rules that we have heard and attempt to make pages fit our rules. **This is not the way to design an optimized page.**

The only way to truly optimize a page is by testing. **Optimization is not an event; it is a process.** Usability can be a helpful tool for marketers to use when gauging psychological costs on a page, and many of the

principles can, at times, be applicable to our webpages. But we must move from rules-based design to results-based design if we truly want optimized processes. So remember the four discoveries we made regarding usability "best practices":

Discovery #1: Short Is Not Always Sweet

Discovery #2: Navigation Is Not Always Necessary

Discovery #3: Options Are Not Always Helpful

Discovery #4: Minimal Is Not Always Optimal

Don't take rules at face value. Test your pages to uncover the true best practice for their situation. And if you notice that you have relied heavily on usability thinking in your website's design, go through your site and identify which pages ought to undergo testing based on the discoveries outlined in this article. You may be one usability myth away from a significant lift in conversion.

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[i] See also, *Never Pull Sofa Duty Again: Stop guessing what your audience wants and start asking*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/marketing-insights/user-interaction.html

[ii] For more on this retailer see "Mistake #1" in the Web clinic, *How Do Website Colors Impact Conversion?*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/website-colors-and-conversion.html

[iii] See our test using direct mail and online marketing combined in the clinic, *Integrate Your Marketing*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/integrate-your-marketing.html

[iv] Configurators are often helpful in producing a conversion lift. See the Car & Driver test in the clinic, *Banner Ad Design (*http://www.marketingexperiments.com/ad-optimization/banner-ad-design.html) and the redesigned quote process in the clinic *263% Higher Conversion Rate (*http://www.marketingexperiments.com/landing-page-optimization/reduce-customer-anxiety.html)

[v] See *Homepage Optimization Applied* for a similar directory-like page design
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/homepage-optimization-applied.html

[vi] For a more in-depth analysis of a radical redesign, see *Rapidly Maximizing Conversion*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/radical-redesign.html

[vii] See also, *Creating a Culture of Testing: How to defeat the tyranny of best practices*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/marketing-q-a/tyranny-of-best-practices-html.html

[viii] See our complete course *The Fundamentals of Online Testing*
http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/online-testing/overview

[ix] See also, *5 Common Call-to-action Errors*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/marketing-insights/call-to-action-errors.html

[x] See also, *No Unsupervised Thinking*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/no-unsupervised-thinking.html

[xi] See also, *Hidden Friction: The 7 Silent Killers of Conversion*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/general/hidden-friction-silent-killers.html

[xii] See the MECLABS Methodology
http://www.meclabs.com/methodology

[xiii] See the Web clinic *Clarity Trumps Persuasion*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/claritytrumpspersuasion.html

Web Usability: Long landing page nets 220% more leads than above the fold call-to-action

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

One of the classic Web usability "best practices" is to put the call-to-action above the fold. I did a little research (thank you, Wikipedia) and apparently, the term dates back to the mid-90s – practically the Paleozoic era of Web marketing.

So, is above the fold still a best practice in 2013? Let's take a look at a recent discovery from our lab …

Background: Sierra Tucson is an addiction and mental health rehabilitation facility

Goal: Increase the total number of leads captured

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

Test Design: Multi-factor split test

Control

The control was an average, short-form page template with a rotating banner. The call-to-action was above the fold on the right-hand side of the landing page.

After analyzing the control landing page, the MECLABS team identified a few possible areas for optimization:

- The page layout causes friction because elements of the value proposition are hidden within the navigation.
- The lack of value proposition on the page does not encourage users to contact the facility.

Based on this analysis, the team crafted the following hypothesis …

Hypothesis: If we increase the value proposition throughout the copy on the homepage and decrease friction with a long-form page layout, then users will be more likely to convert.

Treatment

Navigation was omitted ("Web Usability: When should you avoid navigation?") and a long-form format was used to include all of the information a visitor might want to know on the first page.

Control

Treatment

The value proposition was also emphasized in the headline and the body copy to boost exclusivity, appeal and credibility.

Essentially, this is a single-column, long-form structure with the call-to-action down at the bottom. The treatment is nearly twice the length of the control and the call-to-action is at the bottom of the page.

Results

Design	Conversion Rate
Control	0.78%
Treatment	2.48%
Relative Difference	**220%**

The Wichita State of Web marketing, "below the fold" routed the "above the fold" control. In a shocker, this Cinderella story generated a 220% higher conversion rate with a 98% level of confidence.

By utilizing a single-column, long-copy approach, the treatment better guided the prospect's thought process.

The below-the-fold discovery is interesting in and of itself, but when I discussed this experiment with Jon Ciampi, Vice President Marketing, Business Development & Corporate Development, CRC Health (parent company of Sierra Tucson), he had a deeper discovery for his business.

"The fact that a below the fold form worked better than an above-the-fold form was a secondary learning for us," Jon said. "The primary learning was that the biggest question customers had about our health care centers was around trust. 'I'm handing my healthcare to you; can I trust you with my life?'"

A complete marketing transformation

Now, here's where the story really gets interesting. Jon didn't just settle for a simple discovery in one experiment. I'm going to interview Jon about the full story behind this marketing transformation during a transferable case study session at Optimization Summit 2013 in Boston, but here's a quick look at the story.

"This learning transformed our marketing department, and led to many more lifts. For example, a 14,000% PPC ad improvement that our Google rep called 'the highest clickthrough rate the Google healthcare team had ever seen,'" Jon said.

"Beyond our marketing department, this learning transformed our entire business. For example, we have an 85% increase in paid search revenue across 300 websites. These numbers are shocking to me. We have an unfair advantage," he added.

Previously, the marketing department focused on features of the healthcare centers, like the secluded location. From this discovery, the team focused on the issue of trust.

This changed everything the team did – not just the way they wrote their landing pages, but the way they answered the phone, how they handled reputation management, their use of social media, and the list goes on.

Major Experiment Briefing

Reducing Cart Abandonment

4 main reasons why customers leave your shopping cart and how a few tweaks can stop the leak

- Content created by Flint McGlaughlin, Austin McCraw, Shaun Metzger
- Research conducted by Michael Groszek, Erin Fagin, Kyle Foster, Tony Doty, Gaby Paez, Kyle Chapman, Zuzia Soldenhoff-Thorpe, Austin McCraw, Boris Grinkot, Corey Trent, Gina Townsend

The issue of shopping cart abandonment is philosophical by nature. It requires us, as marketers, to dig down to the root causes and motivations behind the selling process before we can arrive at a testable hypothesis, and eventually a solution. Most marketers would agree that the shopping cart is integral to the success any e-commerce strategy; however, most marketers give little attention to the shopping cart.

Imagine for a moment you are the proprietor of a brick-and-mortar business that sells gizmos. Your goal is to sell as many gizmos as you can, because every gizmo sold adds to your bottom line and makes you more money. A woman in your store approaches you with a gizmo in hand. She says she would like to purchase this gizmo, and asks you to direct her to the counter where she can complete the transaction. At the exact same moment, a man walks by your storefront and begins to peer through the glass into the store. You only have enough time to address one of these prospects, because the man may walk away without entering the store.

What do you do?

Well, according to our research, marketers are more likely to assume the woman will be just fine on her own and you will focus all your attention on the man looking in the window. The chart in **Figure 1.1** shows that out of all the places in a funnel, the shopping cart receives the least attention. This is a huge mistake and is potentially costing many organizations significant revenue.

The shopping cart is where the customer (like the woman in the analogy above) is most motivated – most likely to convert – and we are leaving them to overcome the obstacles of a (often poorly designed) cart process. If we are spending all our efforts to get them in the cart, why would we stop at the shopping cart?

In this article, we will address the issue of shopping cart abandonment. We will focus on why it happens and how a few strategic changes can “stop the leak” in one of the most integral parts of the conversion process – the checkout process.

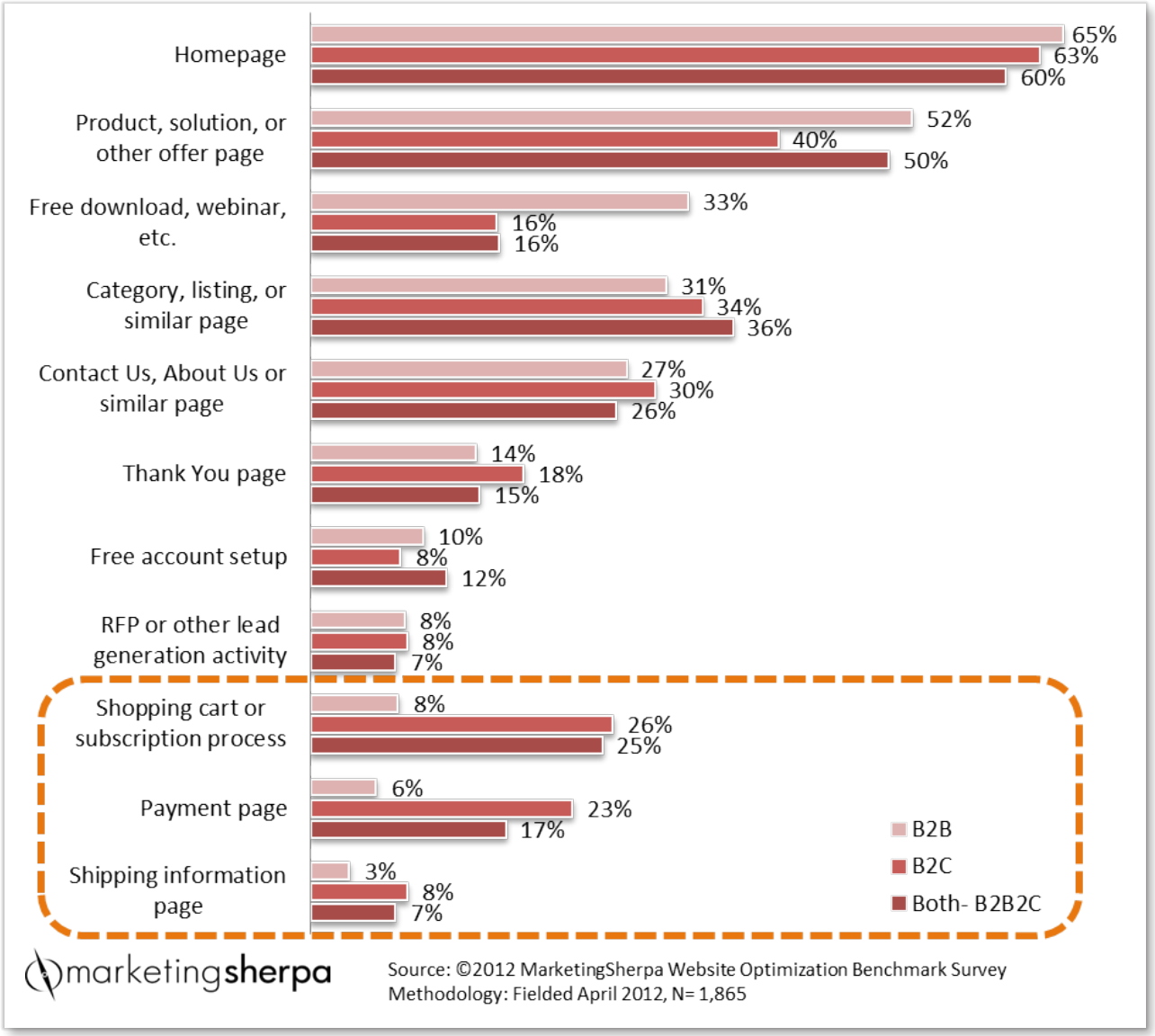

Figure 1.1

An Experiment: How a few shopping cart tweaks generated $3 million in additional revenue

The experiment, Test Protocol TP1758 in the MECLABS Research Library, was conducted for a storage company that offers affordable, easily accessible storage to individuals and businesses. The goal of the test was to discover if any aspects of the shopping cart could be improved to foster more online storage reservation completions (from prospects who already entered the shopping cart).

In **Figure 2.1**, you can see the control page for this experiment. **Figure 2.2** shows you the page we tested against it.

The changes are not far-reaching in the sense of what we call a "radical redesign." Rather, we made a few small tweaks to test a specific hypothesis we formulated regarding the page.

The result was a 9% increase in conversion (**Figure 2.3**). On the surface, this is not necessarily an impressive jump, but **to our client, this increase translated directly into $3 million in additional revenue**.

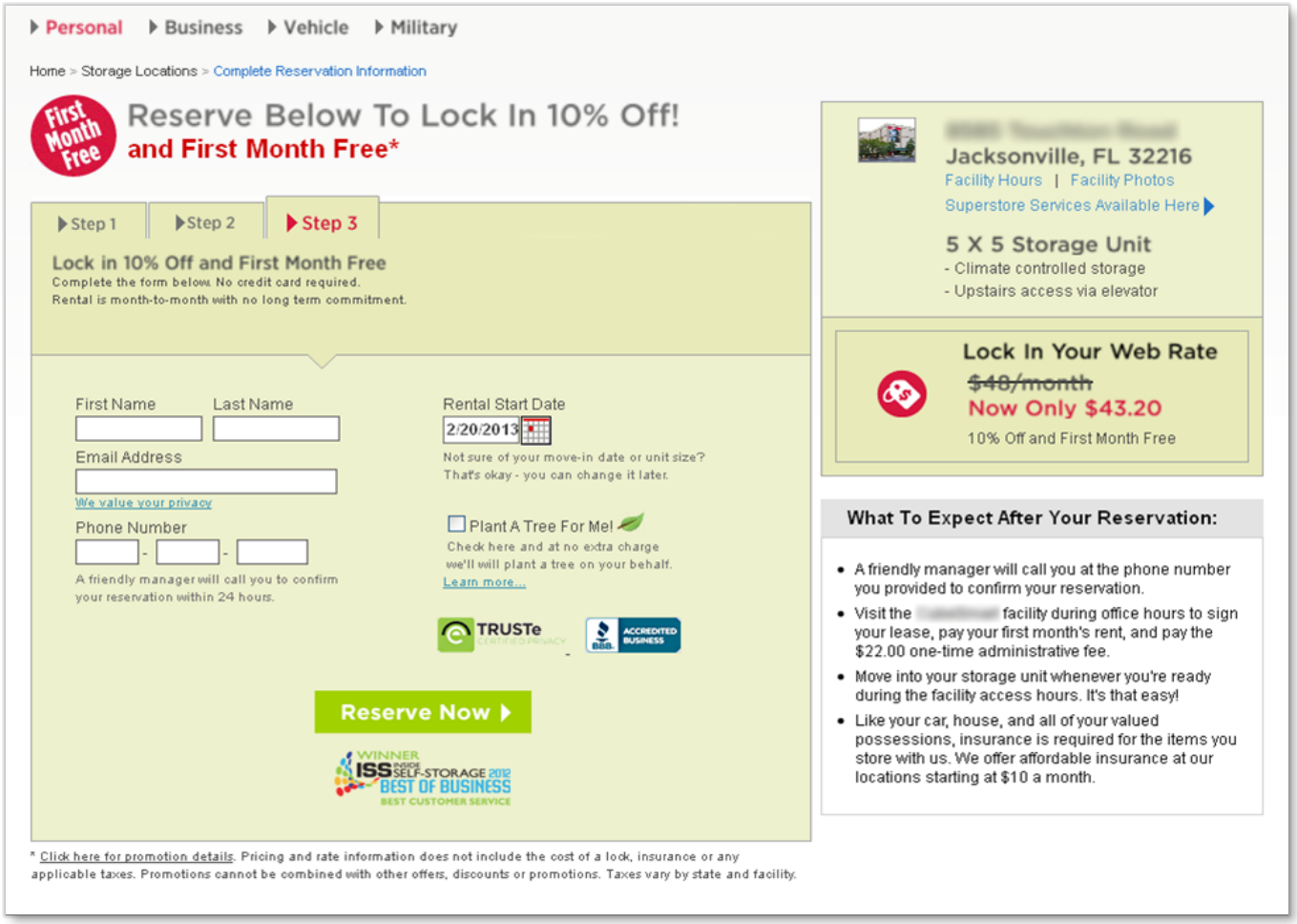

Figure 2.1

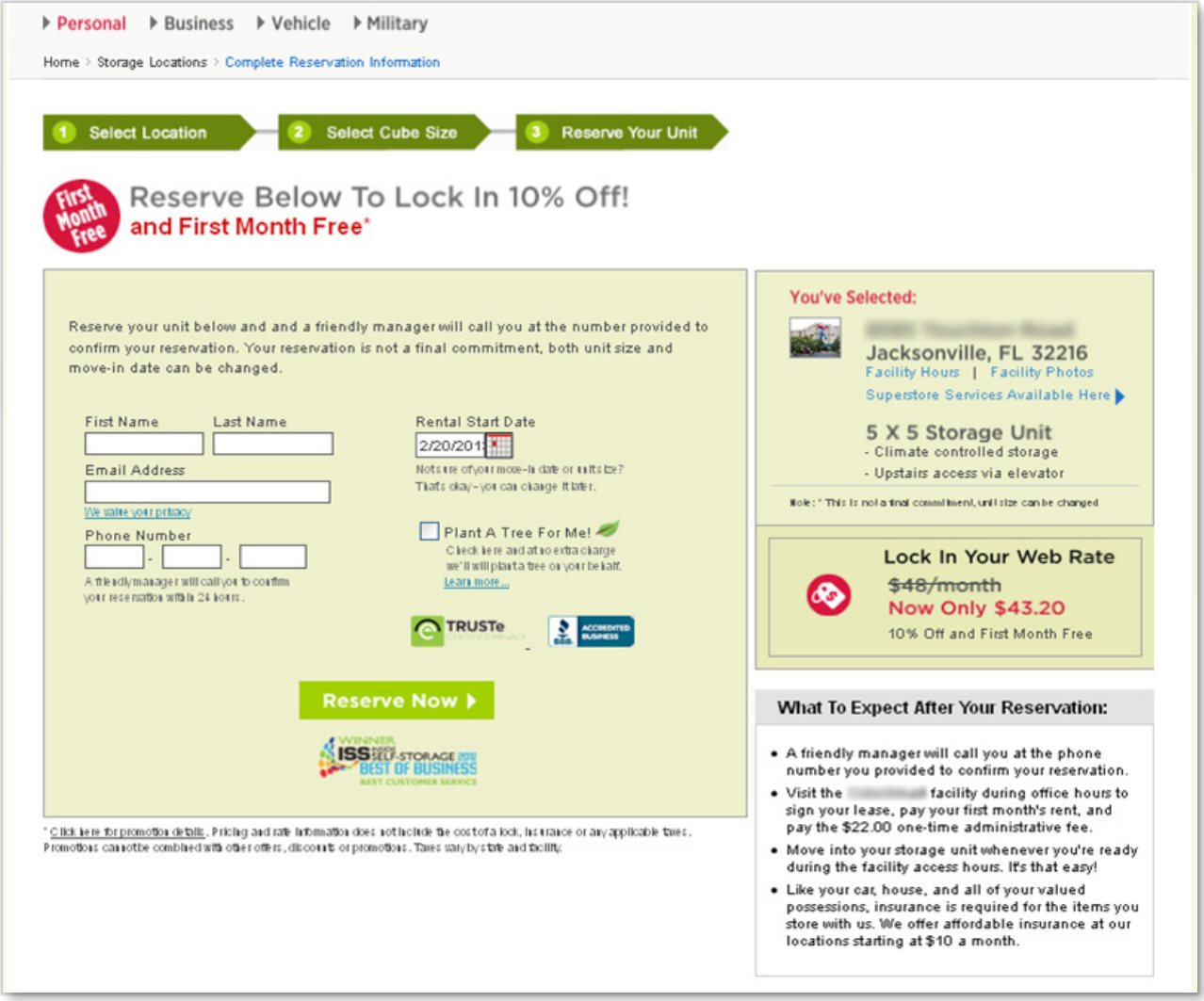

Figure 2.2

9% Increase in Conversions

The treatment page increased the rate of conversion by 9.1%

Design	Conversion Rate
Version A	17.68%
Version B	**19.50%**
Relative Difference	**9.1%**

Figure 2.3

Understanding the Role of Shopping Carts

Clearly, from the experiment above, we can see how improvements (even slight improvements) in the cart optimization can have a disproportionately large impact on revenue. Digging a bit deeper, this experiment reveals an essential principle about shopping carts that we have discovered over the course of many years of experimentation:

Key Principle: **Shopping carts are not just a utility. They are the strategic means by which you (the marketer) maintain the cognitive momentum generated in the conversion process.**

By "cognitive momentum" we mean the velocity of the thought process going on in the prospect's mind (See **Figure 3.1**). So when thinking about shopping carts, we must shift out thinking from viewing a shopping cart as merely functional software to a shopping cart as an extension of our marketing and sales funnel. This is accomplished by building the prospect's cognitive momentum throughout the process. When the momentum of their purchasing intent is stalled by friction or confusion in the checkout process, they are at risk of leaving the cart and abandoning the purchase.

Figure 3.1

In our research of this topic, we have identified **four reasons prospects will abandon their purchase**, as well as simple tweaks you can implement to stop the leak in your shopping cart and increase your revenue.

The 4 Main Reasons a Prospect Abandons Your Shopping Cart

REASON #1: Unwarranted Confusion

To understand this concept, we will look at a case study. TP1621 was a test run for a one-stop vacation planning website that allows users to book their vacation rentals, car rentals and activities all in one place. The goal of the test was to increase their completed bookings.

In **Figure 4.1**, you see the control page. Featured prominently is a horizontally orientated two-step form, the second part of which is grayed out so you can't access it until you have completed the first part of the form. Our hypothesis was that these aspects of the page may be creating confusion, so we created a treatment that modified them.

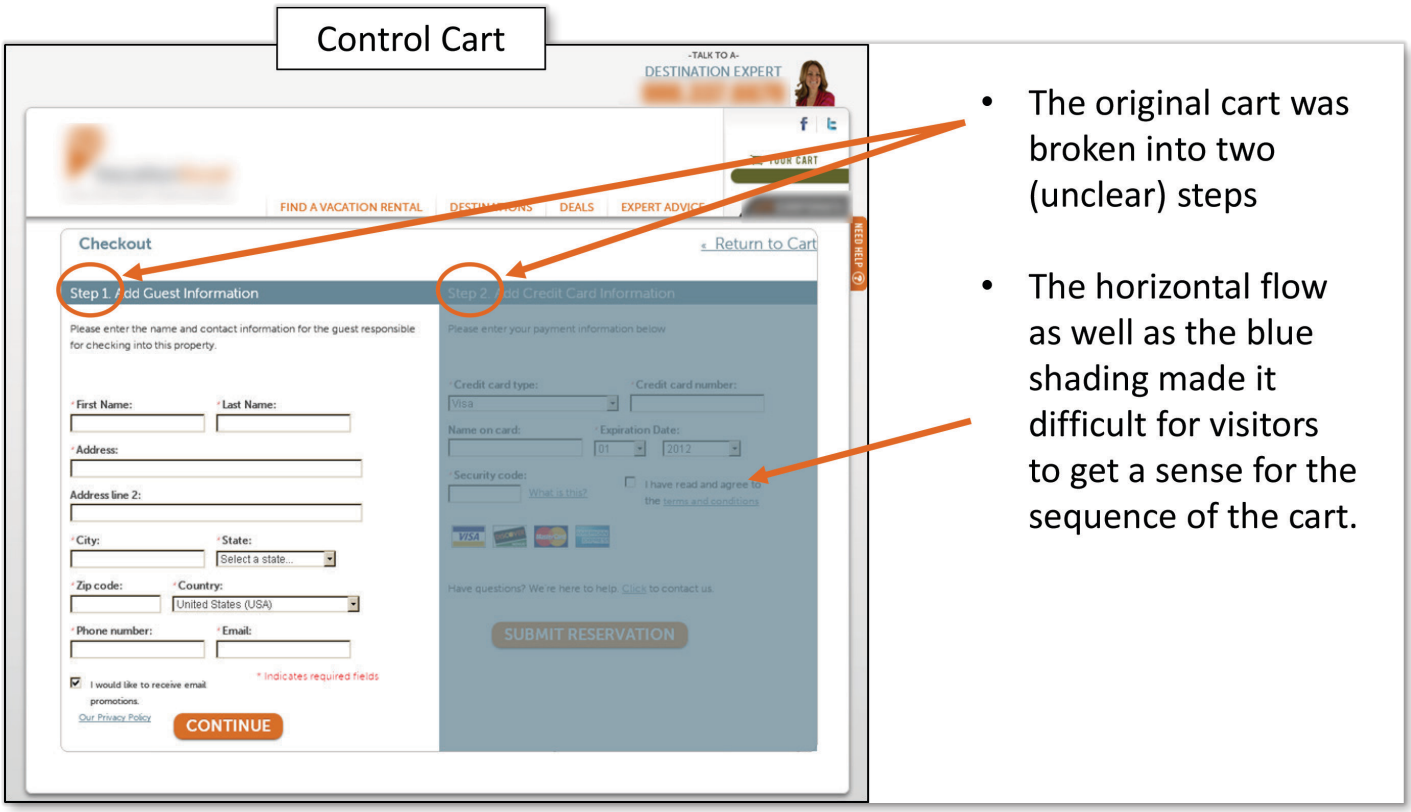

Figure 4.1

In **Figure 4.2**, you see our treatment. We added a "step indicator" that allowed the visitor to orientate themselves as to where they were in the order process. Additionally, we changed the two-step flow to be linear, moving the buyer downward through the form to create velocity. How did this treatment fare?

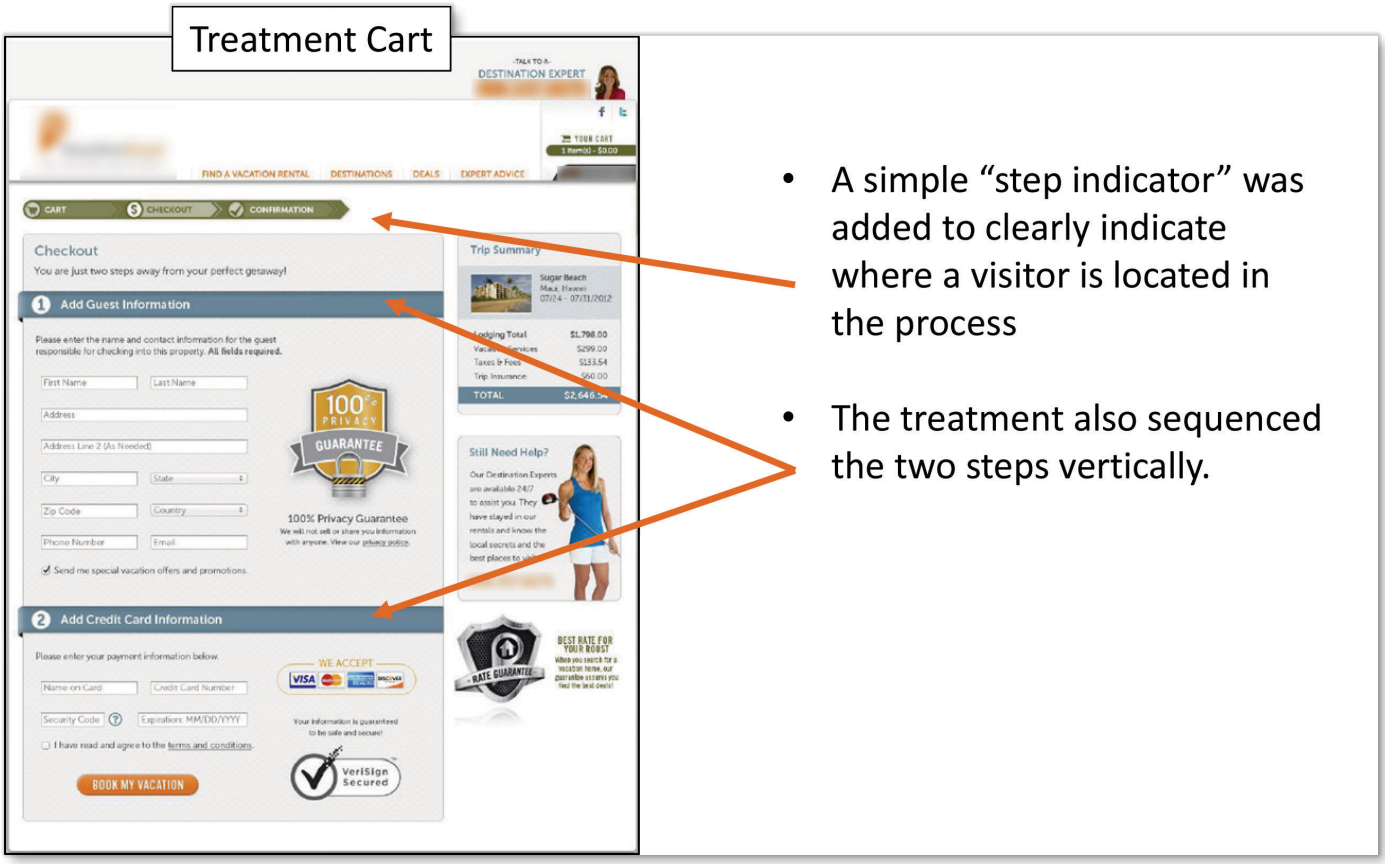

Figure 4.2

36% Increase in Total Cart Conversions

The treatment cart generated 36.1% more conversions than the control

Design	Conversion Rate
Control	27.4%
Treatment	37.2%
Relative Difference	**36.1%**

Figure 4.3

The treatment outperformed the control by 36.1%.

The results (**Figure 4.3**) confirmed that the control page left users unsure of how to proceed, even if just for a moment. Though the client did try to give a method of orientation with the grayed out portion of the form, the execution just didn't work and actually increased the buyer's confusion and anxiety. Essentially, marketers must understand three key principles as it relates to shopping cart confusion:

First, **(1) Confusion is the chief impediment to conversion. In the shopping cart, confusion stems from disorientation.**

In the case study above, the inaccessible gray portion of the form (in addition to the horizontal flow of the form) was creating disorientation. Upon landing on the page, visitors were confused as to how to proceed. Left with the need to sort through the confusion on their own, a significant number of them simply abandoned the purchase.

Second, **(2) For every transition in the conversion process, the visitor experiences a moment of orientation. In this moment, they are trying to make sense on two key levels: Where am I? What can I do here?**

Obviously, the visitor is likely to know where they are in broader sense of which website they are using. However, in the specific sense of where they are in the purchasing process, many shopping carts leave the user with no guidance. A step indicator is a tremendous way to immediately allow prospects to orientate themselves as to where they are in the purchase process.

Additionally, you must make it abundantly clear what the visitor can and must accomplish on this page. The grayed-out portion of the original form created confusion by putting fields on the page that were not accessible to the user. They weren't sure what they were able to do on the page.

Finally, the marketer must understand that **(3) They have approximately seven seconds to answer these questions at each junction of the shopping cart process.**

Based on our research, you only have a short window – approximately seven seconds – to achieve these goals. Bringing clarity immediately is absolutely essential to success in shopping cart optimization. Often, we tell marketers to use the first two inches of the webpage to answer the two questions mentioned above. Sometimes, a change as simple as adding a headline can have a significant impact on minimizing confusion.

This leads us to our next reason why people abandon shopping carts.

REASON #2: Unexpressed Value

In a fascinating experiment from the MECLABS Research Library, TP1789, we see the second reason a prospect will abandon their online purchase in the shopping cart: unexpressed value.

This experiment was conducted in partnership with a newspaper selling home subscriptions to its publication. The company wanted to increase the number of subscriptions being completed in its checkout process, so we ran a treatment page of our own design against its current best-performing page.

You can see the control page in **Figure 5.1**. It is a well-designed page that doesn't immediately present a clear area for improvement. However, upon reflection, we identified a few tweaks we hypothesized would improve conversion, which are shown in **Figure 5.2**.

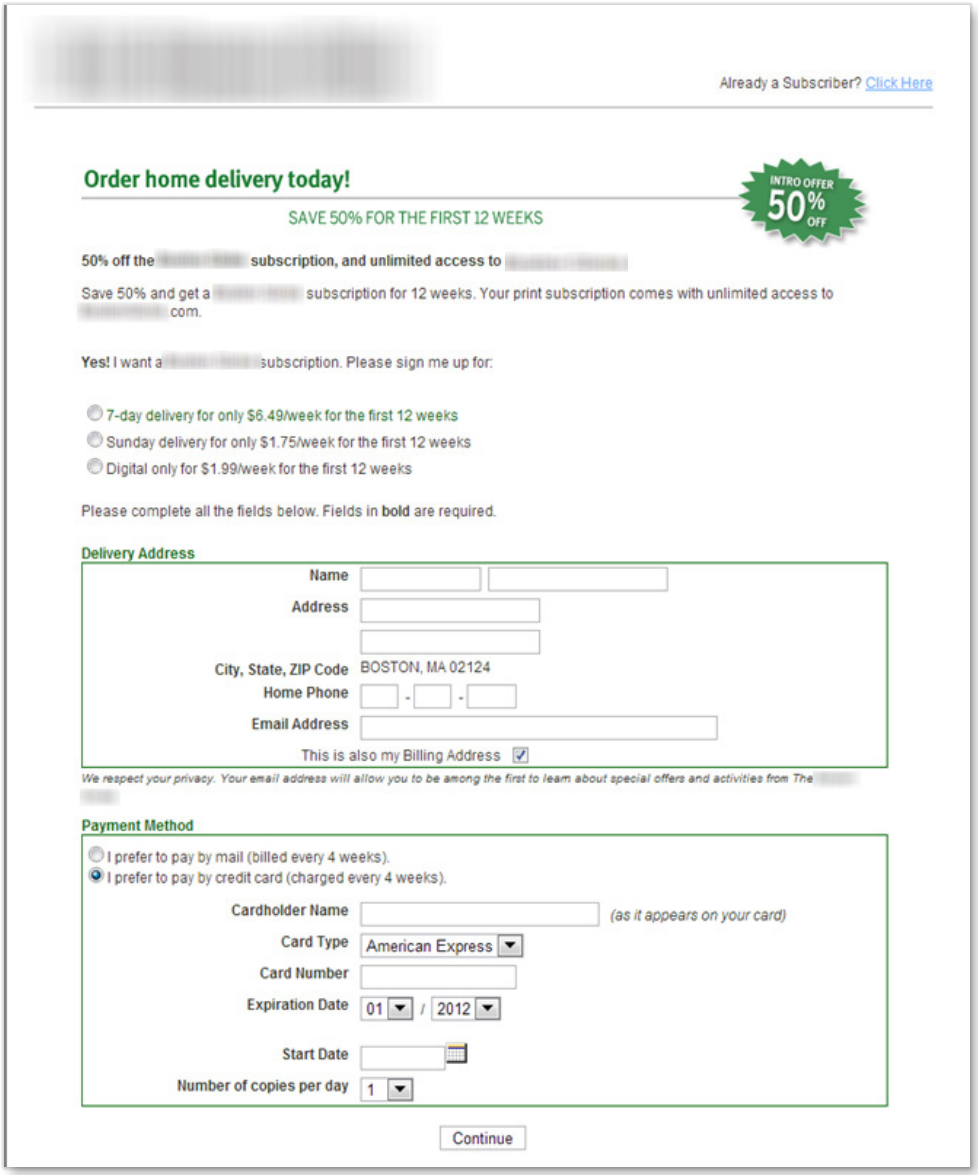

Figure 5.1

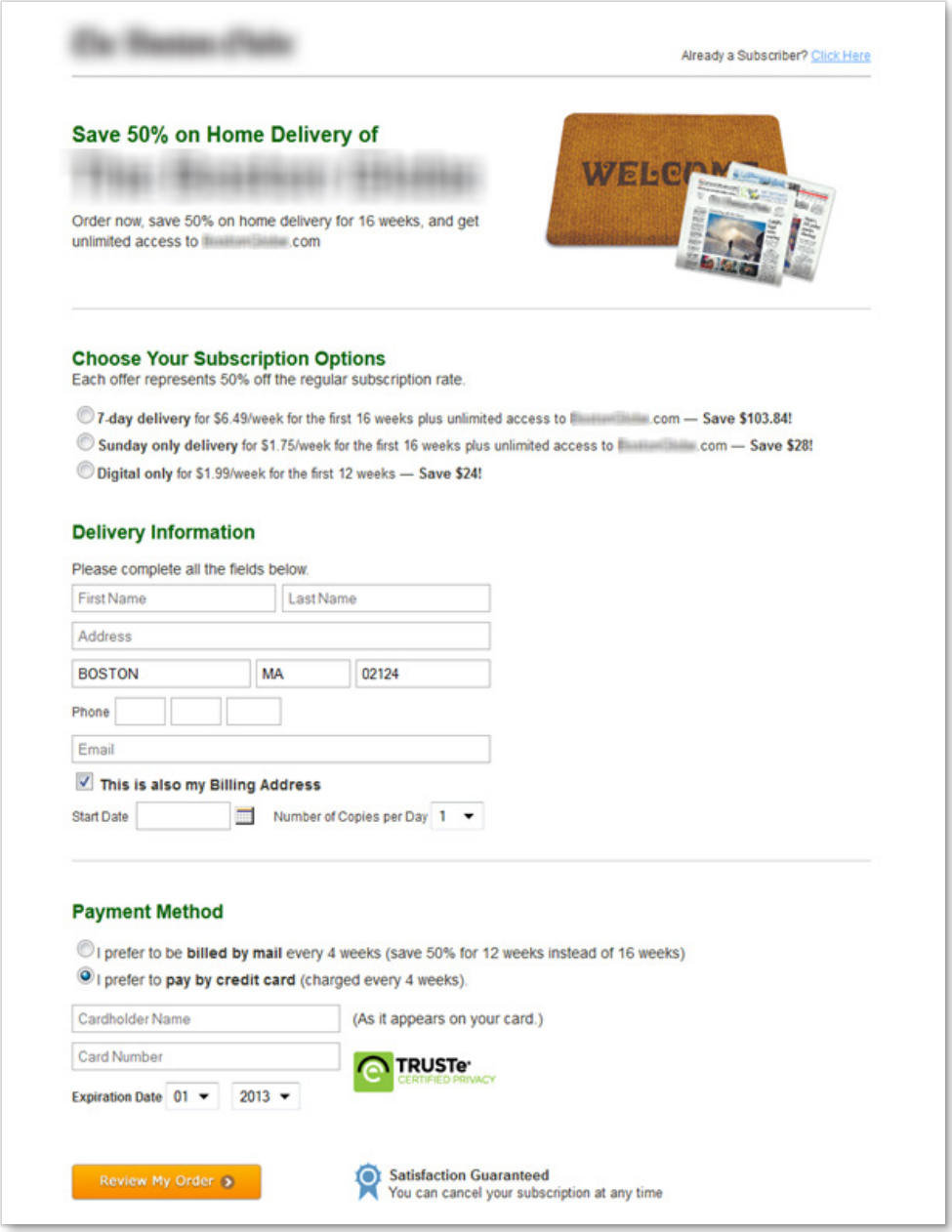

Figure 5.2

First, we changed the headline and image at the top of the page to better emphasize the value proposition of the offer. Then, we added a short amount of copy in each section that reminded the prospect of the value of the subscription. Finally, we added value to the call-to-action at the foot of the page and eased anxiety with credibility indicators.

These simple tweaks increased conversion on the page by 101%.

When you look at the two pages, you may be shocked by this result in **Figure 5.3**. They are not strikingly different in appearance, yet the treatment did much more to emphasize the value of the subscription, whereas the control was simply a utility to foster the subscription process.

101% Increase in Total Cart Conversions

The treatment generated 101% more subscriptions than the control

Design	Conversion Rate
Control	6.4%
Treatment	12.9%
Relative Difference	**101.4%**

Figure 5.3

What we learn from this experiment is **(1) visitor motivations typically peak just prior to the checkout process. At the same time, the cost (material and mental) experienced by the visitor is usually the greatest in the shopping cart.**

This is not an ideal situation for marketers. You have already reached the peak of the prospect's interest, so motivation is likely to decline from here on out. Do you really want to lead them into the high-cost portion of the process without emphasizing the value again so that you can tip the fulcrum in favor of completing the sale?

Further, **(2) One of the main reasons for cart abandonment is that we assume the motivation generated by the offer page will overcome the resistance in the checkout process.**

It is crucial to understand this principle, as it gives us insight into ourselves. As marketers, we often assume the deal is done when we convince prospects to purchase an item. However, a sale is not a sale until the money is in your account, and the decision to purchase is not necessarily enough to make up for a confusing or anxiety riddled shopping cart experience.

Finally, what this experiment reveals is that **(3) Marketers must ensure that value is being expressed continuously for every step/action you require of the visitor.**

If we are to dissuade prospects from abandoning their purchases, we must continually remind them of the value they are receiving in exchange. We must never assume previous motivation will propel the visitor through the process. When we restate value, we increase motivation and cognitive momentum. **Figures 6.1** and **6.2** are additional examples of form pages where value was restated and conversion increased.

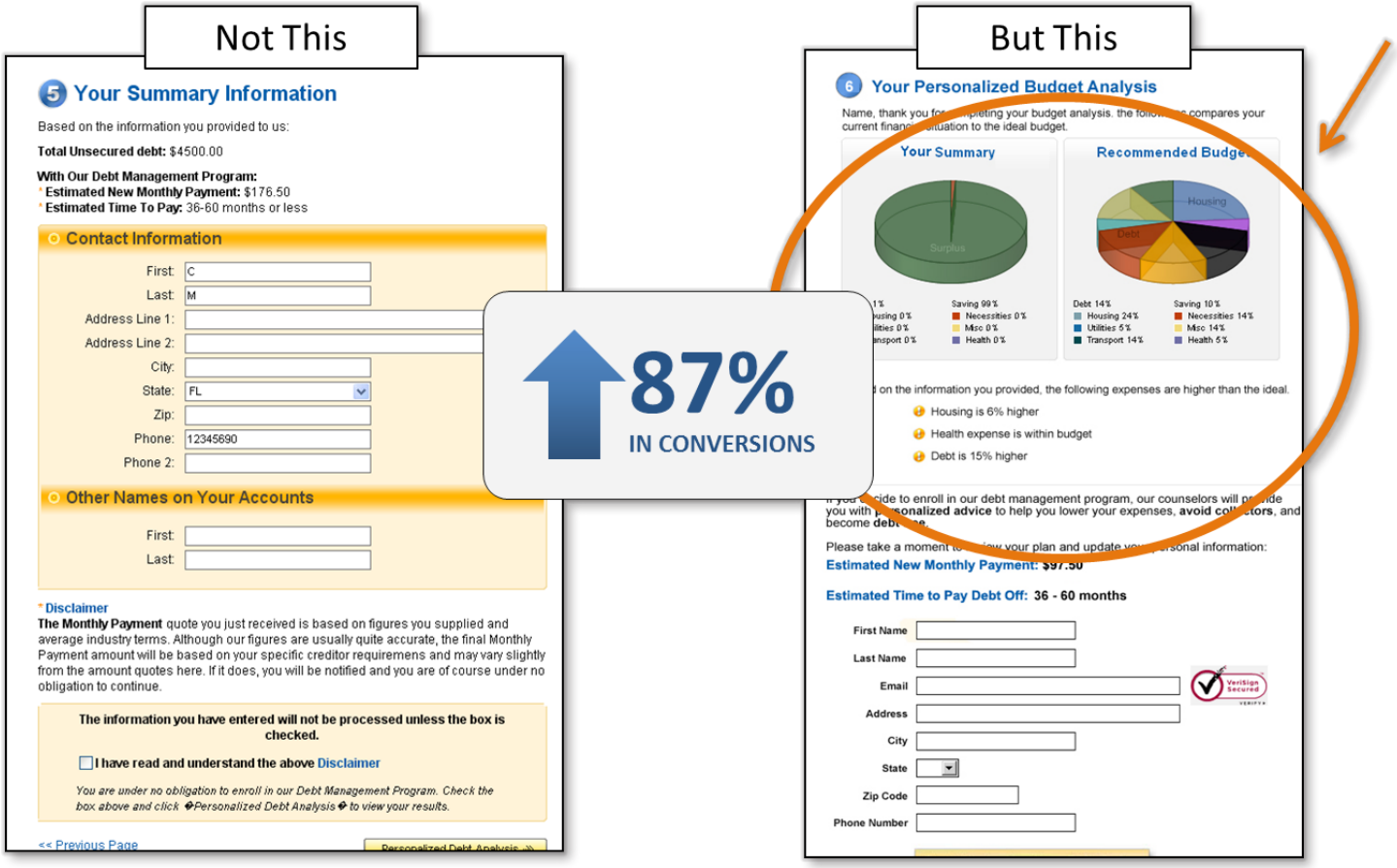

Figure 6.1

Figure 6.2

REASON #3: Unaddressed Anxiety

We have seen that confusion and unexpressed value are reasons why prospects will abandon a purchase, but the third reason is one that underscores both of those to some extent: unaddressed anxiety. Anxiety can be caused by confusion or a failure to continually express value, but the problem is wider reaching than that. TP1070 from the MECLABS Research Library illustrates this issue.

In this experiment, we were helping a national retailer of computer and multimedia hardware to increase the total cart conversions on its site. Additionally, we wanted to raise the revenue per cart conversion. This client is one you would likely recognize and probably have purchased items from.

The control page (**Figure 7.1**) of the shopping cart focuses on upselling the prospect to purchase a more expensive product or additional products. At first glance, this would appear to be a good strategy for increasing the revenue per completed transaction. However, we hypothesized that the upselling focus, particularly the ads on right side of the page were creating unnecessary anxiety and causing visitors to jump ship.

With our treatment (**Figure 7.2**), we did away with the ads that focused on upselling the prospect and instead implemented elements aimed at reducing the potential anxiety of the buyer. This included customer testimonials, credibility logos, and a live chat link where the user could get questions answered. How did this impact conversion?

Figure 7.1

Figure 7.2

The treatment outperformed the control page by 3.69% and increased the revenue per cart by 11.6% (see Figure 7.3). This translated into a projected annual revenue increase of $53 million!

Design	Revenue/Cart
Control	$49.14
Treatment	$54.84
Relative Difference	**11.6%**

Figure 7.3

Anxiety is not only detrimental to our conversion rates, but it may in fact be detrimental to the amount of money people are willing to spend with us. Let us examine some key principles for dealing with anxiety in our shopping carts.

First, **(1) If we think about mitigating anxiety in rational terms, we will likely fail in our efforts. Though anxiety is often simulated by a legitimate concern, its degree/impact is often disproportionate to the measure of risk.**

You cannot fix anxiety with a rational solution, because anxiety is often irrational. It is an overreaction, and as such you must overcorrect it. For example, if you are asking for credit card information over the Internet, there is going to be anxiety on the part of the buyer, whether it is justified or not, because they have heard stories of credit card information being stolen over the Internet. It doesn't matter that most companies aren't stealing credit card information. Knowing this, we must go out of our way to address that cause of anxiety and put it to rest.

Next what marketers must understand is that **(2) Anxiety is also localized in the checkout process. It is closely associated with the geography of the page.**

The closer your buyer gets to clicking the button that will complete the deal, the more anxiety they will have. Their anxiety is associated with that part of the page. This is absolutely vital to understand when

designing and optimizing shopping carts and landing pages.

And finally, **(3) To properly address anxiety, the marketer must anticipate specific concerns related to the product, and preemptively address them with geographical proximity to the core source of the concern.**

Knowing that anxiety is localized, we want to match the geography of the page to the chronology of the mind. Right where we know a prospect will experience anxiety is where we want to put a design element that will ease their anxiety. You can see an example of this in **Figure 8.1**, where credibility logos like a "Satisfaction Guaranteed" seal are placed just below the call-to-action button.

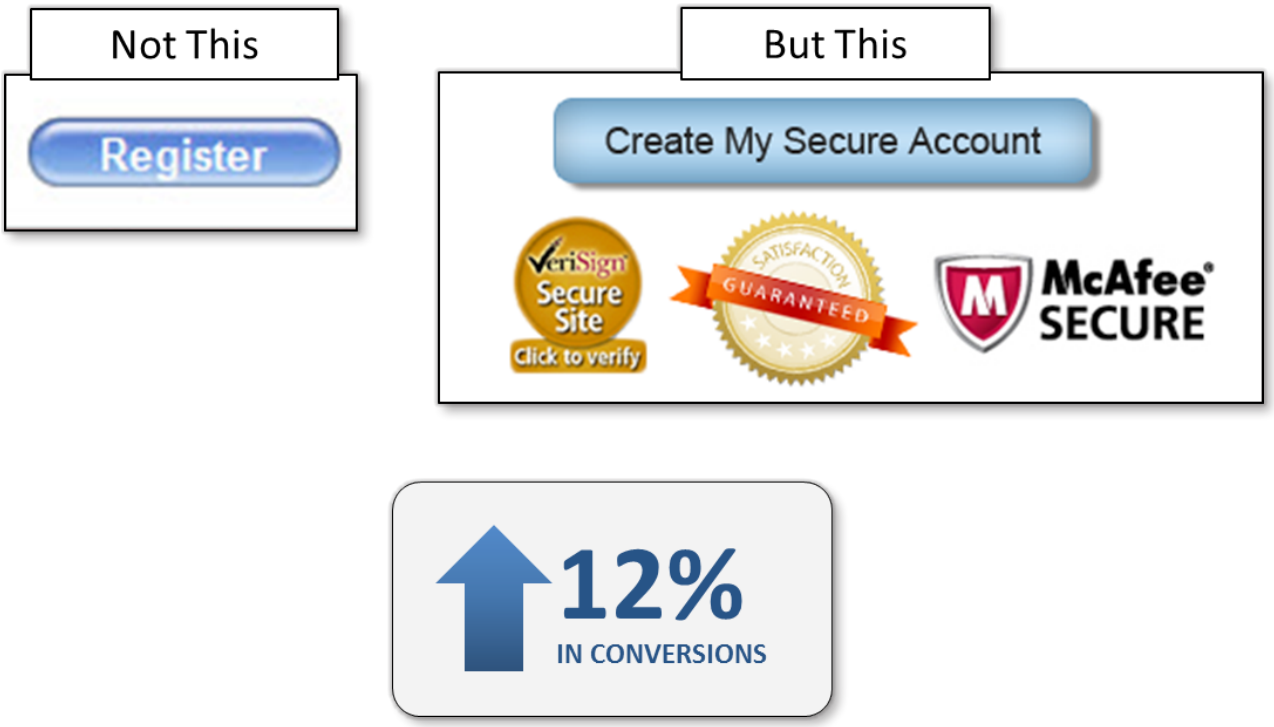

Figure 8.1

REASON #4: Undirected Choices

If you have read any of our content on landing page optimization or participated in a MarketingExperiments Landing Page Optimization Web Clinic, you have likely been exposed to this principle before. Equally weighted competing options are a steady source of shopping cart leakage. Let us dig into a case study.

TP1294 was an experiment where we wanted to increase cart completions for a B2C company offering package vacations (different Research Partner than TP1621 above).

On the control page in **Figure 9.1**, there is a very simple form to complete, which is good. However, after completion there are three equally weighted calls-to-action: View Lodging Options, Add More Activities, and Checkout Without Lodging. We hypothesized that presenting the user with three equally weighted options would cause confusion and increase the likelihood of abandoning the purchase.

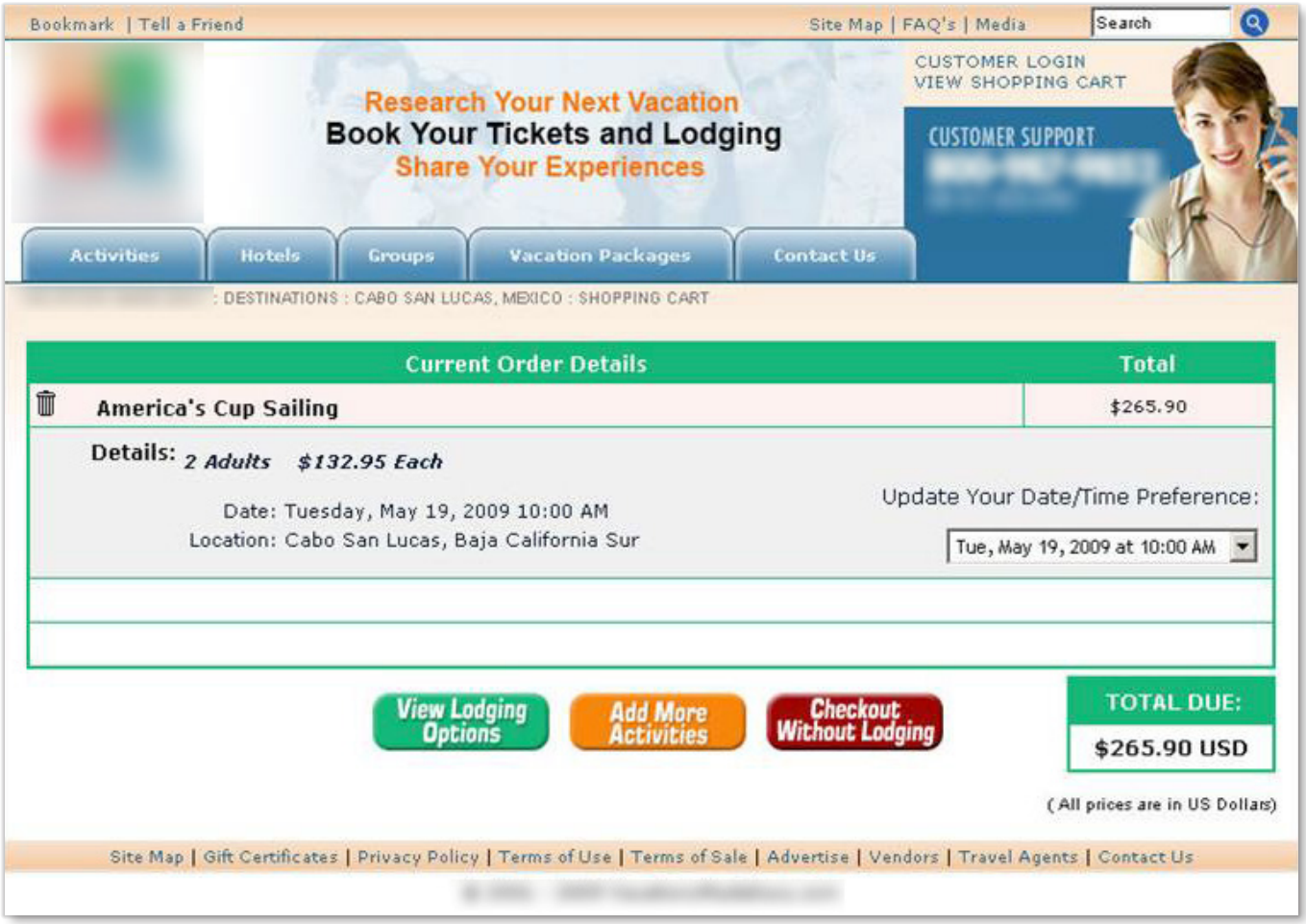

Figure 9.1

So for our treatment (**Figure 9.2**), we changed the page, focusing on one clear call-to-action: Checkout. The other options are on the page, but they are folded into the form so they do not interfere with the call-to-action.

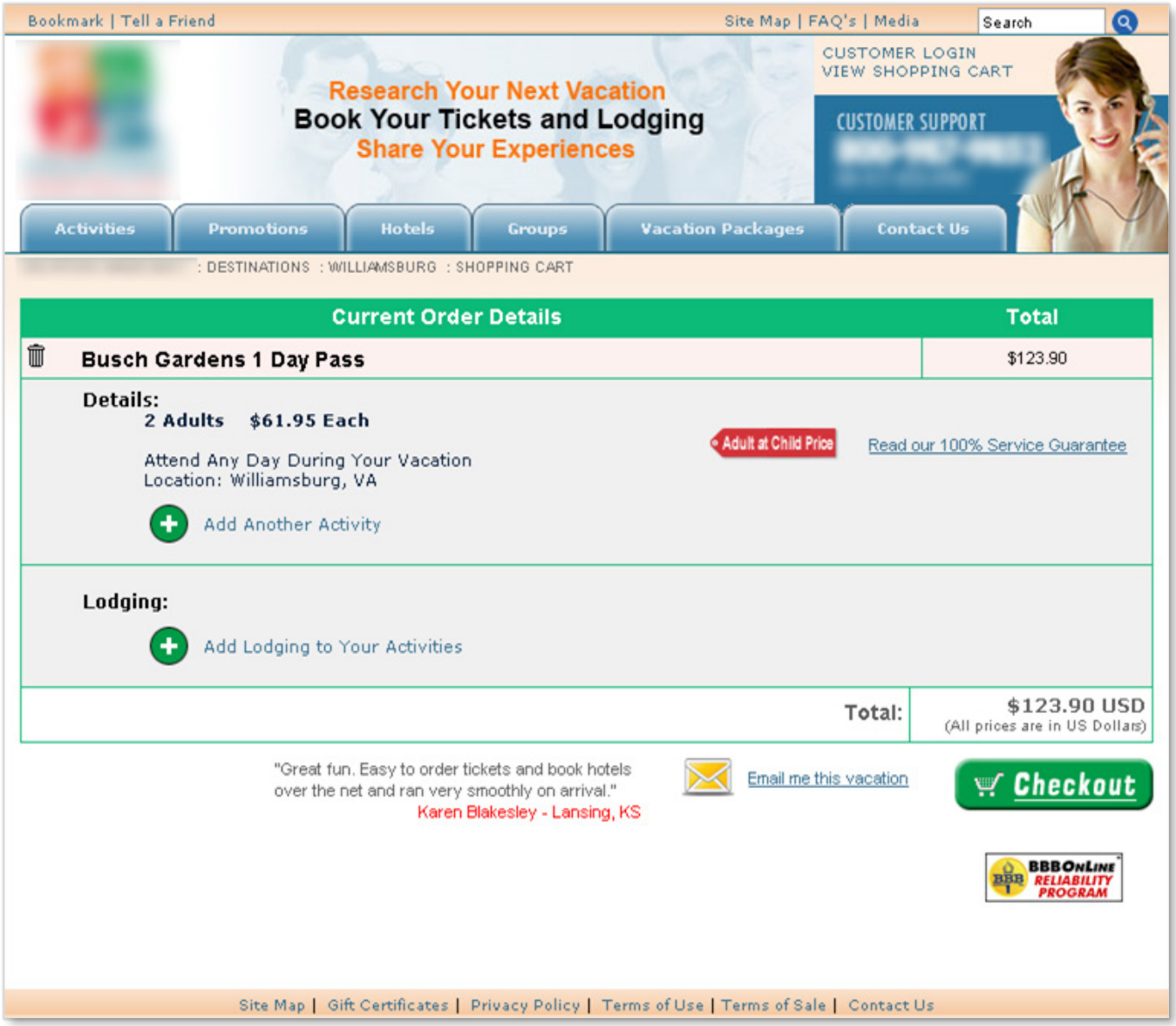

Figure 9.2

What was the result? A 37% increase in cart conversions (see Figure 9.3).

Design	Conversion Rate
Control	12.94%
Treatment	17.66%
Relative Difference	**36.5%**

Figure 9.3

What you need to understand is that **(1) Giving the customer more choice does not always produce more conversions. In fact, one of the greatest impediments to conversion is multiple options that are equally weighted.**

Multiple options significantly impede the cognitive momentum of the buying process. In the case study above, the prospect is sailing along, ready to book their vacation, and then they hit this page. They need to stop and analyze to discover the appropriate option, so they can't keep moving at the same velocity they were before. A few lodging options? Add more activities? What are activities? What sort of activities are they talking about? Check out without lodging? If I check out without lodging, what does that mean? And can I add lodging later? All these questions could begin to race through the visitor's mind and suddenly, it is not worth it to continue the purchase. There are too many variables.

Further, **(2) When possible, the shopping cart should NOT lead a prospect to a set of potential options, but rather to "the one" option. Beware of unsupervised thinking.**

In the example above, how do we address this issue? We simplify the call-to-action and de-emphasize the additional options. We bury them within the product details so they are accessible, but not primary on the page. Again, clarity is the key here. If you do not make it absolutely clear what needs to be done on a page, prospects will need to figure it out for themselves, and in many cases that will not end well for you.

Becoming a Marketing Plumber

Indeed, as marketers our job often boils down to that of a glorified plumber. We seek out the places in our sales funnel where leads and sales are leaking out, and we figure out how to fix the leaks. The tighter our sales plumbing is, the more leads we get, sales we convert, and money we make.

The 4 Main Leaks in Shopping Cart Pipes are:

1. Unwarranted Confusion
2. Unexpressed Value
3. Unaddressed Anxiety
4. Undirected Choices

Now that you know the most likely places where potential sales are leaking out of your shopping cart, it is time to go to work stopping up the leaks. The case studies and key principles outlined above should give you direction on how to do just that. And remember: these are not just leads, these are sales. These are the people asking where the checkout line is. All you want to do is make it as easy as possible for them to complete the purchase.

Email Marketing

Major Experiment Briefing

How You Can Use Email to Discover the Essence of Your Value Proposition (in 5 Simple Steps)

- Content created by Austin McCraw, Paul Cheney, Shaun Metzger
- Research conducted by Tony Doty, Dustin Eichholt, Ashley Hanania

The same meeting occurs within marketing departments and executive boardrooms all across the world. If you have been a marketer for any length of time, you have likely been involved in this meeting. The gist of the meeting is simply this: What point of value should be the focus of our new landing page/email/product page/commercial/etc.?

While everyone in the room is in agreement as to the importance of identifying the value proposition that will produce the highest conversion rate, the agreement often ends there. The copywriter thinks you need to focus on pricing.[i] The vice president of marketing thinks customer service is the ticket. The art director is convinced ease of use will resonate best with the audience.[ii] The meeting proceeds like this until eventually the person wielding the most influence in the room (often the most charismatic and/or highest paid) simply makes an executive decision based on what they perceive to be the best argument or evidence.

But what if this subjective discourse was not our only option? What if there was a way to discover the true weight of a given value proposition in the mind of a prospect or customer? This would have immense implications that would resonate throughout our marketing, and lead to across-the-board increases in conversion and revenue.

An Experiment: Which Value Category Will Generate the Greatest Response?

This experiment is incredibly simple, and yet the implications are profound. We were working with a company that helps oil and gas companies with their marketing. The team was working on an email promotion for an upcoming event and wanted to figure out which of its two potential value propositions (overcoming business challenges or generating more revenue) would produce the greatest response. The experiment is Test Protocol (TP) 2067 in the MECLABS Research Library.[iii]

To test this, we simply ran an A/B split email test to see which produced the best response.[iv] Version A (**Figure 1.1**) focused on overcoming challenges, while Version B (**Figure 1.2**) focused on increasing revenue. The format and look of the emails were the same; the only change was the content.

Dear %%CONTACT%%,

To help you make the most informed decisions and keep your operations moving forward, [illegible] scientists and engineers are continuously researching to find solutions to the spectrum of monitoring and technology issues that you face. They ask the questions relevant to each issue.

- How can you intelligently adjust surface drilling parameters based on new downhole data?
- How can deepwater risk be reduced by combining emerging best practices, real-time remote monitoring, and on-rig expert support?
- What are the newest, most intelligent insights and ideas around stick-slip mitigation?

Get the answers

If you're attending the [illegible] in Amsterdam, don't miss the presentations that address these issues, and be sure to stop by the [illegible] booth where our experts will be available to answer your questions. Even if you're unable to attend the conference in person, we invite you to read the paper abstracts at our [illegible] Online Resource Center.

Figure 1.1

Dear %%CONTACT%%,

To help you drill more safely, efficiently, and effectively, [illegible] scientists and engineers continuously conduct in-depth field tests to leverage the latest technologies and measurement tools. Some of the recent results from this testing will be presented at the [illegible] Drilling Conference and Exhibition in Amsterdam.

- Technology enabling real-time monitoring of downhole drilling conditions results in faster, more informed decision making, improved penetration rates, and higher quality wellbores.
- The combination of managed-pressure drilling techniques and treated micronized barite drilling fluids can enhance wellbore security and reduce drilling risks in wells considered hydraulically undrillable.
- New BHA designs deliver better directional control and penetration rates while outperforming conventional drilling BHAs by more than 350% in three eastern Siberia wells.
- A closed-loop, automated system, performing real-time monitoring of drilling parameters and performance with automatic adjustment of WOB and RPM, resulted in more than a 10% improvement in ROP in several field studies.

Find Out More

If you're attending the [illegible] Drilling Conference, don't miss the presentations that address these issues, and be sure to stop by the [illegible] booth where our experts will be available to answer your questions. Even if you're unable to attend the conference in person, we invite you to read the paper abstracts at our 2011 [illegible] Online Resource Center.

Figure 1.2

The results: Version A outperformed Version B with an additional 17% of prospect clickthroughs.

If you are a dedicated follower of MarketingExperiments, a 17% lift may not strike you as one of our more impressive feats. However, the impact of this test is huge. The great gain from this test was not a better-performing email, but rather the greater **knowledge we obtained about the customer**.[v] We can take this knowledge way beyond email. It can be used to shape all of our marketing collateral. It can be used to shape the nature of the event itself.

Using email to test value proposition can have a dramatic impact that extends beyond a single test, and this experiment leads to three foundation principles about testing your value proposition.

Key Principles

Key Principle #1: The goal of a test is not simply to get a lift, but to get a learning.

As marketers, we must learn to look beyond the lift to the overall learning we can achieve about our customers. Yes, getting a win is good and necessary at times, but the great long-term advantage will come not from a single win here or there, but rather from building a robust customer theory. It is this customer understanding that gives a business long-term sustainable advantage.

Key Principle #2: We should always strive to better understand our customer, and in particular, to understand the essence of our value proposition.

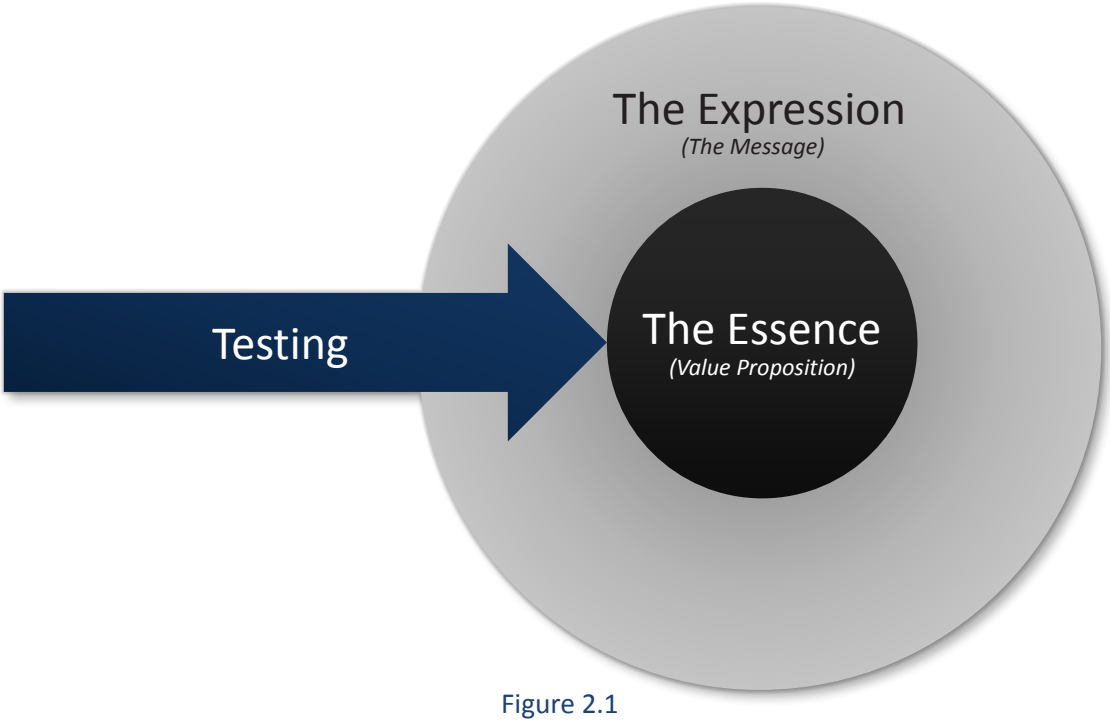

Figure 2.1

In all communication, marketing included, there are essentially two aspects: what you want to say (the essence) and how you say it (the expression). In **Figure 2.1**, you see a chart where we are using the terms essence and expression to communicate this. A majority of the testing we do as marketers is aimed at optimizing the expression of our value proposition. **We must realize it is actually more important to gain a deep understanding of the essence of our value proposition, because this can have a far-reaching impact on the broad spectrum of our marketing, rather than an individual page or email.**

Key Principle #3: Email is one of the most effective ways to quickly test and discover your value proposition.

This may seem a bit counterintuitive at first, but there are four reasons why email offers you the best and fastest way to discover your value proposition:

1. **Ease of Change**
   Whether you are delegating marketing tasks to a large team, or you are a one-person marketing department, email provides you with the easiest opportunity for quick changes and tweaks to your marketing message. Testing an email subject line can take a matter of minutes, while the knowledge you can gain from that simple change can be enormous and last for years.[vi]

2. **Large Sample Sizes**
   Often, you have a huge email list to work with. You can rent a list, purchase a list, co-op with a list, etc. This gives you a large number of data points for your test. The number of eyes that sees a subject line is especially massive, often much greater than what you experience on a webpage or PPC. You can also validate tests much more quickly, and produce statistically significant results almost immediately.[vii]

3. **Highly Competitive Environment**
   This might seem counterintuitive, but a crowded, competitive environment is actually where you want to test your value proposition. You want a spot where there are a lot of options in front of your prospect, because you need to be sure your value proposition can stand up in the toughest situations. Email is a highly competitive, noisy marketplace.

4. **We Already Have to Do It**
   This is the best part: As marketers, we are already doing this. We are not asking you to do something new or additional to what you are already doing. You are already running emails, so a slight tweak here and there is not going to require a lot of your time and will provide you with disproportionally valuable knowledge compared to the effort it takes to implement.

With this in mind, let us delve into five simple steps you can take to use email to discover your strongest value proposition.

The 5 Simple Steps to Use Email to Discover Your Value Proposition

Step #1: Identify Potential Claims of Value

This first step is where the meeting that we described in the opening paragraph can be extremely useful. You need to get all of the potential claims of value on the table, so they can be properly analyzed and tested. You need to come at your business or product from every angle to make sure no possible value claim is left out.

In **Figure 3.1**, you see a chart that helps you visualize this entire process. The highlighted section on the left is where we are now, with all your potential value propositions lined up. Let us think through an example to help wrap our heads around this step.

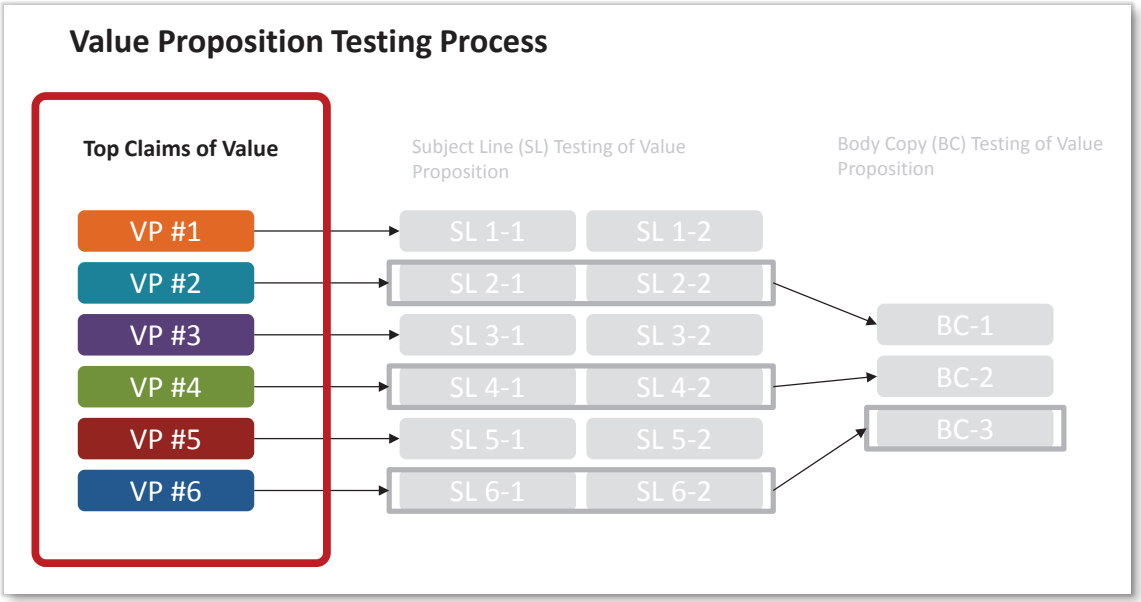

Figure 3.1

Imagine a bank holds a meeting to identify potential claims of value for their mortgage products. What are some of the value claims they could come up with? It might look something like this:

- Reliability
- Lowest Rates
- Easy Process
- Brand Name
- Payment Plan Options
- Reduced Anxiety
- Service Quality
- Community Involvement

Each of these items represents a potential source of value that the bank can offer to prospective mortgage clients. Now that they have made this list, they can move on to Step 2.

Step #2: Estimate the Force of Each Claim

Once you have a list of potential value claims, you need to decide which ones give you the greatest force in the mind of the prospect.[viii] Think of this like weeding a garden. All potential value propositions are plants, but you only want to test the ones that have the possibility of blooming into beautiful flowers. You can ditch the weeds right away. **Some value claims will have greater force than others, and those are the ones to focus on.**

But how can you establish which value propositions are weeds and which are flowers? There is a chart that can help us with this.

In **Figure 4.1**, you see a simple chart with four quadrants. The x-axis is exclusivity and the y-axis is appeal. When evaluating any potential value claim, you want to see where it falls into this chart. To figure out where the claim should fall on this y-axis, ask yourself, "Do people want this?" The higher the appeal, the higher on the chart you should place the claim. For placement on the x-axis, ask yourself, "Can people get this anywhere else?" The more exclusive your claim, the farther right it should be placed.

The lower left quadrant – the one you want to avoid – is a value claim that is readily available from multiple sources, but nobody wants. Conversely, the upper right is a claim that everybody wants to hear and only you can make. This is ideal. **The closer you can get to the upper right corner of the chart, the better your value proposition is.**

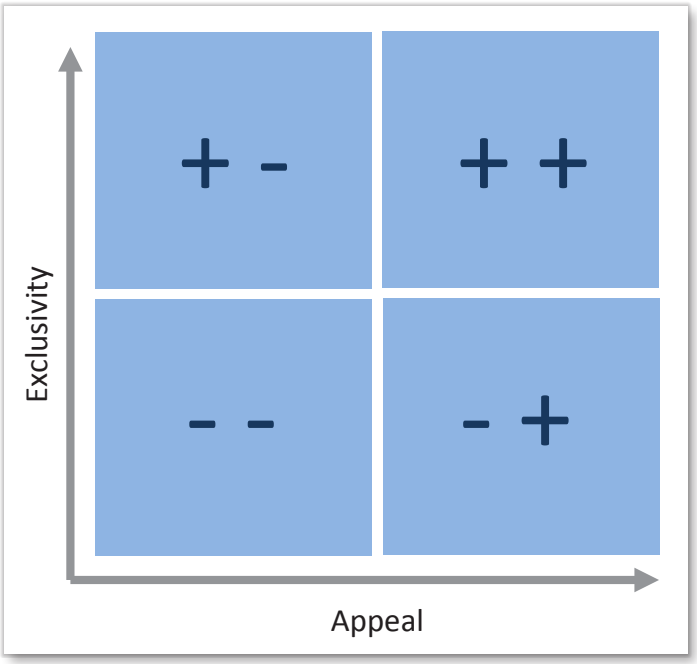

Figure 4.1

In **Figure 4.2**, you can see the mortgage examples from Step 1 evaluated in terms of their appeal and exclusivity. Notice there are a few claims that can be eliminated due to their lack of exclusivity, while we are unsure of how appealing three of the claims will be to the target market. This is when we need to start testing.

Claims of Value	Appeal	Exclusivity
Reliability		
Payment Options		
Lowest Rates		
Brand Name		
Payment Plan Options		
Reduced Anxiety		
Service Quality		

Figure 4.2

We teach a more in-depth process for identifying and evaluating your claims of value in the Value Proposition Development Course.[ix]

Step #3: Test within Subject Lines

Now that you have narrowed down your potential value claims to a promising handful – five or six is great – you can begin to perform tests to get real statistical results from your market. We are now moving into the second stage in our overall process chart (**Figure 5.1**). The reason we begin testing with subject lines, and not entire emails, is that you are testing a larger number of claims at this stage, and it makes the testing easier while still providing statistically accurate data.[x]

What you want to do is craft two or three subject lines for each value claim you are testing. You want to be sure to make the copy as singly focused on one value claim as possible. **A subject line that covers more than one of the value claims will taint the results.** To help you understand this process, we will look at a real case study that falls into the same category as our hypothetical mortgage example earlier.

Figure 5.2 shows you a list of the value claims the financial institution wanted to test paired with the subject lines it used to test those claims. The subject lines in the red boxes produced the highest clickthrough rates, letting the bank know those value claims resonated the most with its prospects.

With the list of potential value claims narrowed down, the bank can now move on to more detailed testing that will reveal the true force of the claim.

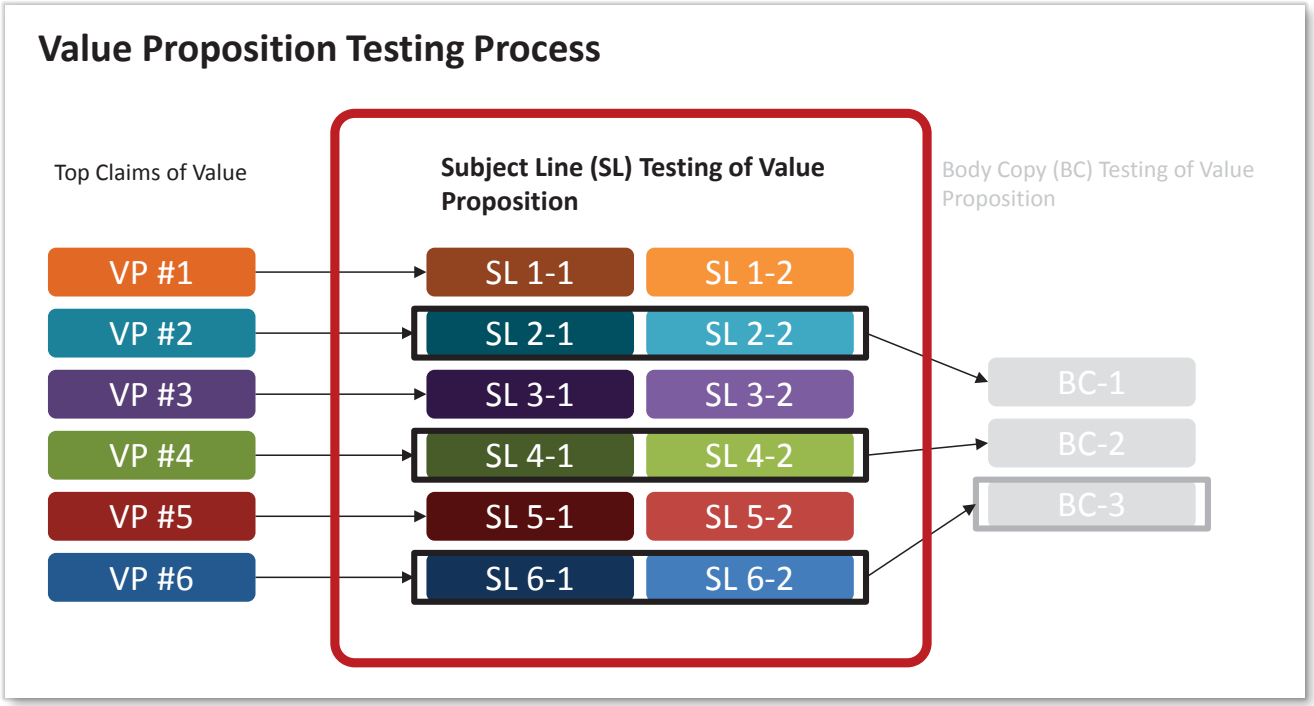

Figure 5.1

Claim	Subject Line	OPR
Low Rates	Mortgage Rates below 2.7%, find a solution in minutes	19.28%
Low Rates	Low mortgage rates – starting under 2.7%	18.58%
Hidden Fees	Low mortgage rates with no points or hidden fees	18.10%
Payment Plan	**Own your home sooner with free bi-weekly payments**	**20.99%**
Brand Name	Buying or Refinancing? Check out [Brand Name]	17.16%
Brand Name	**Discover the advantages of [Brand Name] mortgages**	**19.80%**
Community	Looking for a lower mortgage rate? You're not alone.	18.08%
Anxiety	Spending too much on your mortgage?	18.22%
Anxiety	Getting the lowest mortgage rate?	19.37%
Anxiety	Mortgage payments too high?	18.67%

Figure 5.2

Step #4: Test within Body Copy

With two or three powerful value propositions left to test, we move into the final testing stage of the process (Figure 6.1). Now, rather than just testing different subject lines, it is time to integrate the value proposition into the body copy of the email as well.[xi] **This magnifies the force of the proposition and helps clarify the differences between the propositions.**

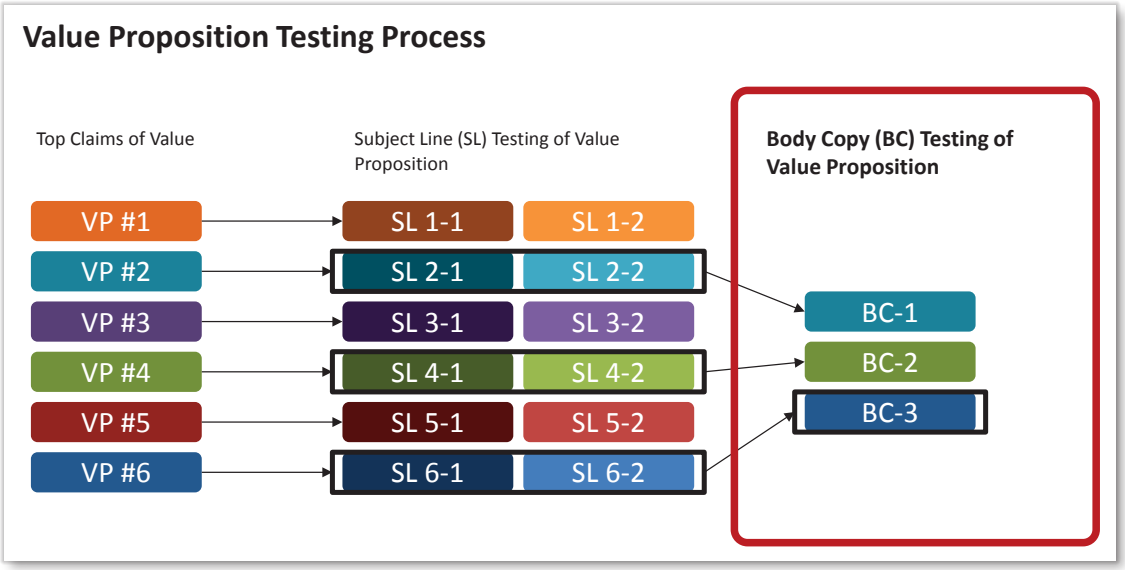

Figure 6.1

Our financial institution from the previous step identified its payment options and customer service as the two best performing value propositions with its prospects, so we created two visually similar emails (Figure 6.2) to test. The only difference between the two emails is the content of the subject line and body copy. One is focused on the bank's payment options, while the other highlights its customer service.

How much of a difference does this magnification of the value proposition make? The contrast between the results is stark. **The payment options email outperformed the customer service email by 241%!** This is an enormous discovery for this business, because the team now has a clear understanding of that one value proposition motivates its prospects and customers significantly more than others.

But how should we integrate the value proposition into the email body copy to ensure proper magnification of the message? **There are five elements (Figure 6.3) into which you must be sure to insert the value claim.**

1. **First Sentence**
   a. You cannot afford to have an opening sentence that does not address the value proposition. You may not get another chance to introduce it to the customer (they may stop reading).
2. **Featured Bullets**
   a. Pull out key benefits that pertain to your claim of value and bullet them in the email. Bullet points draw eyes.

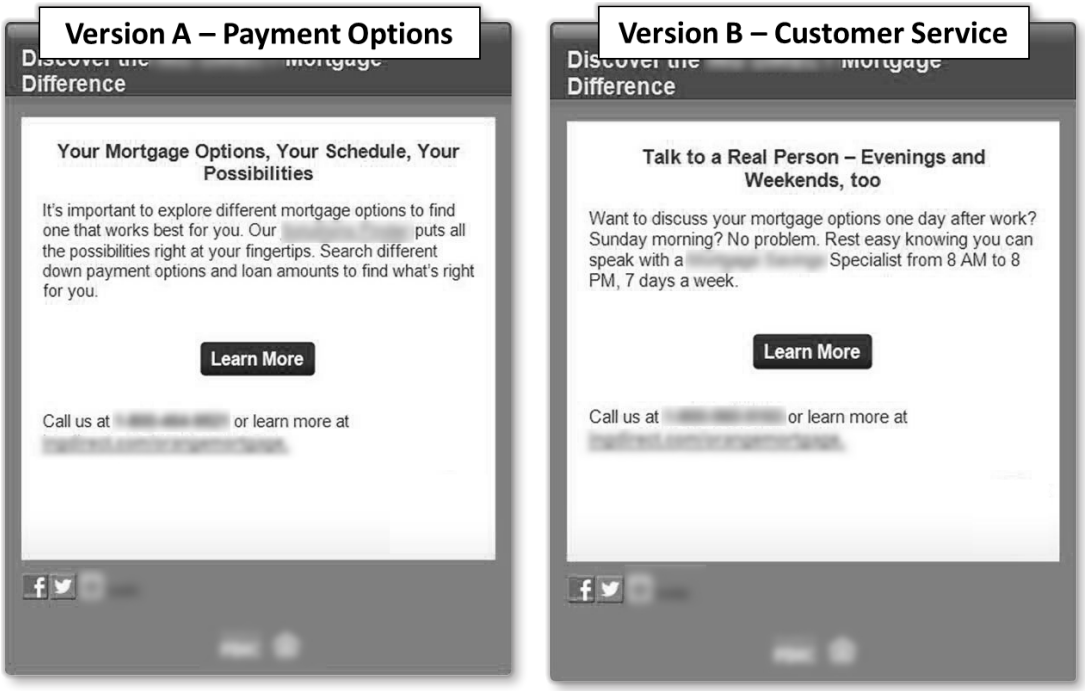

Figure 6.2

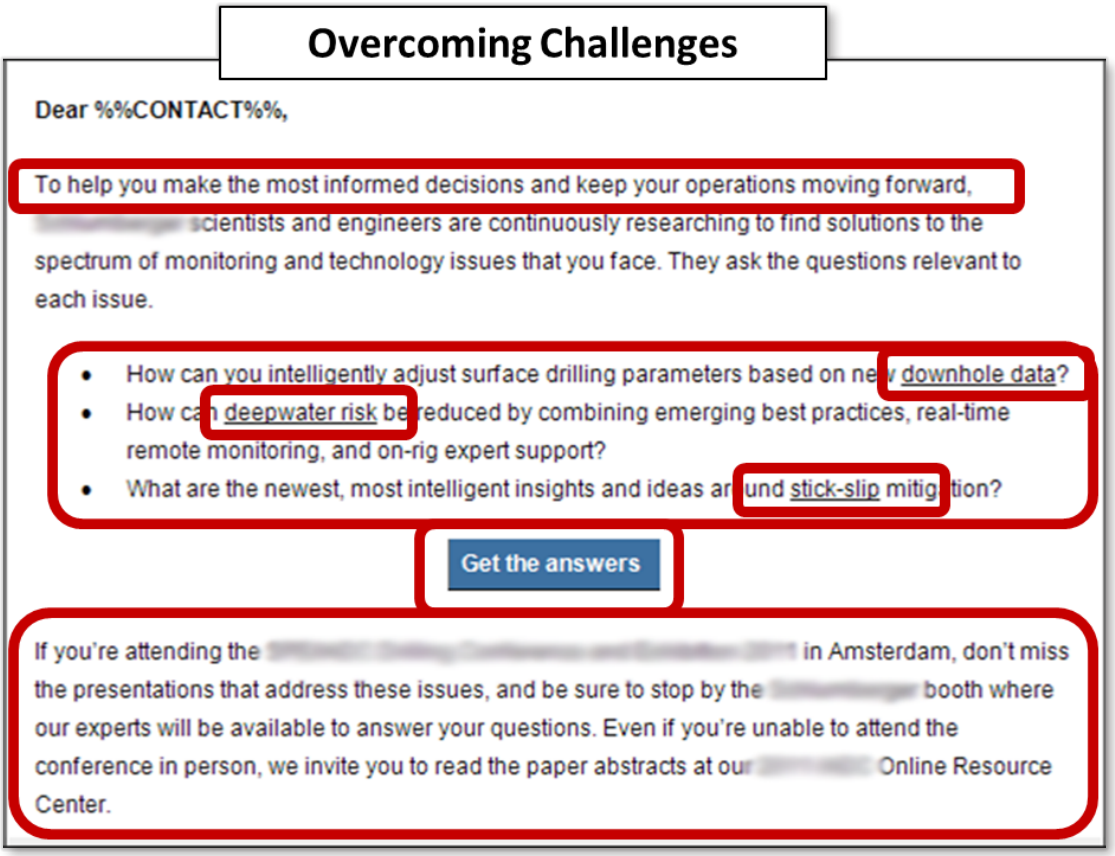

Figure 6.3

3. **Bolded Phrases**
   a. After prospects read the headline, they will likely jump to the bullets and focus on those key phrases that you have bolded. If you provide this eye-path and include the value proposition in those elements, you have the best chance to strongly communicate your claim.
4. **Call-to-Action**
   a. "Click here" does nothing to communicate your value proposition. Make sure your call-to-action integrates your claim of value.[xii]
5. **Post-Script**
   a. Though it may be hard to believe, the post-script is consistently one of the most read elements of an email. This being the case, do not waste this space. Include your value claim in the post-script.[xiii]

Step #5: Interpret and Implement

Now you have run your tests, and you have the data from those tests. That means it is time to analyze and implement. To effectively interpret the results of your tests, there are three questions you need to answer.

1. **What was the financial impact of the test?**
   a. An increase in conversion doesn't help much if it accompanies a decrease in revenue. So it is important to establish the financial impact of the test.[xiv]
2. **What did we learn about the customer?**
   a. This is the crucial takeaway from the tests. What you learn about your customers allows you to optimize the *essence* of your value proposition and improve across the board.
3. **Where can we apply these insights?**
   a. A crucial takeaway does you no good unless it is implemented. To leverage the knowledge you gain from the tests, you must act on the data.

Your answers to these questions are where the truly impactful results lie. You can take what you have learned about your prospects and customers and apply it everywhere. It is not about improving an email campaign; it is about discovering the essence of your value proposition and using that to better serve, better connect to, and better understand your customer.

The Potential of an Optimized Value Proposition

In the important work of understanding and implementing the five steps outlined in this article, it is possible to lose sight of the enormous potential it holds for your marketing efficacy and business' growth. As a step to prevent this natural distraction, we want to outline one last case study that provides an encapsulating snapshot of the potential awaiting those who engage in the rigorous work of testing, interpreting and implementing.

In **Figure 7.1**, you see an illustration representing six pages a client's website. The largest page is a page that we optimized. **The lift was 201%**, and in the process of obtaining this lift, we discovered an important piece of knowledge about the client's customers that impacted the value proposition of the entire

business. **We then went on to roll out this new value proposition to five other pages on the website; and the results of those optimizations are recorded in Figure 7.1: 451%, 302%, 603%, 28%, and 257%.**

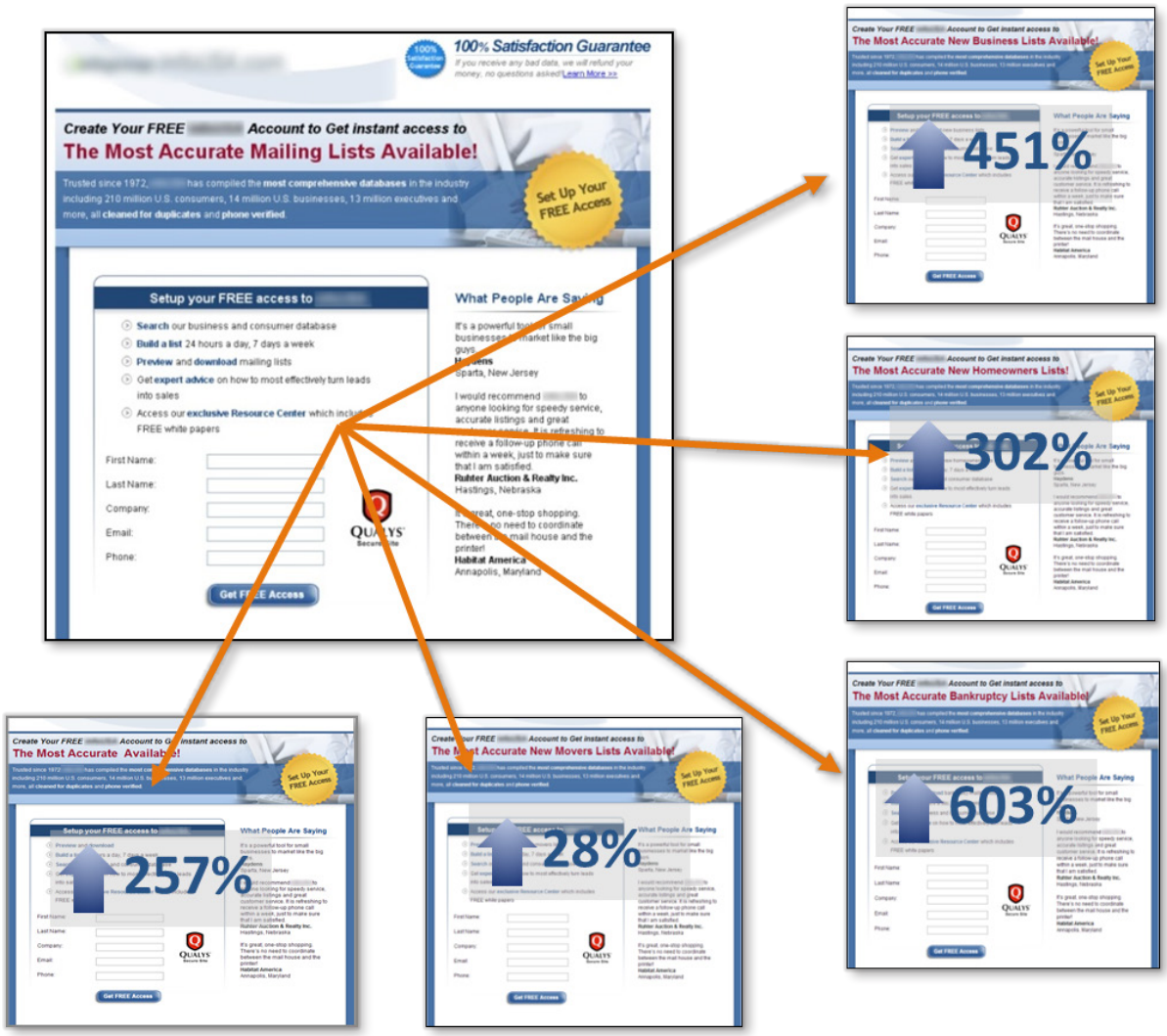

Figure 7.1

From one discovery, we were able to extrapolate the findings to significantly increase the performance of numerous other pages of the website. This same discovery could be used to improve the performance of email campaigns, direct mail campaigns, TV commercials, and every other aspect of marketing.[xv]

STEP #1: Identify Potential Claims of Value
STEP #2: Estimate the Force of Each Claim
STEP #3: Test within Subject Lines (Round 1)
STEP #4: Test within Body Copy (Round 2)
STEP #5: Interpret and Implement

They are five relatively easy steps when it comes to the hectic complexity that awaits the average digital marketer every day, and yet the potential benefit for your marketing and bottom line is clear and significant. So put that meeting to good use. Instead of coming to a conclusion based on subjective opinions, use those opinions as the impetus to actually test your way into understanding the customer. For it is a robust customer theory that gives a company its long-term competitive advantage.

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[i] See *When Should You Reveal Price? The 3 principles of presenting price and how they helped one company generate a 97% increase in conversion.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/pricing.html

[ii] See, *The Usability Myth: 4 surprising discoveries we learned after testing the most common usability principles.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/the-usability-myth.html

[iii] The MECLABS Research Library is cataloged in the MECLABS Research Catalog.
http://www.meclabs.com/catalog

[iv] For more on test design see the article by Data Scientist Diana Sindicich, *Marketing Optimization: How to design split tests and multi-factorial tests*.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/analytics-testing/design-split-and-multi-factorial-tests.html

[v] See, *What Your Customers Want: How to predict customer behavior for maximum ROI.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/what-your-customers-want.html

[vi] See also, *Quick Win Clinic (Part I): The 5 easiest changes to make to your landing pages right now*.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/landing-page-optimization/quick-win-clinic-part-i-.html

[vii] See the article by Daniel Burstein, *A/B Testing: Split tests are meaningless without the proper sample size*.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/analytics-testing/proper-sample-size-testing.html

[viii] To see this principle applied to headline writing see the two-part article by Paul Cheney, *Headlines on Deadlines: How to consistently write effective headlines without working late.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/research-topics/copywriting-research-topics/methodology-to-effective-headlines.html

[ix] *Value Proposition Development Online Course*
http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/value-proposition-development/overview

[x] See also, *Subject Lines Tested: How to write subject lines that double your clickthrough rate.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-optimization/subject-lines-tested.html

[xi] For more on email copywriting see, *Email Copywriting Clinic: Live, on-the-spot analysis of how to improve real-world email campaigns.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-copywriting/improve-email-campaigns.html

[xii] See Daniel Burstein's article, *5 Common Call-to-action Errors.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/marketing-insights/call-to-action-errors.html

[xiii] For more on the P.S. see *Email Marketing Tested — What Makes Email Marketing Copy Effective (or Ineffective)? Part 2 of 2.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-marketing-strategy/email-marketing2.html

[xiv] See, *Measuring What Matters: How simplifying your metrics can increase Marketing ROI by up to 75%.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/measuring-what-matters.html

[xv] See also, *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

Email Deliverability: Only 39% of marketers maintain an opt-in only subscriber list

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

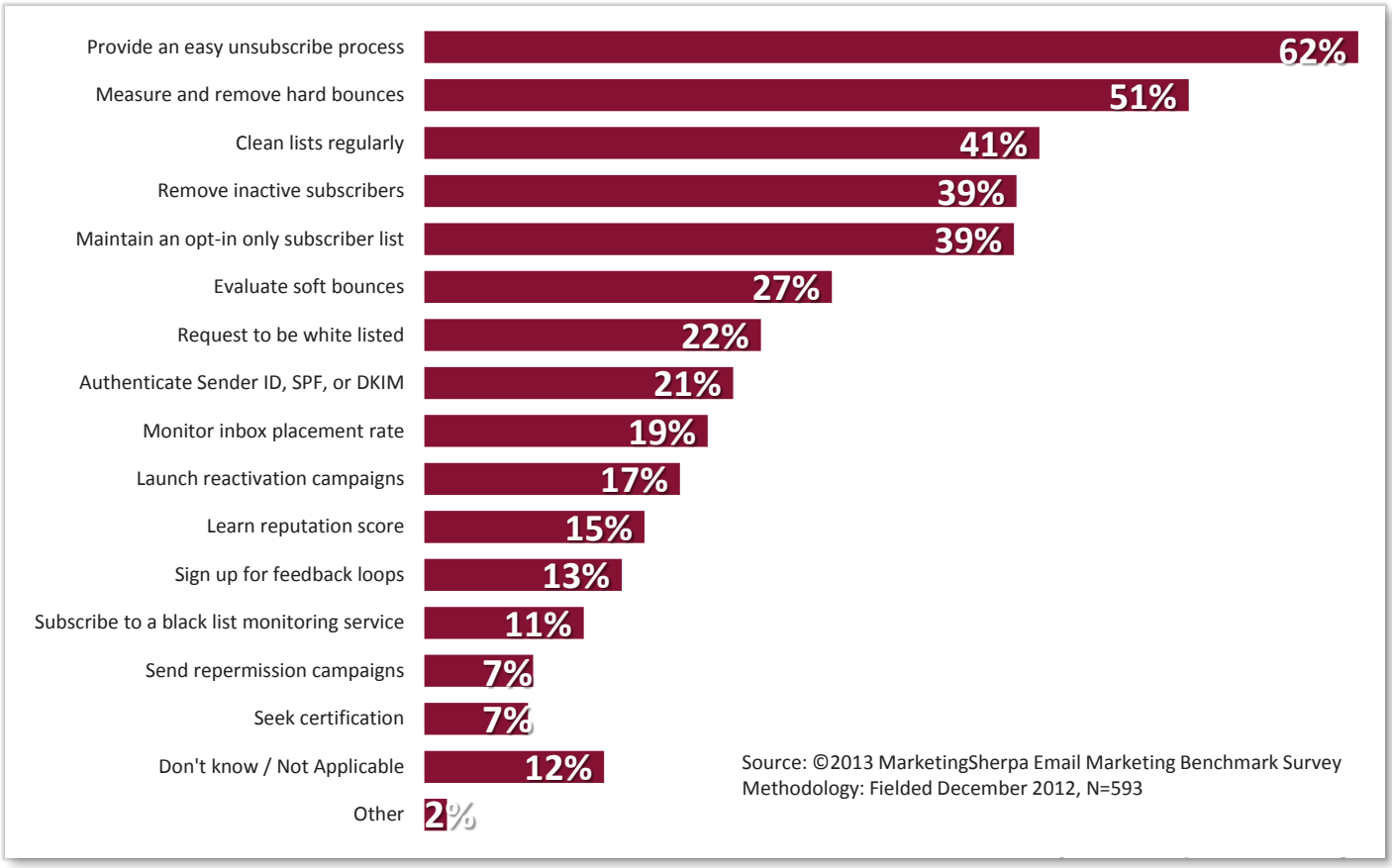
Email marketing is an interesting animal. It has often been compared to direct mail. However, unlike direct mail, sending irrelevant and even annoying messages can really burn your entire email marketing program.

With direct mail, if a recipient didn't like your message, they can drop it straight in the recycling bin.

However, with email marketing, your email recipients can affect your ability to reach *other potential customers* by, for example, marking your email as spam. Brutal.

So, to help you improve your company's email deliverability, we asked marketers about this topic in the MarketingSherpa *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report* …

Q: Which of the following tactics is your organization using to improve email deliverability rates? Please select all that apply.



As always, we asked your peers for their take on this data …

When is a subscriber an inactive subscriber?

"For people who remove inactive subscribers, typically, how long should they be inactive for?"
– Ariel Geifman, Director of Marketing, Mintigo

This is a great question, Ariel. It is the marketing equivalent of "What is the meaning of life?" on some levels.

Because, I'd say – to both questions – the answer varies.

For example, how long is your sales cycle? How frequently do you send email? Can you tell if these folks are engaging with your company in other ways? How segmented are your email sends? Do you send triggered emails?

Whatever the length, it is probably worthwhile to consider a re-engagement campaign before removing these inactive subscribers.

But, answering a question with more questions is a wholly unfulfilling answer, I readily admit. So, to give you some straightforward numbers to chew on, I did a quick dive into the MarketingSherpa Library to see how some companies define inactive subscriber.

Some examples:

- Eventful, an event Web service, considered subscribers inactive if they had not engaged with an email for five months – *Email Marketing: Weekly newsletter sees 400% lift in reactivation of inactive subscribers with personalization*.

- TBC Corporation, which owns automobile parts and tires businesses like Midas and Tire Kingdom, considered subscribers inactive if they had not opened or clicked an email in six months or longer – *Email Marketing: Delivery rate increases from 60% to 99% by separating inactive subscribers*.

- CNET tracks inactivity at different levels. People who hadn't opened an email in the last 60 days, 120 days, and 180 days, for example, and then engages in a re-engagement campaign based on these levels of inactivity before removing inactive subscribers – *Email Marketing: CNET win-back campaign sees 8% subscriber re-engagement*.

- For the most drastic campaign in this area, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra sent a re-engagement email to everyone on the list (including active subscribers), and removed all subscribers who didn't click "yes" they wanted to continue subscribing – *How Cutting a House List 95% Helped Double Sales: 5 steps*.

Embedded videos

"I'd be interested to see open/ROI rates of video marketing efforts versus text and pictures. Do you have any research available on this topic?"

– Rikki Green, Tactical Marketing Analyst, Levementum

We do not have any research available yet, and I do not know of any in the industry, Rikki. However, here is a case study about a marketer who increased conversions more than 50% by embedding video in emails – *Embedded Video Lifts Conversion Rate 50%: 5 Steps to Test Deliverability & Subject Line*.

I'll give the final word on email deliverability to Kathryn Joy …

Marketers are using an opt-out strategy more than they are using opt-in to build their lists

"I was surprised that only 39% report maintaining an opt-in only subscriber list. Apparently, with the easy unsubscribe process being the number one tactic for improving deliverability; marketers are using an opt-out strategy more than they are using opt-in to build their lists. This may work if there is a close relationship with the subscriber via other channels, and if they are proving email value right away."

– Kathryn Joy, Owner, Kathryn Joy Marketing & TC Success

Email Testing: How the Obama campaign generated approximately $500 million in donations from email marketing

- Adam Sutton, Senior Reporter

U.S. presidential campaigns are nonprofit juggernauts. They use every marketing channel to raise a massive amount of donations in a matter of months. Throughout that time, hundreds of millions of dollars are pumped into two gigantic marketing machines.

Toby Fallsgraff, Director of Email, Obama for America, helped engineer President Obama's email fundraising in 2012. His team earned the majority of the campaign's online donations, which totaled about $690 million. More than 4.5 million people donated, and the average gift was $53.

"You can do the math and figure out a lot of people gave more than once," Fallsgraff says.

Encouraging repeat donors was central to the campaign's strategy. However, that wasn't the only tactic. He and a team of 20 writers, as well as analysts and other staff, tested subject lines, copy and segments almost every day of the campaign.

Here are three of the best tactics they discovered:

Tactic #1: Send 'quick donate' links

At first, it seemed counterintuitive. Why would someone make another donation after being reminded that they already made one? All logic aside, Fallsgraff says his team earned a slight lift by thanking people for their earlier donations and requesting another.

"We were thanking them before we tested because it was the right thing to do," he says. "Then we realized it made a small increase in performance. Merely acknowledging a donation and thanking them made people more likely to give again."

Speed the donation

The campaign wanted to make it easier for repeat donors to give again. Early on, the development team partnered with an agency to create "quick donate" links for the emails. The links allowed previous donors to give again with a single click, eliminating the need to visit a landing page or fill out a form.

"Even if it only takes two minutes to complete the form, there's a significant drop off when we ask people to complete it," Fallsgraff says.

Only previous donors who had agreed to save their payment information during checkout received the email shown on the following page. Clicking on a link made an instant contribution without any further action by the donor. Making this work was a significant technical undertaking, Fallsgraff says.

From: Barack Obama [info@barackobama.com]
Sent: Tuesday, October 23
Subject: Stick with me, Toby

Friend --

I don't want to lose this election.

Not because of what losing would mean for me -- Michelle and I will be fine no matter what happens.

But because of what it would mean for our country and middle-class families.

This race is very close.

I'm not willing to watch the progress you and I worked so hard to achieve be undone.

Don't wait. Donate $3 today.

You're one of the campaign's most committed supporters. Because you've saved your payment information, your donation will go through immediately. It matters more today than it will later:

QUICK DONATE: $3

QUICK DONATE: $35

QUICK DONATE: $50

QUICK DONATE: $100

QUICK DONATE: $250

Or donate another amount:

https://donate.barackobama.com/Two-Weeks

I believe in you. If you stick with me, and if we fight harder than ever for the next two weeks, I truly believe we can't lose.

Thank you,

Barack

P.S. -- I don't know what Election Night will hold, but I'd like you to be a part of the event here in Chicago. **Any donation you make today automatically enters you for a chance to meet me -- airfare and hotel for you and a guest are covered.**

No purchase, payment, or contribution necessary to enter or win. Contributing will not improve chances of winning. Void where prohibited. Entries must be received by October 29, 2012. You may enter by contributing to Obama for America here, by signing up for Quick Donate here, or click here to enter without contributing or signing up for Quick Donate. Two (2) winners will each receive the following prize package: round-trip tickets for winner and a guest from within the fifty U.S. States, DC, or Puerto Rico to a destination to be determined by Sponsor; hotel accommodations for winner and a guest; tickets for winner and a guest to an event of Sponsor; and the opportunity to meet with President Obama (approximate retail value of all prizes $2,800). Odds of winning depend on number of entries received and the timing of entries received. Promotion open only to U.S. citizens, or lawful permanent U.S. residents who are legal residents of the 50 United States, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico and 18 or older (or age of majority under applicable law). Promotion subject to Official Rules and additional restrictions on eligibility. Sponsor: Obama for America, 130 E. Randolph St., Chicago, IL 60601.

Paid for by Obama for America

Contributions or gifts to Obama for America are not tax deductible

This email was sent to: tfallsgraff@barackobama.com.
If that is not your preferred email address, you can update your information here.
We believe that emails are a vital way for the campaign to stay in direct contact with supporters. Click here if you'd like to unsubscribe from these messages.
This campaign is a community, and all ideas are welcome.
We appreciate any feedback you might have -- positive or negative.
Click here to contact the campaign with any questions or concerns.
Obama for America, P.O. Box 803638, Chicago, IL, 60680

The team often listed several of these links in emails to previous donors. Each suggested a different contribution level, such as $3, $35, $50, $100, and $250. With one click, the donor could give the indicated amount.

Massive lift in conversions

Conversion rates increased about 300% on average when using the links, says Fallsgraff. Since this applied to previous donors, the team wondered if this result merely reflected the group's predetermined willingness to give, rather than an increase caused by the new links.

Therefore, the team tested the links. One group of previous donors received quick donation links in an email. Another group of previous donors received regular donation links. The result: the 300% lift stayed true. The links had worked.

The team encouraged every donor to save his or her payment information. The campaign even started offering incentives, such as a free bumper sticker, to everyone who donated.

"I wouldn't be surprised if we start seeing more and more email campaigns using these kinds of links after the election cycle," says Fallsgraff.

Explain how they work

With millions of subscribers, it's not difficult to imagine how one or two people could misunderstand the links and make an accidental donation. The team wanted to avoid this, so it included copy such as "your donation will go through immediately."

Here's an example from one message:

> "You're one of the campaign's most committed supporters. Because you've saved your payment information, your donation will go through immediately. It matters more today than it will later."

Tactic #2: Segment with behavioral data

Members of the press speculated on Obama for America's email segmentation after the campaign, Fallsgraff says.

"There's a lot of misinformation out there with people trying to reverse engineer our segmentation strategy.

It's not entirely accurate. It's pretty far off, actually."

Obama for America's email team tested the viability of many segments. The data clearly showed that tailoring messages to a person's previous actions (i.e., behavioral data) earned the best results.

Here are the four segments the team consistently used. Each received targeted copy in the emails:

- **Previous donors** — The team sent unique messages to people who donated previously in the 2012 election.
- **Quick donors** — This was a sub-group of the previous donors. These people saved their payment information and received quick-donation links in their emails.
- **Non-donors** — A large chunk of the audience received the campaign's emails but they had never donated.
- **Lapsed donors** — The team also tailored messages to people who had donated to Obama for America in 2008 but who had not yet donated in 2012.

Tactic #3: Test every day

The team sometimes emailed subscribers who lived near a campaign-related event. There were other one-off messages, but the team mainly focused on national fundraising emails.

Obama for America tested and sent a national email almost every day. This increased to multiple times a day as Election Day drew nearer. There was a massive demand for copy, but the team kept testing because it worked, says Fallsgraff.

"Sometimes we'd see a lift of anywhere between 5% or 10%. But 5% or 10% on an email that's projected to raise a million dollars is a lot of money. It's totally worth our while, so that's why we had 20 writers and 20 email staffers working at all hours of the night — to make sure these tests were ready."

Here's the testing process the team used:

Step 1. Write a bunch of emails

The nearly two dozen writers at Obama for America wrote almost constantly to fuel the email program's ravenous demands. They were also responsible for helping to code the messages and resolve other back-end details.

"Everybody was a utility player, so we never had somebody just writing and somebody just producing," says Fallsgraff.

Step 2. Choose four to six and brainstorm

For each send, the team whittled the drafts down to a selection of four to six. It then brainstormed subject lines until it had three for each message (12 to 18 subject lines in total).

Step 3. Tailor the copy

The team tailored the copy of the chosen emails to each segment of the audience. For example, quick-donate links were added to emails that reached donors who had saved their payment information. Non-donors might be encouraged, "don't wait until the last minute!"

Step 4. Test the message, then the subject line

The team randomly selected a group from each segment to receive test emails. A winner was determined for each segment, and the team then tested its three subject lines. The combination of best message and best subject line was then sent to the remainder of the group to complete the campaign.

Step 5. Start over

The team did this nearly every day for months, sometimes multiple times a day. It paid off handsomely, however. The team's best-performing subject line, "I will be outspent," and best-performing email (shown on the following page) raised more than $2.6 million.

Toby Fallsgraff and Amelia Showalter, Director of Digital Analytics, Obama for America, were the keynote speakers at MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments Optimization Summit 2013 in Boston, May 20-23, in a presentation entitled "Email Optimization: How A/B testing generated $500 million in donations."

From: Barack Obama [info@barackobama.com]
Sent: Tuesday, June 26, 2012
Subject: I will be outspent

Friend --

I will be the first president in modern history to be outspent in his re-election campaign, if things continue as they have so far.

I'm not just talking about the super PACs and anonymous outside groups -- I'm talking about the Romney campaign itself. Those outside groups just add even more to the underlying problem.

The Romney campaign raises more than we do, and the math isn't hard to understand: Through the primaries, we raised almost three-quarters of our money from donors giving less than $1,000, while Mitt Romney's campaign raised more than three-quarters of its money from individuals giving $1,000 or more.

And, again, that's not including the massive outside spending by super PACs and front groups funneling up to an additional billion dollars into ads trashing me, you, and everything we believe in.

We can be outspent and still win -- but we can't be outspent 10 to 1 and still win.

More than 2.2 million Americans have already chipped in for us, and I'm so grateful for it. **As we face this week's fundraising deadline, can you make a donation of $3 or more today?**

Every donation you make today automatically enters you to join Michelle and me for one of the last grassroots dinners of this campaign -- tomorrow is your last chance to get your name in.

These dinners represent how we do things differently. My opponent spent this past weekend at a secretive retreat for the biggest donors to both his campaign and the super PACs that support him.

I've got other responsibilities I'm attending to.

Donate today to stand for our kind of politics:

https://donate.barackobama.com/June-Deadline

Thank you,

Barack

No purchase, payment, or contribution necessary to enter or win. Contributing will not improve chances of winning. Void where prohibited. Entries must be received by June 26, 2012. You may enter by contributing to Sponsor here or click here to enter without contributing. Three winners will each receive the following prize package: round-trip tickets for winner and a guest from within the fifty U.S. States, DC, or Puerto Rico to a destination to be determined by the Sponsor; hotel accommodations; and dinner with President Obama on a date to be determined by the Sponsor (approximate retail value of all prizes $4,800). Odds of winning depend on number of entries received. Promotion open only to U.S. citizens, or lawful permanent U.S. residents who are legal residents of 50 United States, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico and 18 or older (or age of majority under applicable law). Promotion subject to Official Rules and additional restrictions on eligibility. Sponsor: Obama for America, 130 E. Randolph St., Chicago, IL 60601.

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Marketing Optimization

Major Experiment Briefing

When Should You Reveal Price?

The 3 principles of presenting price and how they helped one company generate a 97% increase in conversion

- Content created by Flint McGlaughlin, Austin McCraw, Shaun Metzger
- Research conducted by Nathan Thompson, Solomon Osiatynski, Erin Fagin, Ben Huppertz, Gaby Paez, Jimmy Ellis, Paul Clowe, Corey Trent

From the earliest days of business to now, the issue of price is essential to the success of a product. However, it's often one of the most mysterious aspects of marketing.

- How do we set price?
- When should we reveal it?
- Is there a way to test it?

These are common questions for marketers. And if marketers are honest, we often have no concrete methodology to determine the best way to present the price of an offer. We generally present price based on either **imitation** (*what others are doing*) or **intuition** (*what we think the price should be*).

But how much money are we leaving on the table by having a price that is too high or too low? How many customers might we be losing by presenting the price too soon or too late in the conversion process? It was this question that led to the following experiment.

An Experiment: Does the timing of price introduction affect landing page conversion?

The experiment is Test Protocol (TP) 1645 in the MECLABS Research Library. Our Research Partner, a large sports entertainment company, wanted to increase conversion on a landing page promoting the "pro," paid version of its fantasy sports leagues.[i] The control page, as shown in **Figure 1.1**, focused on the value of the software application itself while prominently featuring the price of the product near the call-to-action.[ii]

To zone in on the best course of action for our redesign, we conducted a variable cluster test, putting two treatments against the control with multiple variables manipulated on each treatment.[iii] Treatment #1 (**Figure 1.2**) shifts the focus of the value proposition from the software to the free trial. It also deemphasizes the price of the product, instead putting it in the last sentence of the body copy of the third bullet point.

Figure 1.1

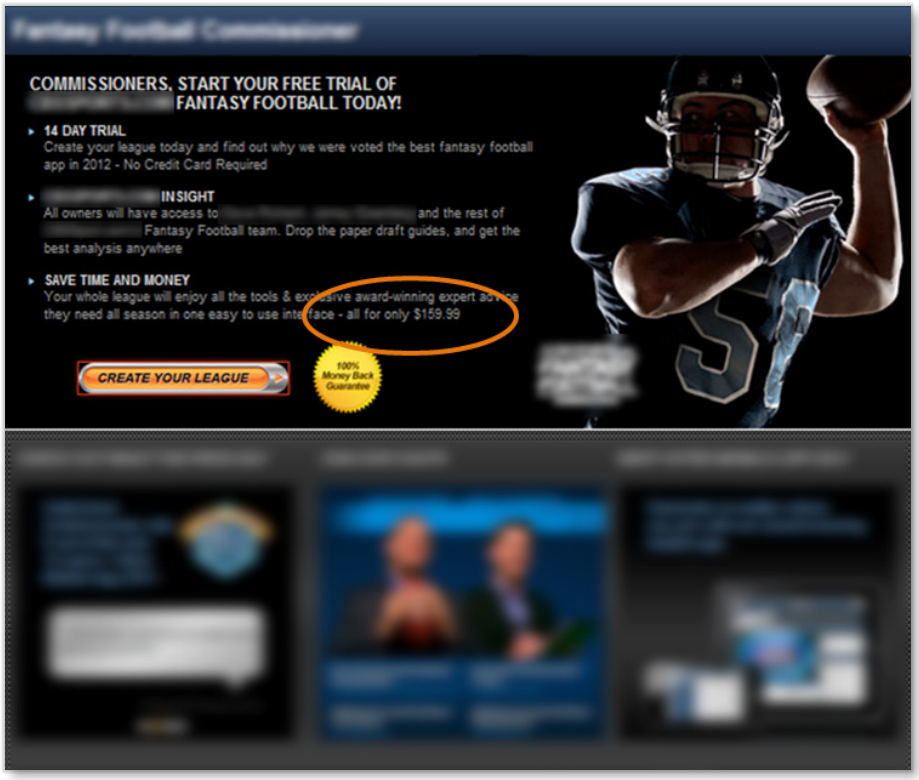

Figure 1.2

In Treatment #2 (**Figure 1.3**), we shifted the focus of the copy again, this time onto the value of the company. More importantly, we completely removed mention of the price of the product, choosing to introduce this at a later point in the buying process.[iv]

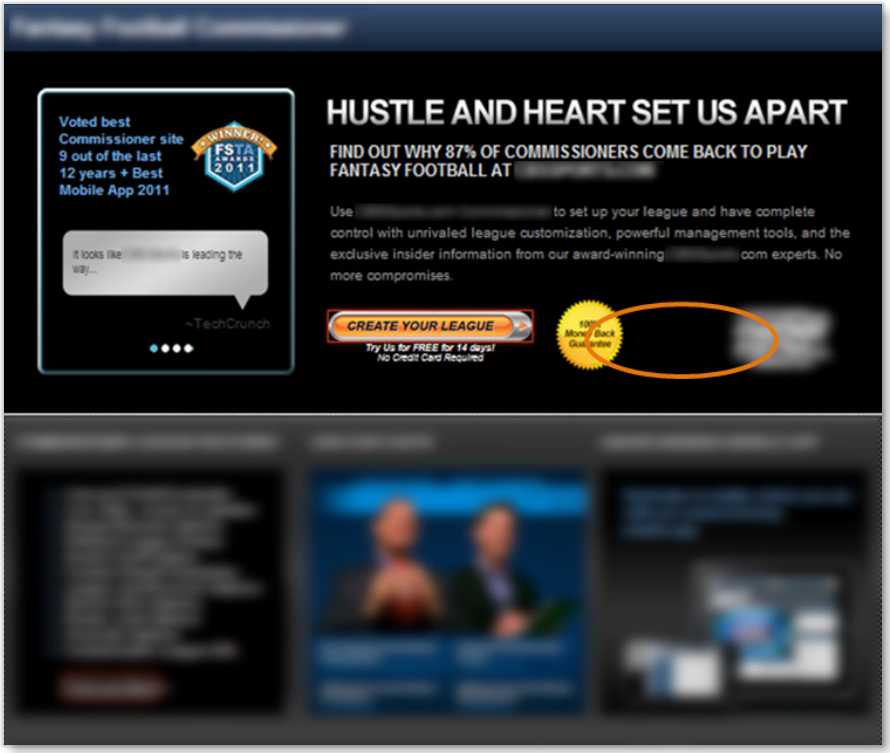

Figure 1.3

In **Figure 1.4**, you can see that in the control, the price was prominently displayed upon signing up for the free trial. In Treatment #1, it was deemphasized but present when prospects signed up for the free trial. It was then re-emphasized during the second week of the trial. In Treatment #2, the price was removed altogether from the landing page. It was only revealed during the second week of the free trial. What was the resulting change in *paying* conversion (e.g., people buying the pro version of the fantasy league after the free trial)?

Figure 1.4

Treatment #1 outperformed the control by 86%, while Treatment #2 outperformed the control by an even greater 97%.

This result (see **Figure 1.5**) answers the question of whether the timing of price introduction matters. It does. Both of the winning versions de-emphasized the price on the front end and brought it in much later in the conversion process.

Subscription Path	League Start Rate	Rel. diff	Statistical Significance
Control	5.01%	-	-
Treatment #1	9.25%	84.6%	99%
Treatment #2	**9.85%**	**96.6%**	**99%**

Figure 1.5

But this experiment alone does not give us an answer as to when the best time is to introduce price. For the past decade, we have been conducting price tests across multiple industries, and the results vary from experiment to experiment (as you will see below) on the precise timing. However, we have discovered **three transferable principles** that can help marketers determine when and how to introduce price in their own sales conversation processes.

The 3 Principles of Presenting Price and How They Helped One Company Generate a 97% Increase in Conversion

Principle #1: Price does not equal cost

To begin, marketers must understand three things about cost. First, we must **(1) not confuse price with cost. Price may be the least part of the cost**. When dealing with price as it relates to marketing, we must understand one of the key distinctions made in the works of economics, namely that "price" and "cost" are not synonyms.[v] Oftentimes, we as laypersons use these terms interchangeably, yet they represent two different (and extremely important) aspects of the buying process. Keep this in mind as we delve in to the first key principle of this section.

Price is the amount of money you are charging for your good or service. It only represents a portion of the overall cost of the purchase to the customer, and it may not in fact be the largest portion of the cost. It may be that other concerns are carrying more weight than the actual price of the item.[vi] This leads us into the second key principle of this section.

Next, the marketer must understand that **(2) cost does not exist on the webpage (or in a product's price); cost exists in the mind of the customer. Many elements other than price can contribute to cost**. You cannot set the cost of a transaction like you can the price. You control the price, but many other variables exist and can weigh on the mind of a prospect, increasing the mental cost of completing the transaction. It is useful to think of price as being one component in a series of other psychological variables. In **Figure 2.1**, you see an equation that represents this idea.[vii] Cost is the aggregate of all of these variables.

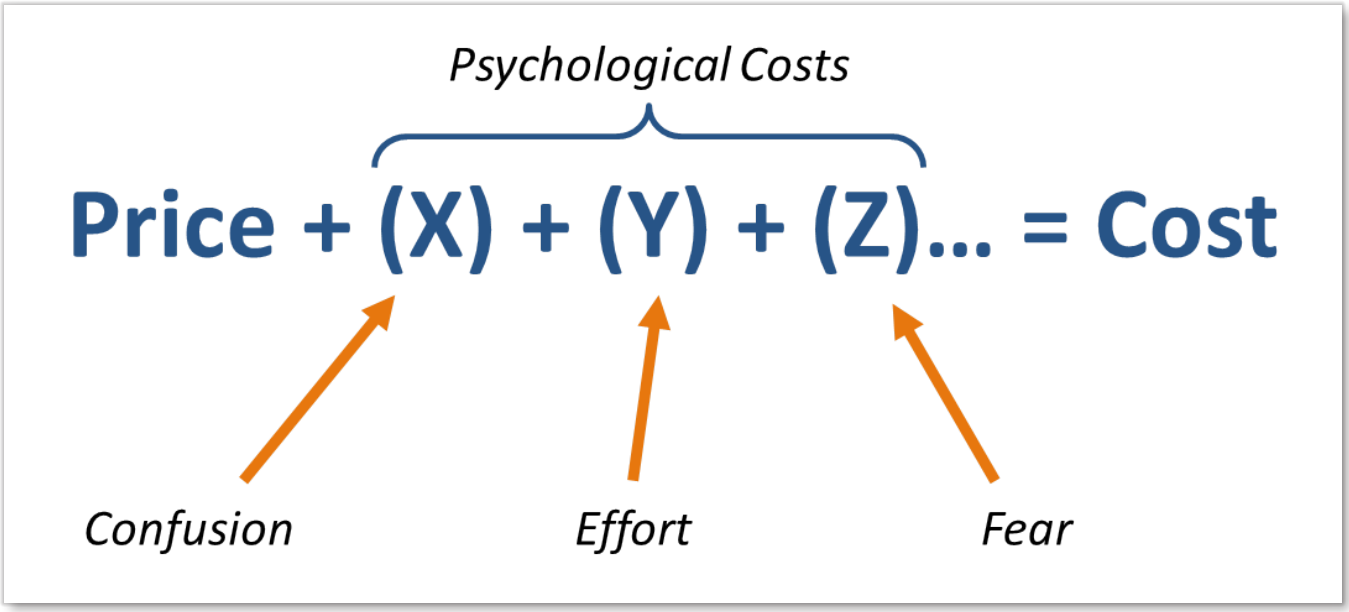

Figure 2.1

In that equation, we have zeroed in on three particular forms of cost in the mind of the prospect or the customer: confusion, effort and fear. These are not the only additional influencers of cost, but they are extremely common ones, especially with online sales. With this equation, we are not so much presenting a heuristic as we are illustrating a way to think about the total cost associated with an offer. As marketers, we can often get disproportionately concerned about price when it is not actually price that's keeping someone from purchasing.

To illustrate this point, let us look again at the control page from the previous experiment. **Figure 2.2** highlights where we see these other cost variables at play on the landing page. We see confusion present in the disorientating headline and multiple sections of competing content. Difficulty shows up with hard-to-read text and a bevy of calls-to-action to sort through. Fear rears its head when the prospect is not assured that all the functionality they desire is included. What then are we to do about this?

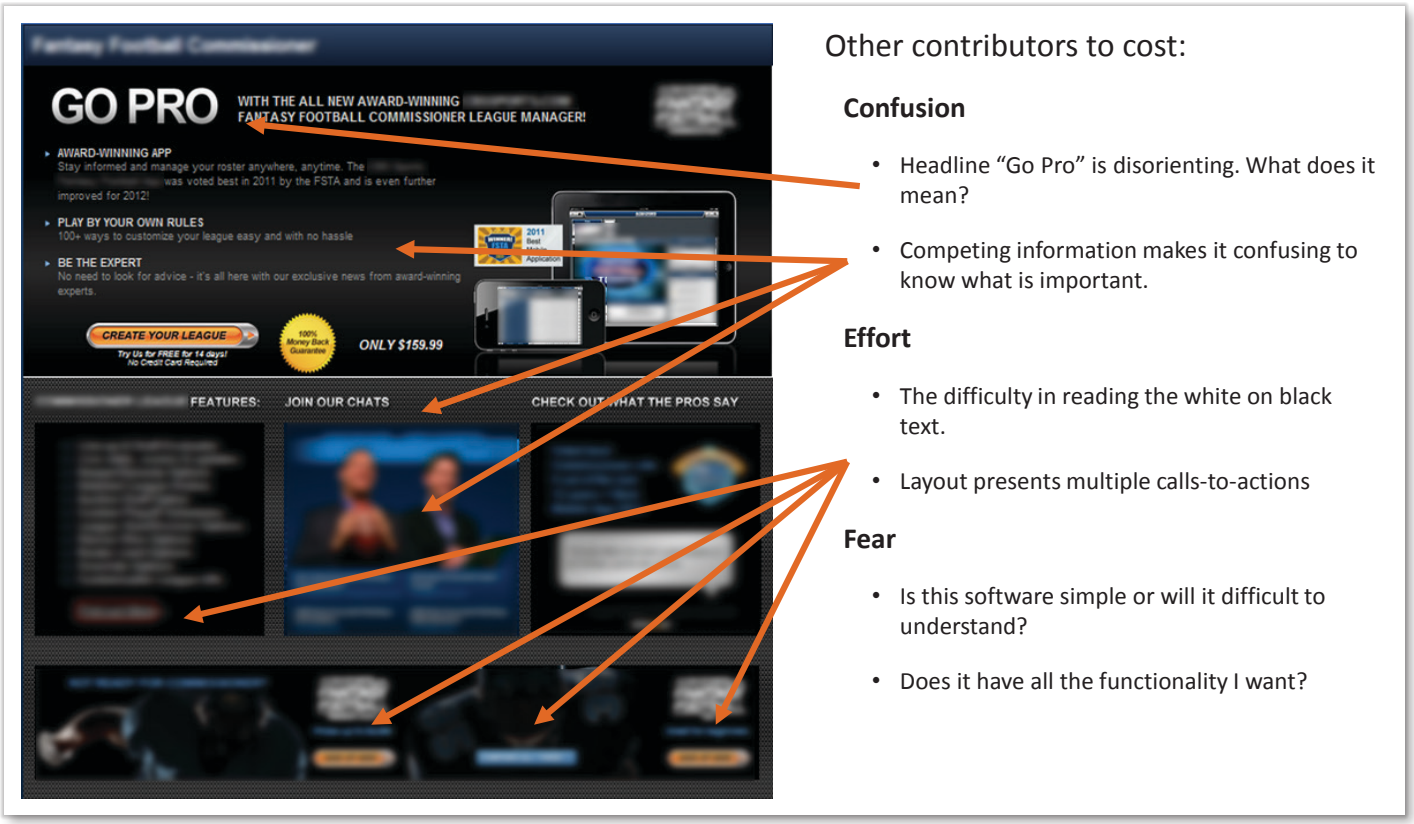

Figure 2.2

Finally, we must realize that **(3) the goal of the marketer is to minimize (not eliminate) as much non-price specific costs as possible**. You cannot eliminate all forms of additional cost from your webpages or buying processes. However, your goal is to minimize these factors wherever possible. The extent to which you are able to do so will be immediately evident in your conversion rates.

Principle #2: Price can be either P+ or P-

It is counterintuitive, but price does not necessarily need to be a negative in terms of the impact on the

total mental cost of the transaction. **There are, in fact, situations when the way you reveal price can position it as a positive.** And, if the price in itself is a positive surprise (i.e., the person was expecting a higher cost), then price helps to stimulate a stronger "I want it" drive in the prospect. So, perceived positive and perceived negative are two ways to view how price is presented. The graphic in **Figure 3.1** illustrates this as a fulcrum, which is a helpful way to think about it. We will now look further into this concept with a case study from Encyclopedia Britannica.[viii]

Figure 3.1

The results of this study can be found in the MarketingExperiments Research Library. The reason Encyclopedia Britannica (EB) came to us was to get help optimizing its landing page where visitors go to sign up for a free trial. To give a little background, the company had already done a considerable amount of work on this page, including hiring outside consultants to optimize it. Because of all the work it had put into it, the EB team did not believe even a 20% lift was possible, and would have been very happy with something in that general area.

In **Figure 4.1**, you can see the control landing page. This is actually the first page in a two-page series. The first page gives the user information about and the benefits of EB, while the second page (pictured in **Figure 4.2**) has the visitor choose a pricing option, should they decide to continue after the free trial (which automatically renews if not cancelled). This presentation of the pricing information is rather confusing, which causes it to act as a negative force on the cost of signing up for the free trial. Could there not be a better way to present this information?

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PC Magazine April 2004

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Figure 4.1

Subscribing is fast and easy. Select a subscription choice and enter your e-mail address below to begin.

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If you have a **promotion code**, please enter it here:
(Please note, codes are case-sensitive.)

Figure 4.2

In our treatment (**Figure 4.3**), we condensed the two-page series into one landing page. We optimized the top of the page to communicate the value proposition with laser-like intensity, because we hypothesized that this boost in value would allow us to present the pricing information sooner. Additionally, and most critically to this study, we changed the way the pricing information was presented. Rather than force the user to choose from three options, we simply inform them that if they choose not to cancel, the subscription will continue uninterrupted for $11.95/month. We then added that this price saves them $1,261.50 off the price of the print version of EB. This takes the price of the subscription and turns it into a real benefit, with a positive effect on the cost in the mind of the customer.

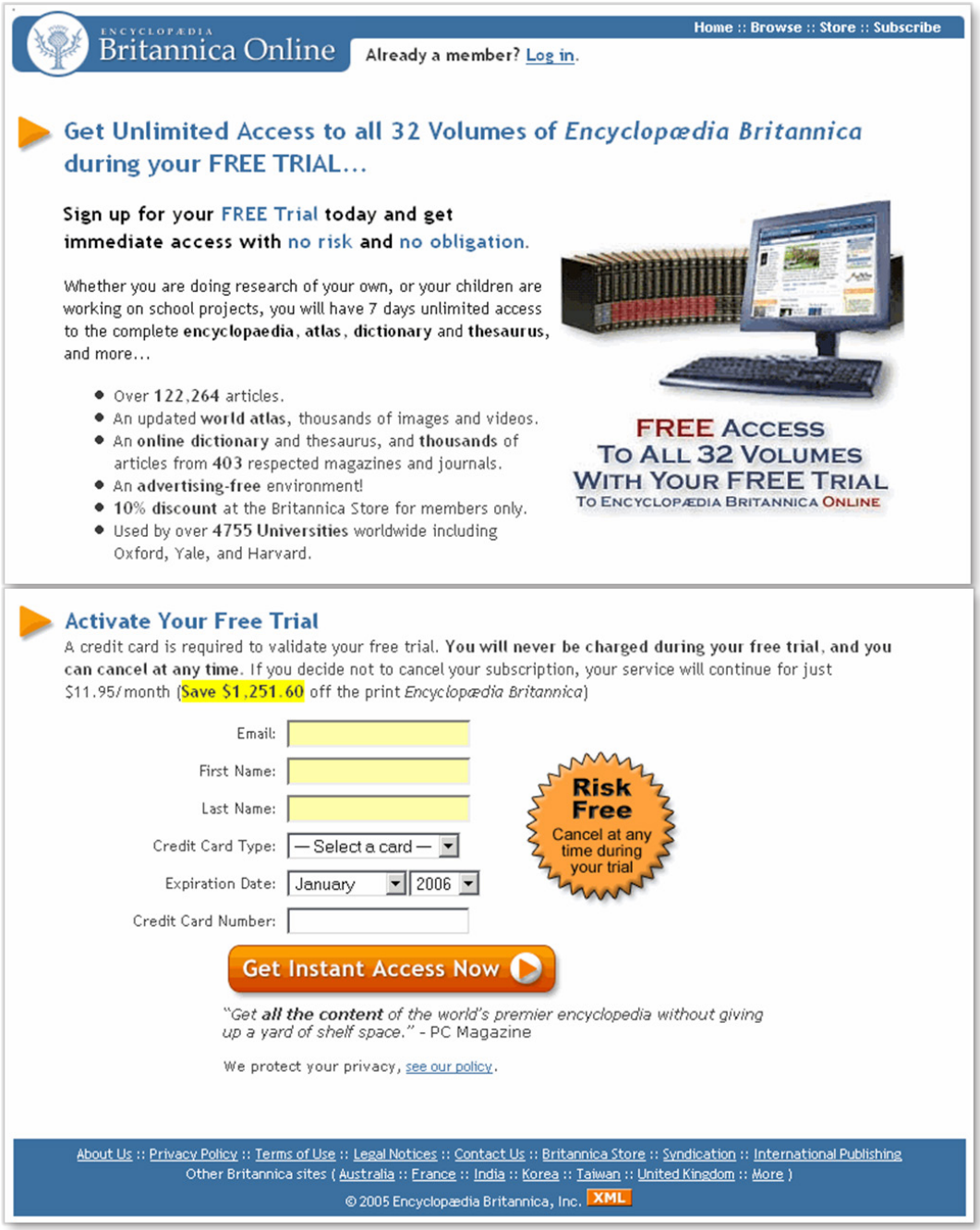

Figure 4.3

What was the result? A 103% increase in conversion (**See Figure 4.4**). Remember, EB would have been quite happy with 20%. This leads us to an extremely important question: When is the best time to introduce price? In our first experiment, we improved response by introducing it later in the process. In EB's case, we increased conversion by introducing it earlier. There are three points to guide our thinking on this matter.

Versions	CR	Rel. diff	Stat. Conf
Control	1.00%	-	-
Treatment	**2.03%**	**103%**	95%

Figure 4.4

First, **(1) in most cases, price should be presented only when the value is established and the fulcrum is fully weighted on the value side. It is essential that the value must be conceptualized, imagined, and fully appreciated prior to revealing the price**.

The first study we looked at falls into this category, and most situations will. When you are dealing with expensive products, service products or online sales that focus on a small group of products (as opposed to an e-commerce site where the price is displayed next to the product), this likely applies to you, as well.

On the other hand, **(2) our research also suggests that in some cases delaying the presentation of price can actually create anxiety – particularly in industries where people expect to see the price up-front. People fear they are being manipulated**.

The fear of manipulation or trickery is very strong, especially online. If your business falls into the category of businesses that either (a) may be mistrusted based on your industry/peers, or (b) is expected to provide the price upfront, you must be aware of this and cater to that expectation.

Finally, **(3) the key is to understand how price impacts the variables in the thought sequence**.

To know which category you fall into, you must have a clear understanding of how the price of your product will affect the other variables in the mental cost of the transaction in the mind of the prospect. This leads us to Principle #3.

Principle #3: Price must be tested

The idea of testing price gives many marketers enormous pause, if not outright anxiety. However, there is a way to do it that is effective and will not upset customers. We cover this in more detail in our advanced training materials, but for the purpose of this article, we must limit our focus to understanding the purpose of and reason for the test in the first place. A case study will help us with this.

TP1154 in the MECLABS Research Library is an experiment we ran in partnership with National Alert Registry, an online service that alerts you when a registered sex offender moves into your neighborhood. The goal of the test was to increase the total revenue created by subscriptions. It is crucial to note that the goal was not necessarily to lift conversion, but rather to increase revenue.

There was no control for this test. Rather, we ran three identical treatments, which you can see in **Figures 5.1 and 5.2**. The only difference between the pages was the price that was presented for the service: $10, $12.50 and $14.95.

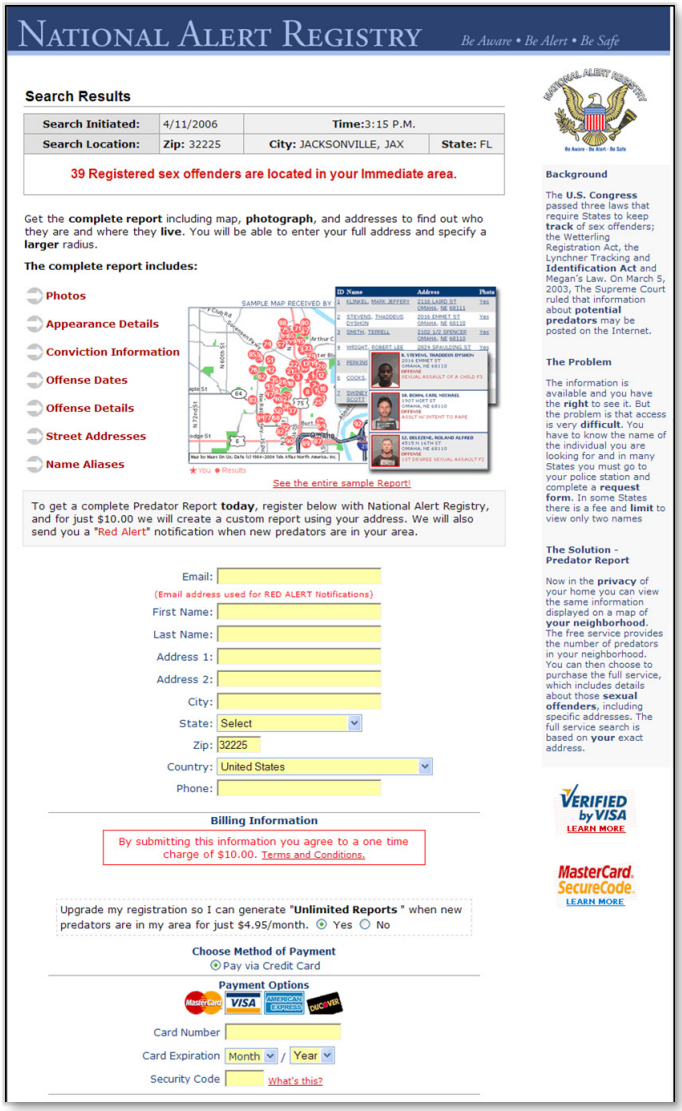

Figure 5.1

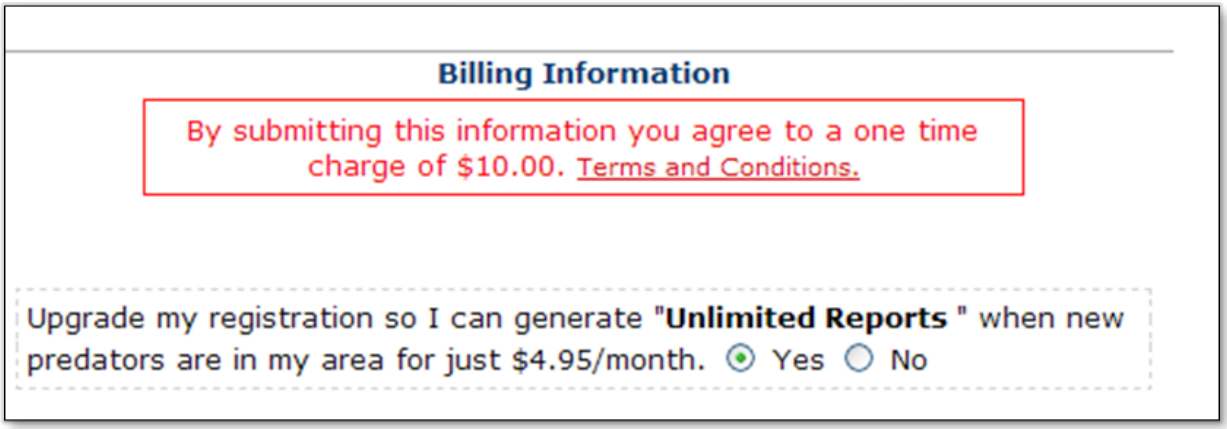

Figure 5.2

What were the results? First, we must say that the price to market each page remained the same: $808.02. So that didn't change, obviously. However, look at **Figure 5.3** to see the result breakdown. The $10 page generated $1,560 in total revenue and a 93% return on investment – more than double the ROI of either of the other pages. Additionally, we found that buyers who selected the $10 option were more likely to opt for an optional upgrade priced at $4.95/month. These additional upgrades added $247,233.94 per year to the company's revenue.

Price Point	Marketing Cost	Total Revenue	ROI
$10.00	**$808.02**	**$1,560.00**	**93.06%**
$12.50	$808.02	$1,175.00	45.42%
$14.95	$808.02	$1,106.30	36.91%

Figure 5.3

So the lowest price point produced the largest amount of revenue. This was counterintuitive to roughly 80% of marketers we polled informally. It just defies our expectations, and encapsulates why testing is so absolutely critical. So what can we learn from this? There are three key principles.

First, marketers must understand that **(1) presenting price is part science and part alchemy**. At the most basic level: It's a guess with some science involved. Science almost always begins with an intuitive leap, which is scientific jargon for a guess. But that guess is then formulated into a hypothesis. And the hypothesis is tested, and the testing of that hypothesis is what leads to an insight. Often it is not the insight we were expecting, and it often doesn't corroborate our guess, but it leads us to new information.[ix]

So to get started testing, you make an educated guess and go from there.

Further, **(2) company value is generated by maximizing the gap between your price to deliver and the customer's willingness to pay**. The value that you can create for you business lies in widening the gap between what people will pay for your product and the price you must pay to produce and deliver it. Michael Porter has done fascinating work on this subject. In Figure 4c, you can see his Price Frontier Graph, which can help you visualize this principle. The higher up and to the right you can move on the graph, the more money you will be making. But how can you know where you are on the graph?

And finally, at the end of the day **(3) you cannot know that you have the right price until you have run an experiment where you have charged too much (and thus discovered the top threshold of "willingness to pay")**.

This may be a frustrating truth to many of you, but it is a truth nonetheless. You simply cannot know you are at the right place until you've gone too far. When you do this, you discover the top threshold of your customers' willingness to pay, and that is where you find maximum value. You cannot get there any other way.

The Value of Price-Fixing Outweighs the Cost

You may be reading this and thinking to yourself that the mental cost of implementing the testing required to determine your ideal price point is simply not worth it. But the fact of the matter is that if you take the time to fix the way you handle the pricing of your products or services, your bottom line will improve and you will see that the value you create far outweighs the cost of testing.[x] If you want to take the road less traveled, and boost conversion, sales and revenue, there are three guideposts to direct you.

Principle #1: Price does not equal cost
Principle #2: Price can be either P+ or P-
Principle #3: Price must be tested

If you take the time to thoroughly digest these crucial principles and implement the changes they necessitate for the way you broach the issue of pricing, you will learn intimate knowledge you didn't yet know about your customers. And this knowledge will allow you to maximize the value you create with each and every sale.

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[i] "For another experiment from this company testing the color of the page, see *How Do Website Colors Impact Conversion? New research reveals 5 critical mistakes designers make with color.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/website-colors-and-conversion.html

[ii] For more on Calls-to-action see Daniel Burstein's article, *5 Common Call-to-action Errors*.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/marketing-insights/call-to-action-errors.html

[iii] For more on variable cluster testing and radical redesigns, see *Rapidly Maximizing Conversion: How one company quickly achieved a 58.1% lift with a radical redesign*.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/site-optimization/radical-redesign.html

[iv] For another software company that removed mention of price on a free trial page, see *SEO Landing Pages: How we achieved 548% more conversions without damaging organic rankings*.
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/search-optimization/seo-landing-pages.html

[v] At MECLABS, we use the term "cost-force" to help distinguish it from price. See Daniel Burstein's article, *Value Proposition: Why do customers act?*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/marketing-insights/customers-act-on-value-cost.html

[vi] See also, *263% Higher Conversion Rate: How reducing anxiety helped one company improve conversion rate three-fold.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/landing-page-optimization/reduce-customer-anxiety.html

[vii] At MECLABS, we use the term "perceived cost" to measure barriers to purchase in the mind of the customer. See *Website Optimization: 7 ways to reduce the perceived costs of lead generation offers.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/practical-application/reduce-percieved-cost.html

[viii] See also, *Product Pricing: 4 tips for communicating price in your marketing*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/practical-application/4-tips-product-pricing.html

[ix] Dr. Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director of MECLABS emphasizes the importance of testing as a learning and transformative agent in business. See *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

[x] See also, *Ask the Scientist: Price testing methods and practices.*
http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/practical-application/price.html

Copywriting: How long (or short) should your copy be?

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

How long should this blog post be?

What about your landing page? Or email?

Content length discussions are as old as human communication itself. When Ug (the first critic) said to Zog about his cave paintings, "You had me at 'Zog kill bison.' All the rest was unnecessary commentary. I lost interest."

On Wednesday's free MarketingExperiments Web clinic – "Long Copy vs. Short Copy: How discovering the optimal length of a webpage produced a 220% increase in conversion" – Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS, will share our discoveries about copy length.

But first, we asked the MarketingExperiments community for their opinions on copy length. Here's the long (and short) of it …

No such thing as too long or too short

There is no such thing as too long or too short when it comes to copy. It's like a long ball or a short ball in football. If it's effective, then that is the one to use. The right one.

The key to any copy is the headline, followed by the first paragraph and so on until the P.S., putting in sub-headings for the browsers and enough detail to emotionally engage the reader.

The same is true of video. When the quality of the writing is good, it creates emotional engagement with some logical elements that people use to rationalize their emotional buying decision. No one complains their favorite book was too long to read … or their favorite film was too long to watch. That's because they are emotionally engaging.

So, the answer to the question is …

"Copy should be long enough to emotionally engage the prospect and give them enough rational reasons to back their emotional decision to purchase."

If it's good enough copy, (the message) going to the right person, (the market) in the right format, (the media), then you are onto a winner.

When you can't deliver enough quality copy in the media you are using, e.g., radio ad, or press ad, then you write a call-to-action advert that gets people to request the detailed copy or go somewhere they can get hold of it.

- Boyd Butler, Consultant

What is your customer's goal? How do they find your content?

I'll take a counterpoint to Boyd.

First thing, not all content will work in all situations, regardless of your copy. You have to look at how the consumer will be engaging with the content, and how they come across it. If you break down content into two buckets, people engage with content to do the following:

1. Research a purchase
2. Professional development (Entertainment is a veil we use to make this more palatable)

Inside of both of these, you can then further break it down to [the question]: how do they find the content? This factor determines the odds of your content getting engaged with.

People find content two ways:

1. They search for it
2. It is sent to them

For example, if someone is researching a purchase, they are more likely to like a longer form of content. Why? Because they are seeking out information to make an informed decision. This means they are doing a search, and asking to engage with content.

Most of us also require a form to be filled out to access the content. This means there is a negotiation going on with the consumer as well. We are asking them to give up something in exchange for the content. So, there has to be [significant] value on the content for them to give up their email address.

In these situations, a longer, or full, document performs better. At first glance, a larger document appears to have more value than a short document, hence is a better deal for the person. So, they are more likely to engage with it in that situation.

Compare this to content sent via email. The consumer is not in research mode (unless your email is on a drip campaign following up researching activity), and they are in work mode. This means professional development content is more likely to get engaged with.

We are disrupting their day. So, they do not have the time to read a long form piece of content. They need to engage with the content in a short time period. They have to stop their task at hand to read your content. In this scenario, short form content works better.

I suggest the rule of five in these cases. Make sure your content can be digested in under five minutes, and that is clear to the consumer. If you do this, you are increasing your odds of engagement when disrupting their day.

You need to look at when and where your content is going to be engaged with, to make sure you are creating the best content, giving you the best odds of engagement. You also need to combine this with your goals. The goal of content should never be to make someone sales ready. It should be to move them to the next stage in their lifecycle. I have never read a piece of content and said, "OK, I'll buy it." Especially not in the B2B world where there is a large amount of research.

The stats back up these claims with the following data:

Stat #1: The more expensive your product, the more research someone must do.

Stat #2: People break research up into stages, and usually perform two to three different batches of research before they reach out to set up demos.

Stat #3: People prefer their content to be under five pages, in general.

This research will be made public in my report published by Pardot coming up in the next month. You can also see me present on this data at the B2B Inspiration Tour.

- Mathew Sweezey, Manager of Marketing Research and Education, Pardot

Focus on customer personas

I think it all depends on how you know your customer persona. For example, if you market to women/housewives/24-32/living in Texas, I think long copy of human talk (the one that you have while you are with you friends) will be perfect – especially if you include a chance to add comments (with a plugin like Disqus).

On the other hand, if you market to professional males/19-33/living in New York, then you need a catchy headline with a short copy.

- Ahmed Seddiq, Senior Operation Officer, Corporate Visa Services, Dnata, The Emirates Group

Major Experiment Briefing

Long Copy vs. Short Copy

How discovering the optimal length of a webpage produced a 220% increase in conversion

- Content created by Flint McGlaughlin, Austin McCraw, Shaun Metzger
- Research conducted by Nathan Thompson, Kyle Chapman, Nicholas Borszich

In all of marketing, there is likely no longer running debate, no more divisive and oft encountered discussion, than that about the optimal amount of copy on webpages, advertisements, emails and more. As we have seen in other experiments,[i] images and multimedia can be very powerful when it comes to conversion, but what about copy?

Most marketers heavily rely on copy in their digital campaigns, but is this practice truly effective? Should there be less copy for today's media-rich, postmodern generation? Or does the likelihood of a purchase increase with the multiplication of our words? You will find ardent supporters and detractors for each camp, but who is right?

At MarketingExperiments, we love to debate a question like this, but at the end of the day, we must test. This article represents what we have discovered over a decade of testing[ii] the length of webpage copy.

Experiment #1: How does copy length impact conversion?

The experiment is Test Protocol 1001 in the MECLABS Research Library, and the goal is to understand the impact of copy length on conversion rate. In this particular case, we were partnering with a Web company that provides personal psychological testing to curious individuals. It was looking to increase the form submissions for a free assessment, and it needed to drastically improve conversion in a relatively short period of time to reach a benchmark that carried additional funding for the business. It was a time-crunch situation, which is not unlike those you likely encounter on a regular basis in your work.

The control for the test was a well-designed page. In fact, we had helped the company's team design the control page, and it was already its best converting page. However, when we began to put ourselves in the shoes of the prospect, and walk through the thought sequence necessary to lead them to a conversion,[iii] we began to question whether all the copy on the page was needed. We hypothesized by reducing the

copy, we may be able to see an increase. In **Figure 1.1**, you can see the control page, the three treatments we ran against it and the conversion results.

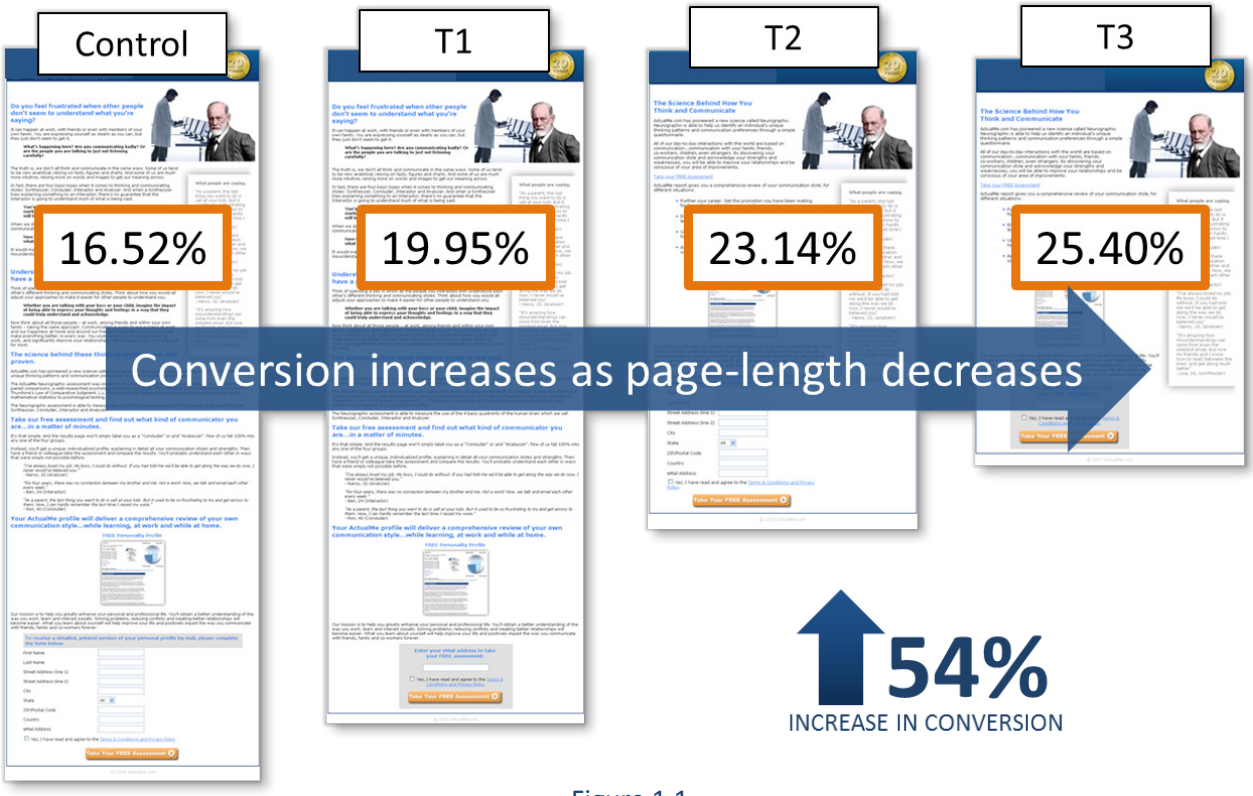

Figure 1.1

As the copy on the page decreased, the conversion percentage increased. The company needed to achieve 100,000 form submissions, and with the deadline a month away, it had only received 9,000. Not only did this boost help the team hit their mark, they actually surpassed it by collecting around 300,000 submissions.

So, what do we take away from this? We can sum it up in a key principle.

Key Principle: One of the most effective ways to increase conversion is to decrease friction. Indeed, our experiments suggest there is a disproportionately high return on efforts to reduce friction. Copy length is often the easiest form of friction to reduce.

Friction is psychological resistance a prospect encounters when engaging with your marketing materials. [iv] Reducing friction is one of the easiest things to do on your pages, because once you are looking at the page with your prospect's eyes, friction is relatively easy to identify. However, **the changes you make to alleviate friction often lead to disproportionately high conversion rate boosts compared to other**

changes you could implement. This is particularly relevant in the debate regarding copy, because copy length is often the easiest form of friction to create (and conversely, eliminate).[v]

In **Figures 2.1** through **2.4**, you can see four more examples of when copy length was producing friction and reducing the copy lead to an increase in conversion. In each of these situations, something very specific was unfolding in the thought sequence of the prospect. As marketers, **we don't optimize webpages, we optimize thought sequences**. So, the reason the copy reduction improved response is not because of fundamental Web design rule, but rather because a large amount of copy was simply not needed to help the prospect come to a buying decision. It was actually just clogging the process.

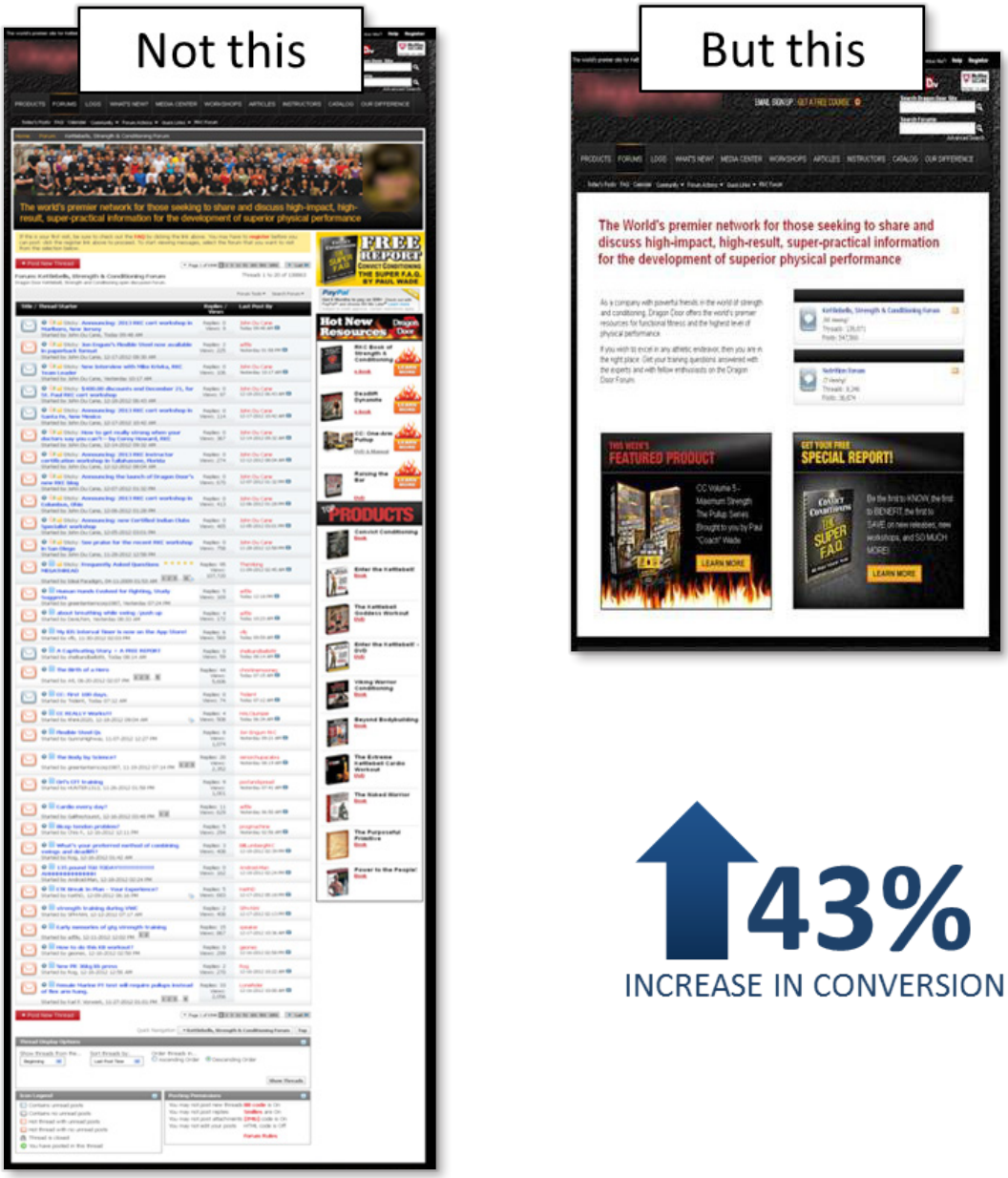

Figure 2.1

Figure 2.2

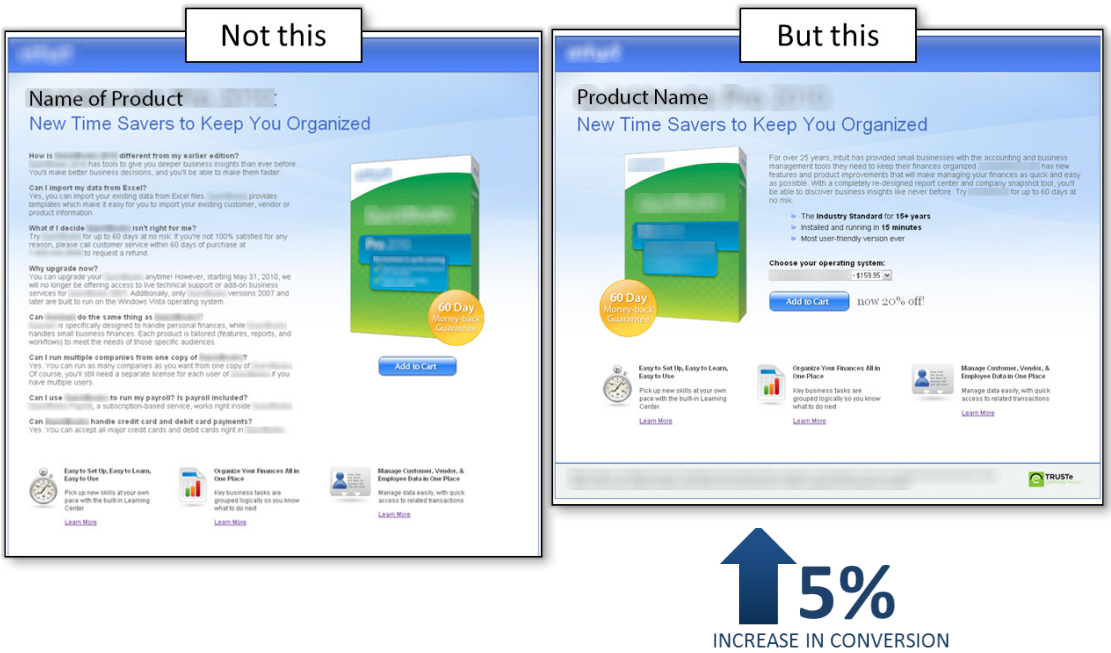

Figure 2.3

Figure 2.4

So, the shorter the page length, the higher the conversion rate. But is this always the case? Our curiosity must push us to ask these important questions: Is there ever a time when long copy could be a better option than short copy? If so, what is our criterion for determining which is the best option for the situation?

Experiment #2: How long copy produced a 220% increase in conversion

To investigate this, we shall turn to another case study, TP1662 in the MECLABS Research Library. The Research Partner is a clinic that helps people dealing with addiction and/or mental health problems. It has locations all over the world and is one of the best in the business. The goal of the test was to increase the number of leads captured on the main landing page. Of course, this business does not think about form captures in terms of "leads," but we only use this marketing terminology to help us communicate our point as it relates to marketing.

The control page, as you can see in **Figure 3.1**, is professionally designed. In many ways, the team has followed a number of marketing "best practices" when building this page, especially as it relates to copy (i.e., "the shorter, the better").[vi] However, when we looked at the page, we hypothesized there may be

more information needed to help someone actually take this monumental, almost frightening, step of requesting help. So, we decided to run a treatment, seen in **Figure 3.2**, that employed long-form copy to guide prospects through the vital information they needed to make a decision.

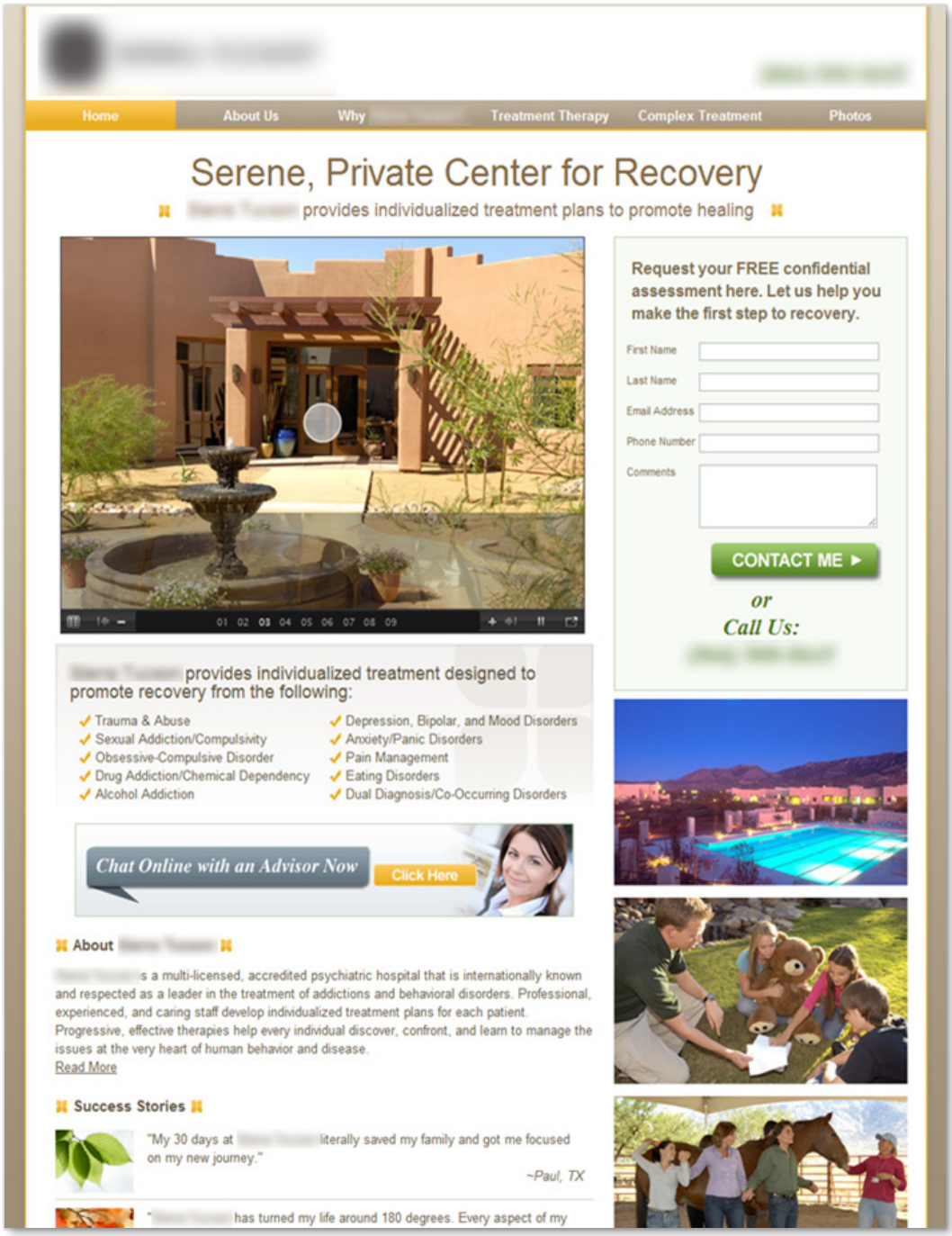

Figure 3.1

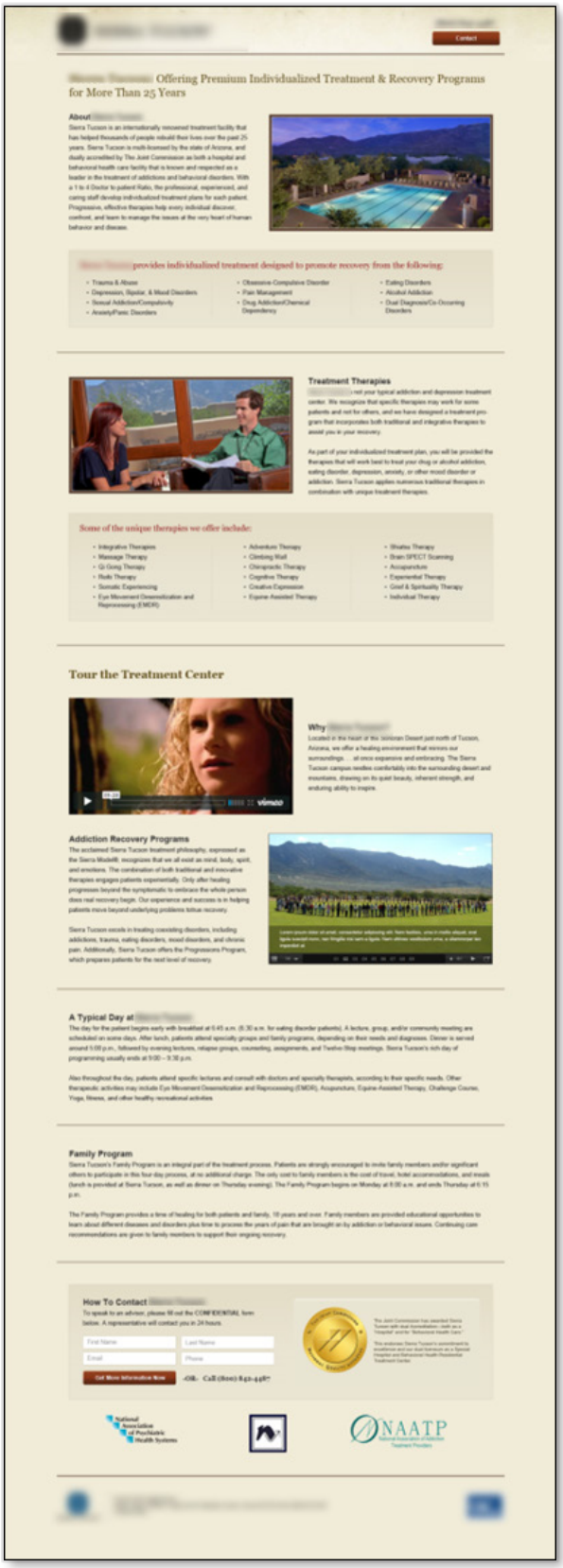
Offering Premium Individualized Treatment & Recovery Programs for More Than 25 Years
Treatment Therapies
Tour the Treatment Center
Addiction Recovery Programs
Family Program
How To Contact
NAATP

Figure 3.2

As you can see, our treatment page was nearly twice the length of the control. Additionally, the call-to-action was located at the bottom of the page, which violates the well-circulated marketing best practice of keeping the call-to-action above the fold. But what was the result of the test?

Design	Conversion Rate
Control	0.78%
Treatment	2.48%
Relative Difference	**220%**

Figure 3.3

The treatment page outperformed the control by 220%.[vii] This is a significant result, and the implications are immense for our marketing. But what are they? How are we to know when short copy is preferred? How are we to decipher when long-form copy will produce greater returns?

Long copy vs. short copy

As we stated above, one of the most effective ways to increase conversion is to decrease friction. And, copy length is often the easiest form of friction to reduce. But with that said, the marketer must also understand **(1) friction does not exist on the page, it exists in the mind of your customer. The goal of the marketer is not simply to decrease page length, but rather decrease mental effort for the customer.**[viii]

We must reduce friction. It is relatively easy and has potential for an enormous payoff. Yet, marketers are often confused about where friction actually resides. As we mentioned earlier, friction cannot be reduced by implementing a rigid list of best practices. Rather, we must engage with the mental process the prospect follows if we hope to identify the sources of friction in a page. It is not sufficient to decrease page length (though it can be helpful in the right situations, as we have seen), you must also decrease mental effort, as this is the true source of friction.

Further, the marketer must understand **(2) often adding copy to a page is required to guide the visitor's thought sequence to a purchase decision. In fact, our testing suggests a direct relationship between the cost/complexity of an offer and the amount of information required to achieve a conversion**.

To illustrate this principle, refer to the chart in **Figure 4.1** created by MECLABS' Director of Sciences. The bottom axis tracks the cost of your offer to the prospect. This includes everything from the financial cost to

the psychological and mental cost of the purchase. The vertical axis deals with the nature of the offer. At the bottom are simple, impulse purchases, and as the complexity of the offer increases, the offer moves up in the chart vertically.

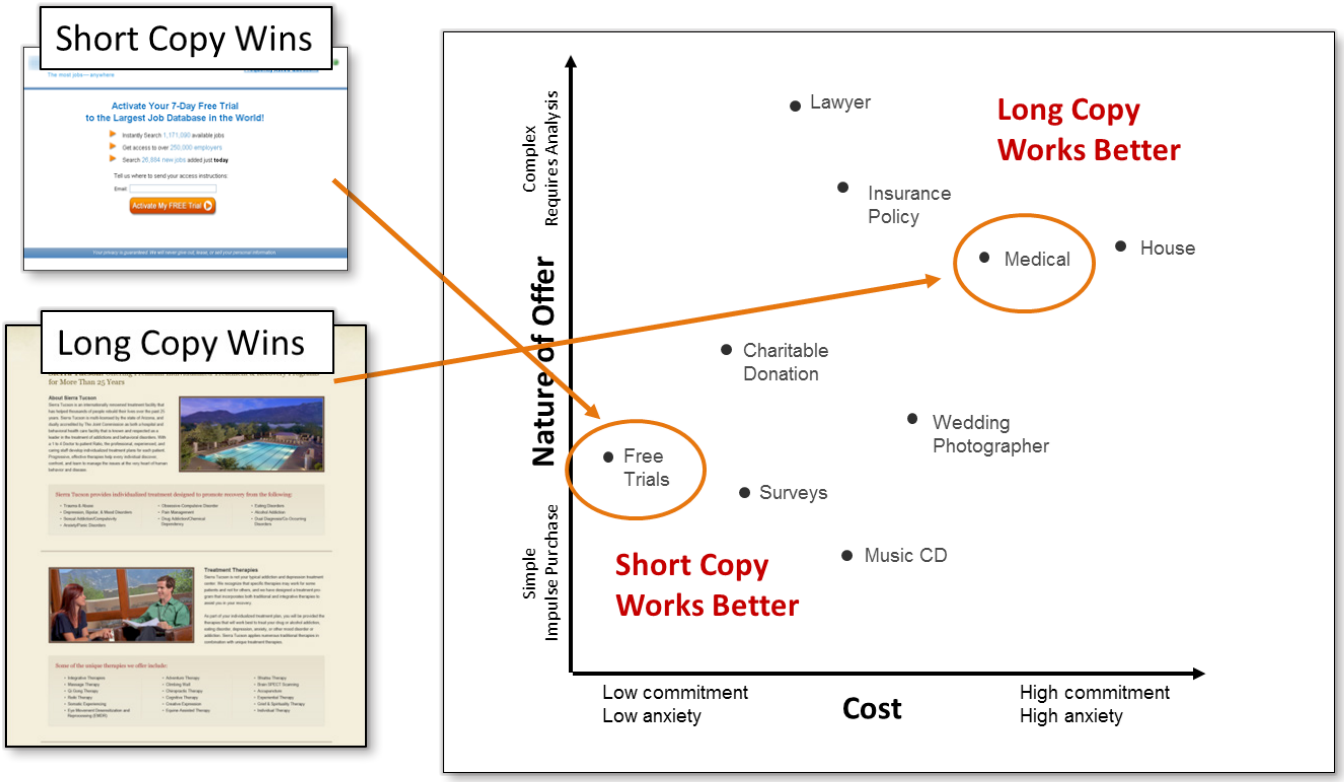

Figure 4.1

This means that the further an offer moves up and away from the center of the graph (axis point), the more likely that offer will need a long copy explanation.

This chart is incredibly valuable for helping you decide what type of copy is needed for a particular page or advertisement. Of course, the business categories placed on the chart are just ideas, and yours might be an exception. Remember as we have taught elsewhere, **there are no expert marketers, only experienced marketers and expert testers**.

A Form-Optimizing Checklist

To go one step further and help you implement these principles into your daily marketing life, we have put together a checklist of reminders to guide you as you make your copywriting decisions. Simply ask yourself

these questions and use the knowledge you gained from this article to come to an educated decision. **Of course, it is then always advisable to test.**

- **Question 1:** What is the nature of your product? Is it a "high-cost" or a "high-anxiety" product? Does your offer require little commitment on the part of the customer?
- **Question 2:** How complex is your product? Does it require much explanation, or is it grasped quickly with little explanation?
- **Question 3:** How much does your visitor know prior to arriving on your webpage? Is this their first exposure, or are they coming in from a channel in which they were already sold on the offer?
- **Question 4:** Does all of the copy either express or support the value proposition? If not, it is waste and can be eliminated.
- **Question 5:** Can the layout of the page be adjusted so the most essential information is in a vertically flowing main column and all supporting (unnecessary) copy is in a secondary column?

And the winner is ...

Who is the winner in the raging debate for the soul of copywriting? **The answer, as we find many times in marketing and life, is "it depends."** Short copy is generally the answer for low-cost, low-complexity offers, while long copy reigns supreme for expensive, complex offerings.

The key is to understand where your offer falls, and, most importantly, the thought sequence the customer engages in throughout the process. As you seek out the answer to the copywriting conundrum for your situation, use the checklist above to ask the right questions, and remember these three key principles:

Key Principle #1: One of the most effective ways to increase conversion is to decrease friction. Indeed, our experiments suggest there is a disproportionately high return on efforts to reduce friction. Copy length is often the easiest form of friction to reduce.

Key Principle #2: However, friction does not exist on the page, it exists in the mind of your customer. The goal of the marketer is not simply to decrease page length, but rather decrease mental effort.

Key Principle #3: Many times, adding copy to a page is required to guide the visitor's thought sequence to a purchase decision. In fact, our testing suggests a direct relationship between the cost/complexity of an offer and the amount of information required to achieve a conversion.

We can use principles from a decade of research to get us in the zone and make an educated guess, but ultimately this hypothesis must be tested. There are patterns (as mentioned above), but no absolute best practices. And, when it comes to copy length, we often discover our intuition and rules are incorrect. There are no expert marketers, only experienced marketers and expert testers.

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[i] See http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/images-vs-copy.html

[ii] All concepts in this article are based the MECLABS research library, which comprises more than 10,000 pages, 1 billion email sends, 5 million sales calls and 500,000 interviews marketing leaders from around the world. For more about the research, see: http://www.meclabs.com/catalog

[iii] The marketer is trying to see their marketing collateral through the eyes of the prospect. We must use customer logic instead of company logic. For more on this essential principle, see: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/what-your-customers-want.html

[iv] For more examples of reducing friction, see: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/landing-page-optimization/hidden-friction.html

[v] For more information about how friction impacts conversion, see Session 3 of the MECLABS online certification course on Landing Page Optimization: http://www.meclabs.com/training/online-course/landing-page-optimization/overview

[vi] Often, common best practices underperform when it comes to conversion. See more common "myths of optimization" here: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/marketing-optimization/the-usability-myth.html

[vii] These test results are statistically validated at a 95% level of confidence. For more information about our testing methodology for this and the other experiments in this article, see: http://www.meclabs.com/methodology

[viii] The marketer is not optimizing webpages, we are optimizing thought sequences: http://www.marketingexperiments.com/email-optimization/the-web-as-a-living-laboratory.html

Lead Generation Optimization: Two simple changes increase lead rate 166%

- John Tackett, Editorial Analyst

One of the most effective ways to increase conversion is by decreasing the amount of perceived resistance and aggravation your prospects experience in your lead capture process – or in short, dialing down the levels of friction.

In today's MarketingExperiments blog post, we're going to get our hands a little dirty by diving into some evidence-based marketing to learn how the MECLABS research team made two simple changes to a lead capture process that increased lead rates 166%.

What is friction?

Before we get started, let's get clear on what friction is exactly.

At MarketingExperiments, friction is defined as "a psychological resistance to a given element in a sales or sign-up process." In other words, it's a psychological element present in your marketing that prevents prospects from acting on your offer.

It's also important to mention here that your goal is not to eliminate all friction. Anytime you ask for information, there is going to be at least some amount friction present. Instead, you want test and optimize your way into identifying and mitigating as much friction in your lead capture process as possible.

Now let's take a look at the research notes for a little background …

Background: A luxury home builder seeking to sell homes to families with a higher-than-average income level

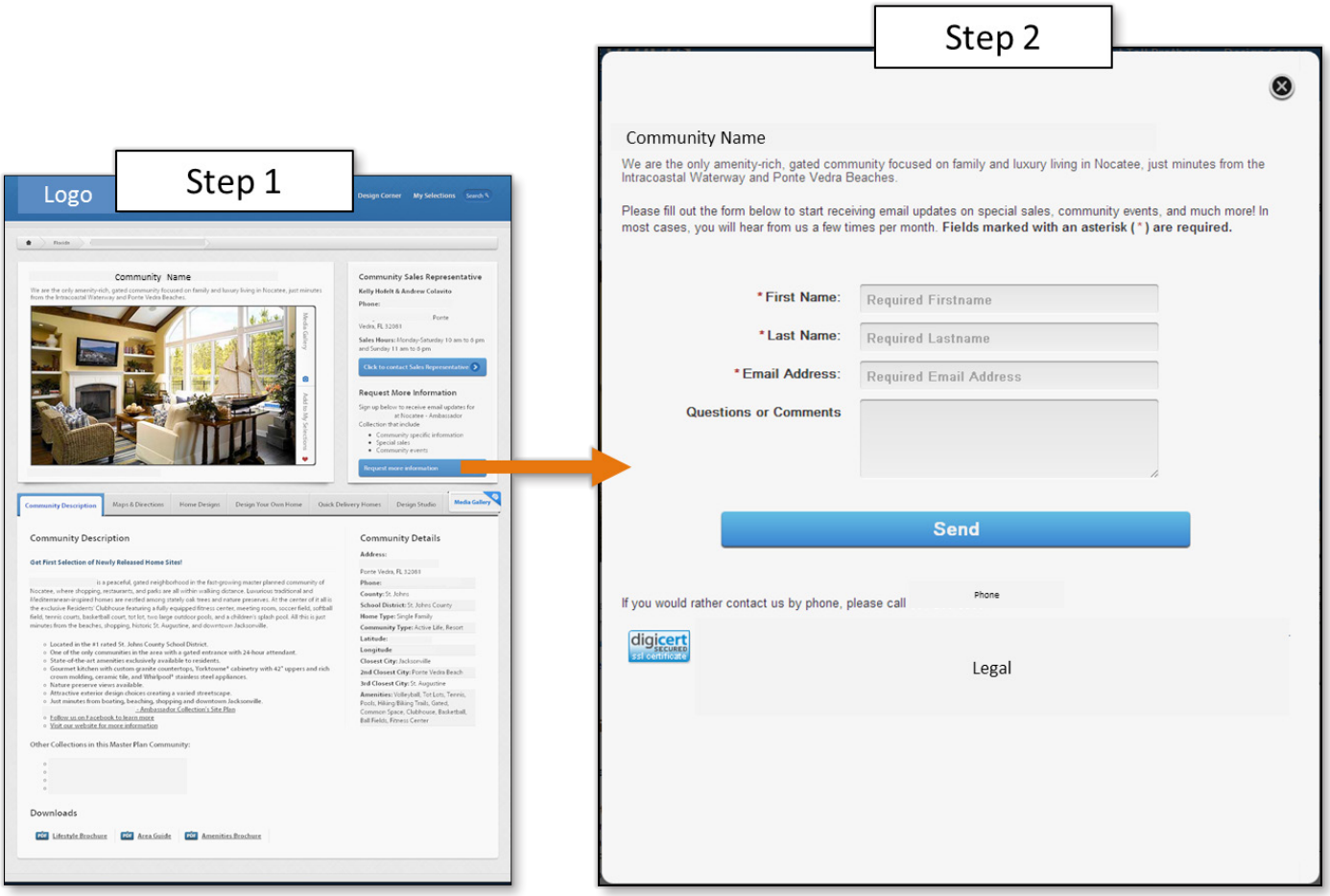
Goal: To increase the number of leads

Primary Research Question: Which color scheme will result in a higher conversion rate?

Approach: A/B multifactor split test

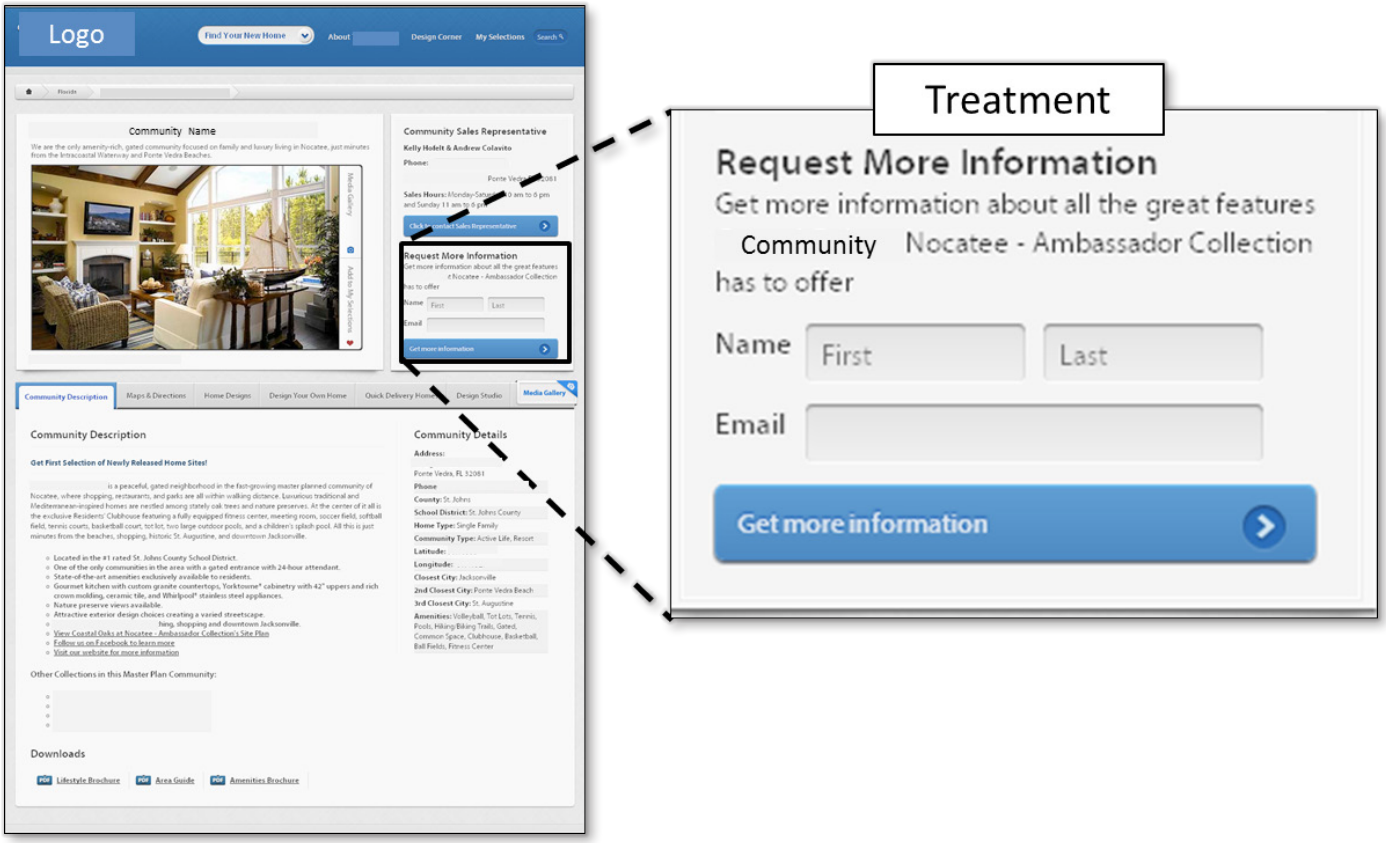
Control

The control featured a two-step lead capture process that started with a “request more information” call-to-action that redirected prospects to a second form field page requiring users to provide their first and last name and email address into the form fields.



Treatment

For the treatment, the team removed the second step completely, changed the form field layout to appear fewer in number, made providing information optional for users and removed the questions and comments field.



Results

166% increase in lead rate

The new form design improved the lead generation rate by 166%

	CR	Relative Difference	Statistical Confidence
Control	0.9%	-	-
Treatment	**2.3%**	**166.5%**	**99.4%**

What you need to understand

By minimizing friction through reducing the number of steps and fields, the treatment outperformed the control by 166%. To learn more about how friction impacts conversion; you can watch the free on-demand MarketingExperiments Web clinic replay of "Hidden Friction: The 6 silent killers of conversion."

Customer Management

Infographic: Customer experience in the digital age

- David Kirkpatrick, Senior Reporter

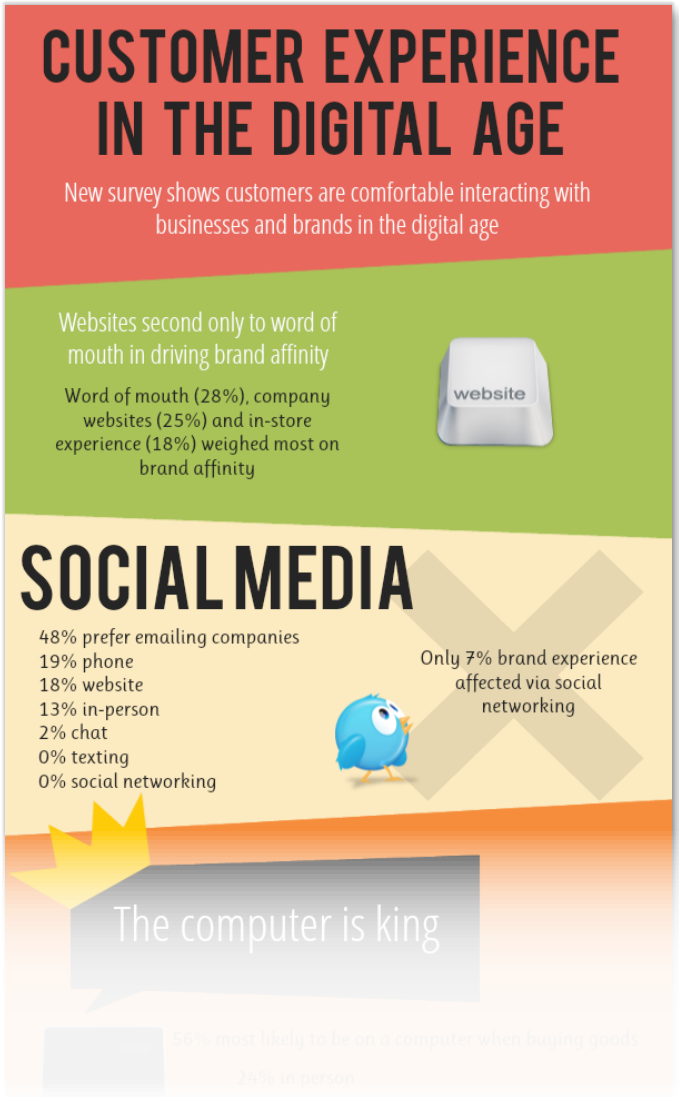
For today's MarketingSherpa blog post, we have an infographic from Kentico, "Customer Experience in the Digital Age."

The research behind the infographic was an eight-question survey of 200 Internet users via SurveyMonkey in February 2013, and the survey was open to both consumer and B2B brand interactions.

Here are few data points on the surveyed Internet users:

The gender breakdown was 54% male and 46% female, and the age breakdown included …

- 18-24 – 10%
- 25-34 – 20%
- 35-44 – 24%
- 45-54 – 19%
- 55-64 – 15%
- 65-74 – 10%
- Over 74 – 2%



To help put this infographic – and the research that went into the content – into context, I had the chance to interview Thom Robbins, Chief Evangelist, Kentico Software.

***MarketingSherpa:* What were some of the key findings?**

Thom Robbins: Company websites were second (25%) behind word of mouth (28%) in weighing most heavily on impacting brand affinity. In-store experiences factored [at] 18%.

Perhaps most surprising was the discovery

that only 7% of respondents felt their brand experience was affected by social networks such as Facebook or Twitter, but I think this may be misleading. People may be influenced by social media a lot more than they think they are, through both direct and indirect interactions.

***MS:* Did any results come as a surprise?**

TR: Other than the small role social media seemed to have, which I think merely shows us it's a channel still on the rise, I was most surprised to see that 69% of those surveyed said they were willing to give up personal data in exchange for more customized service.

***MS:* Were there any results that might inform future research, or uncovered data points that deserve/require a deeper dive into customer insights?**

TR: Well, I thought it was very telling that 97% were ready to forgive poor service as long as the company offers up a quick response or correction.

It's important for businesses to know that while mistakes will be made, in the age of social media, every single customer experience counts. You can't afford [to have] anyone to walk away unhappy, and there's really no excuse given how forgiving customers are as long as you respond quickly to complaints.

***MS:* What is the key learning marketers should take away from these data points? How can marketers use this information to improve their marketing efforts?**

TR: I think we learned the biggest sin is to keep the customer waiting.

45% named wait times as their biggest customer complaint.

32% were most put off by unhelpful company reps. Bad experiences can also be blamed on inferior websites (9%) and too much email (9%).

But overall, with 56% saying they're most likely to have meaningful brand interactions at the computer, I think our survey shows businesses need to do whatever they can to optimize the digital experience for customers.

This includes experimenting with emerging tools and making sure their websites and overall service is helpful, responsive and personalized.

***MS:* Do you have any forward-thinking ideas or opinions on the future of customer experience in the digital age?**

TR: As we are seeing, every single experience is vital to the lifetime value of any customer.

The evolution of technology has only just begun to enhance this.

Today, we are seeing personalization becoming a mandatory component of customer experience. Moving forward, personalization will need to become predictive. This means marketing departments will need to understand, leverage and action the mounds of customer data being collected to create a unique behavior pattern.

Marketing Research Chart: SEO most effective tactic for lead gen, but also among the most difficult

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

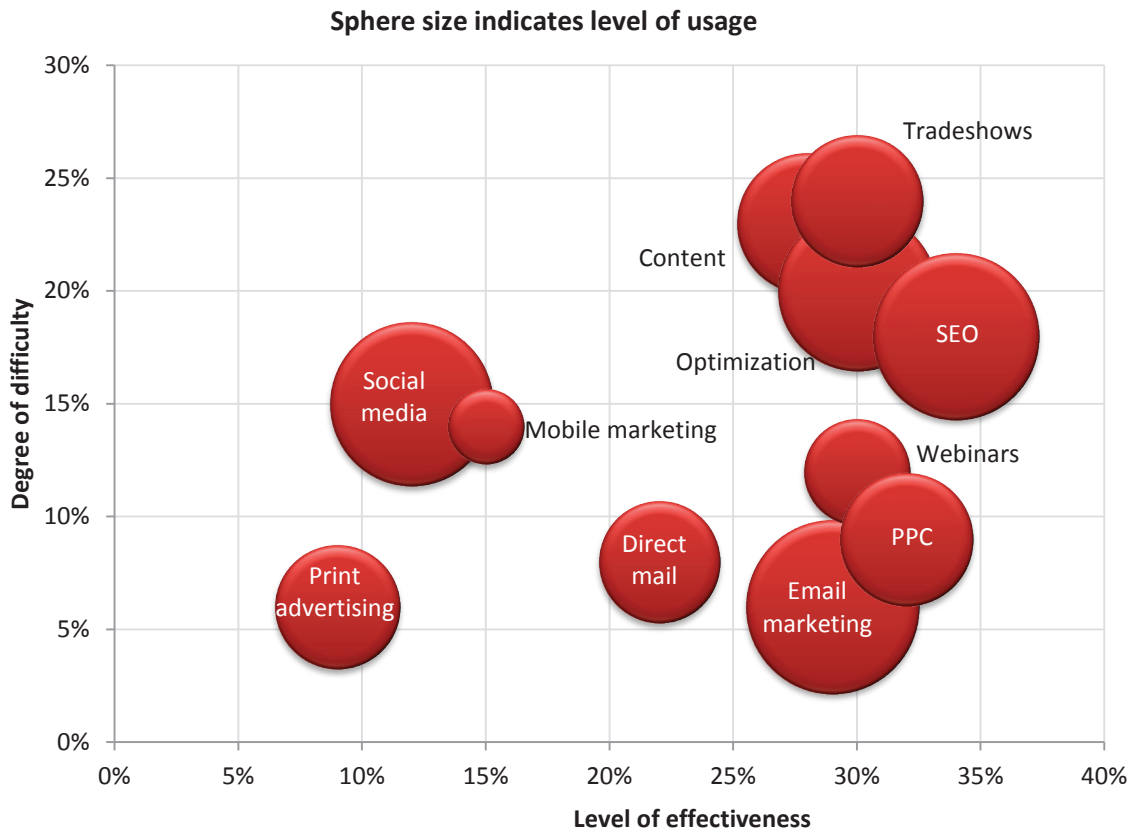
Usage of a lead generation tactic can sometimes be driven by the hype surrounding it. Other marketers take an unbiased view of the tactic, and gauge its effectiveness versus its difficulty.

So, we asked marketers the following three questions, and combined them into one chart to balance these considerations …

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

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

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



marketingsherpa

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Lead Generation Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded January 2012, N=1,915

As you can see, search engine optimization was considered the most effective tactic, but also among the most difficult. However, it is not as difficult as another highly effective tactic (and important component of SEO) — content.

Trade shows are considered more difficult than content. Although, even with the physical logistics issues surrounding trade shows along with the difficulty of sticking out on an often-crowded expo floor (not to mention the challenge of coming up with the coolest free swag), trade shows were rated as barely more difficult than content.

On the flip side, email marketing was considered both among the most effective and least difficult tactics. Not surprisingly, it was also highly used. Mobile marketing, still an emerging tactic (although one that should go hand-in-virtual-glove with email) is among the least used tactics. Somewhat surprisingly, given its relative newness to most marketers, it was only considered about mid-range in difficulty.

One of the biggest opportunities appears to be in webinars (another subset of the highly difficult content marketing). While marketers struggled somewhat with content, they did find webinars much easier. Combining that with their high degree of effectiveness and relatively low rate of usage (in other words, less competition for your webinars), they could be a tactic worth looking into for your lead generation planning if you do not already utilize them.

Points to consider

Use this data, and the following questions, to help your marketing department evaluate its efforts.

What challenges do you face with your SEO? Is it purely around the technical challenges of your website, or do you also struggle with the relationships necessary for link building or the content that must feed the beast?

What challenges to you face with creating content? How do you plan to overcome them? Do you have a dedicated writer(s) or content creator(s) on your marketing team, do you outsource your content creation to a freelance writer(s) or an agency? Or is your marketing team responsible for generating its own content?

Do you overlook relatively laggard techniques like print advertising simply because they don't generate as much hype in the industry? While it has a low level of effectiveness, might its low level of difficulty and usage (competition for eyeballs) make it a worthwhile tactic to explore?

Share your experiences with the MarketingSherpa community

Use the above questions internally with your own team to help improve your lead generation efforts, and also share your actionable advice and inspirational stories on the MarketingSherpa LinkedIn Group discussion about this chart for a chance to be featured in a future blog post.

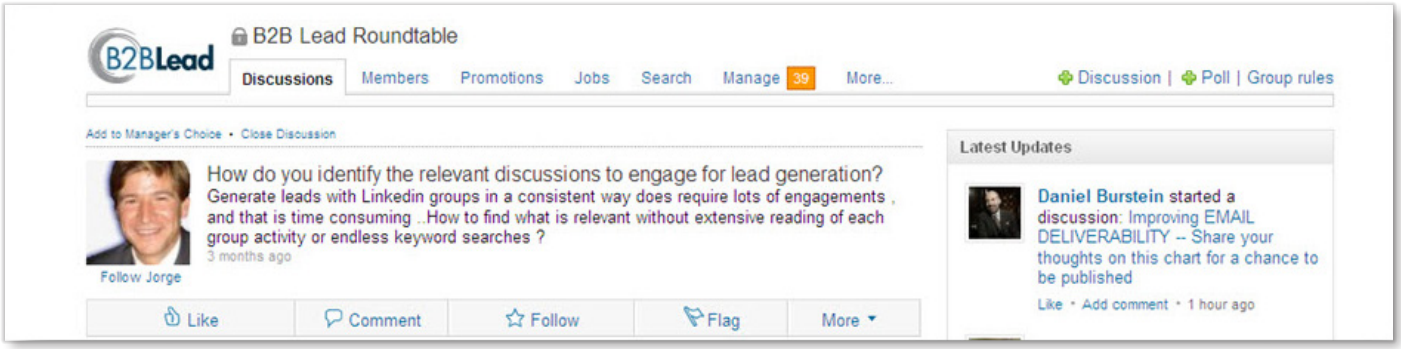
For more information about lead gen, read the free excerpt of the MarketingSherpa *2012 Lead Generation Benchmark Report*.

Lead Generation: 5 tips to generate leads faster on LinkedIn

- Andrea Johnson, Editorial Manager

Wouldn't it be great if you could just collect hot leads by spending a few minutes a day on LinkedIn?

A member of our B2B Lead Generation Roundtable LinkedIn Group was likely dreaming about this when he asked the group for a way to generate leads through LinkedIn that "doesn't require a lot of time, engagement and endless keyword searches."



I posed this question to Ellie Mirman and Shreesha Ramdas. Mirman is head of SMB (small- and medium-sized business) Marketing for HubSpot, and Ramdas is General Manager of LeadFormix, both are marketing organizations specializing in B2B lead generation.

Guess what? They said it is possible to generate hot leads in a few minutes a day.

But, here's the rub: It's going to take time, effort and content to reach that point.

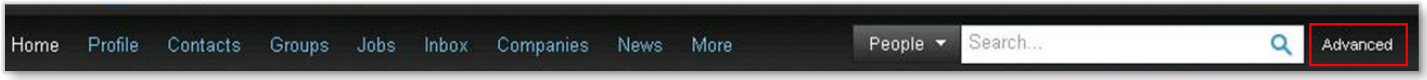
(If you have heard the term "content" tossed around in marketing, but aren't quite sure what it is, it's just a fancy term for information. Content could be anything from a link to a newspaper article, to a blog post. Every time you see the word "content," just think, "Oh, they mean information.")

Here are their five essential tips to getting to the point where it's easy to generate leads on LinkedIn.

1. Know and segment your audience.

Ramdas advised following groups, individuals and companies so information about them fills your LinkedIn stream. You'll see what's important to them through the information they're posting, and the questions they're asking. From that, you can determine what content they'll value.

But, you only have so much time in the day, so he also advised being selective about the companies and people you follow, and the groups you join. To those ends, Ramdas suggested taking advantage of the advanced search option on the upper-right corner of the LinkedIn page.



It enables you to search people by:

- Past and current employers
- Industry
- Location
- Title

For groups, he advised using the keyword function to:

- Search by industries in your marketplace, e.g., "semiconductors"
- Search for the roles that populate the influencers and decision-makers in your marketplace, e.g., "semiconductors, marketing"
- Selecting the groups where they are most active – some will be open and anyone can join, others will require approval for you to join

"Those that require approval will have very relevant members," Ramdas said.

2. Proceed with caution if you don't want to be perceived as a spammer.

Once you have a list of names or are a member of a group, take it slow and move forward thoughtfully.

"Build up your credibility," Ramdas advised.

3. Post content to groups and your own LinkedIn stream that matters to your marketplace.

To do so, Mirman offered these tips:

- **Don't sell.** "The main rule of thumb is speaking to your target market's problems or common challenges without selling your product," she said, "and offer content that can help them – regardless of whether they buy from you – at least once or twice daily."
- **Keep it current.** "Latch onto anything around recent news and current industry events," she advised. "Find ways to marry current events to your industry."

- **Stay within the channel.** "Stay specific to your social network, for instance, LinkedIn news does well on LinkedIn. Facebook news does well on Facebook," Mirman said.
- **Be proactive with blogging.** She advised posting at least once weekly on real industry issues that point back to your solution."Sales and Marketing should work closely together. The marketing team should be creating blogs and other content, and Sales can help ensure they are creating the right content by letting Marketing know what their prospects care about," she explained.

4. Is time of the essence? Consider a paid program.

They're often the fastest way to get your message in front of your prospects, Ramdas said.

"So, for example, if I am going to target a VP of marketing and directors of marketing, I can run a LinkedIn banner ad promoting a white paper to all those members; it's easier than joining groups and following discussions," he explained.

But, those ads probably aren't going to be as effective if there isn't the groundwork of an existing relationship.

You can also pay for programs that can extract contact information from LinkedIn Groups so you can contact members directly.

"I wouldn't advise doing this unless what you have to say is very relevant to the members," Ramdas added. "Again, build up your credibility first."

5. Message unto others ...

Mirman believes there's a golden rule to LinkedIn messages – contact others as you would like to be contacted.

"I get all of these LinkedIn messages from people I have no relationship with, maybe some sort of exchange at some point, but they have jumped way far ahead of the sales and marketing process by contacting me," she explained. "They're pitching me on an idea, solution or product that has nothing to do with my issues. It's very irritating and I tune them out.'

The key, she said, is to share content your prospects will find interesting, share with their peers and motivate them to click through to your website and contact you.

"When you do that, you're reaching more than just a few prospects, you're reaching your prospects and their networks," Mirman said. "The return on your time invested will increase exponentially and lead generation will become much easier – prospects will be seeking you out."

Lead Generation: How well do you really know what your customers want?

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

"It is absolutely necessary. Don't base your marketing on assumptions and allow your customers to identify your success."

– Alex Corzo, Manager of Brand Integration, Orlando Health

How important is value prop testing?

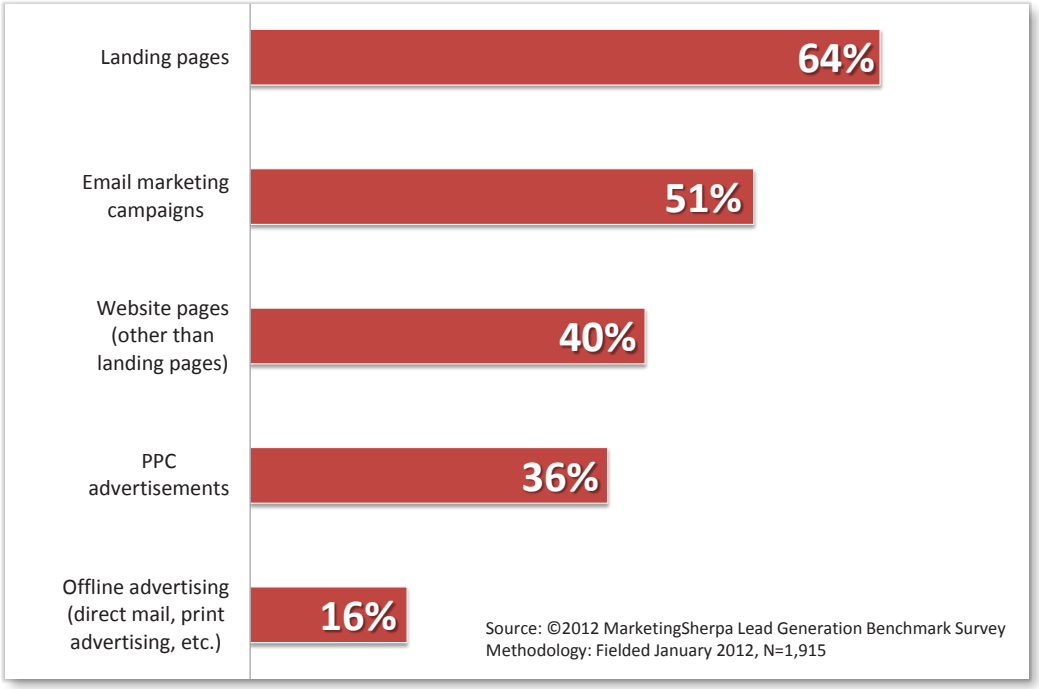
The case studies at Optimization Summit 2013 reaffirmed the importance of value proposition testing for me. For example, through testing, Jon Ciampi, Vice President Marketing, Business Development & Corporate Development, CRC Health, learned his customers craved trust, not luxury. He reinvented his lead funnel based on this insight, changing everything from his company's landing pages to his team's call scripts.

So, how can you discover your value proposition?

At Optimization Summit, my colleague Austin McCraw, Senior Editorial Analyst, MECLABS, shared "How You Can Use Email to Discover the Essence of Your Value Proposition (in 5 Simple Steps)."

But email is just one channel for testing value proposition. So, in the MarketingSherpa *2012 Lead Generation Benchmark Report*, we asked…

Q: Which methods have been the most effective at testing your value proposition? Select up to three responses.



We also reached out to our audience, and asked for their value proposition testing tips. The lowest response in the chart, offline advertising (in this case, using cold calling), received the most passionate response, as you'll see below …

Different tactics work for testing (and challenging) different aspects of your value proposition

"For example, you can't test the "secondary aspects" of your value proposition with PPC advertising because of obvious limitations, but it's an ideal method for finding out what are the strongest motivators ("primary aspects") of your value proposition.

It seems many people forget landing pages aren't as objective as they might think. The traffic source affects expectations (and who comes to your page). So, one aspect of your value proposition might appear to work best, but really you only know what those visitors respond to.

For example, you sell supplements and you're running an ad at a site focused on marathon running. You get visitors interested in extreme endurance. Your landing page should then focus on endurance. In other words, if one aspect of your value proposition is about building endurance, that's what will appear to be the most important aspect of it. But if the traffic came from a bodybuilding site, you'd better focus on other aspects or at least frame your value proposition differently."

– Peter Sandeen, Online Conversion Specialist

Cold calling

"In a business-to-business setting, I make a few hundred cold calls myself.

By the time I finish those calls, I know with a fairly high degree of confidence whether there is a need in the marketplace for what I'm offering.

Since I make those calls myself, I also have firsthand evidence of whether the value proposition resonates with prospective buyers. Only after do I allocate marketing dollars to communicating the message.

I know this method is "expensive," but I'm a founder, so for me it's about making the time and for that reason spending on marketing first would be more expensive.

Anyway, guess what I've found over and over again trying this approach in a variety of B2B situations? If the value proposition doesn't include making them money or saving them time, it probably won't resonate!"

– David Chevalier, Co-founder, SalesBlend

And more cold calling

"In my opinion, there is no substitute for David's approach of having the founder or equivalent making enough cold calls.

Using senior execs to personally do testing is still not cheap, but really talking to that many prospects is not only priceless but an incredible kickstart to building pipeline for the sales that follow the test."

– Chris Beall, Chief Product Officer, ConnectAndSell

Five Ideas on the Business-to-Individual Concept for B2B Marketers

- David Kirkpatrick, Senior Reporter

For the next two weeks, the MarketingSherpa B2B Marketing newsletter will feature articles on two cutting-edge marketing concepts — the emerging "B2i" or business-to-individual idea, and the challenge of marketing to digital natives versus digital immigrants.

These articles will not be the typical how-to instruction, although you will find some tactical advice for tackling these emerging marketing topics.

This week, we take a look at the B2i concept. Essentially, this idea postulates B2B and B2C marketing strategies and tactics are coming together and merging into simply marketing to individuals.

This can be seen in personalization across both marketing disciplines, and even in how there is some measure of mirroring between lead nurturing and engagement with B2B marketing and ongoing customer engagement and nurturing in consumer marketing. One happens before the sale, and the other after, but the basic marketing principles are increasingly similar.

Getting personal is increasingly important for B2B marketers. Here's an example of why you want to be connected to the person and not the database record.

Brian Carroll, Executive Director, Revenue Optimization, MECLABS, said, "When I speak to audiences and ask how many of them updated at least one thing on their business card this year — phone number, job title, name, address or email — at least 50% of the audience lifts their hand. My research has shown that at least 4% of your list is changing every month and that means that after a year, 48% of your list has changed something."

To find out more on this topic, we were able to speak with an incredible group of industry experts:

- Rich Fleck, Vice President of Strategy, Responsys
- Jim Lecinski, Vice President US Sales and Service, Google
- Michael Ni, CMO, Avangate
- Brian Solis, Principal Analyst, Altimeter Group

Read on to learn more about the B2i marketing concept, and be sure to catch next week's MarketingSherpa B2B Newsletter, where we'll cover the challenge of marketing to digital natives versus digital immigrants.

Idea #1. Creating relationships should be a philosophy, not just a marketing strategy

Solis had great insights to kick off this topic:

> You know, the concept of B2i is more important than the world of just business is ready to handle, but it is exactly what we're talking about in these [marketing] moments of truth.
>
> What we're really talking about is just real people talking to real people, and I have often said that maybe the best thing for business is to think about it if we just stop talking B2C and B2B and really just started looking at P2P — just the idea of people-to-people.
>
> Some of the best businesses that I'm working with today are looking — even though that they might have business customers — they're looking at what the relationship would be between their business customer and then the ultimate customer because they know that if they can empower their customer to think about the people that they're trying to reach, they could design a better product or service to not just add a competitive advantage, but to deliver a better experience proactively.
>
> Then, they know that they're going to have a competitive advantage against all of the other B2B companies. And, they're mindful about the customer, and to me this is incredibly important because without it, we are going to get caught up in business as usual, which is, as you know — design a product or service, sell it, market it incredibly well and then react to what happens.
>
> When you can consider what it's like to deliver a better experience even as you are baking it into the product or service, when you're thinking about what reactions could look like, when you're thinking about how do you best … not just condition but introduce a positive experience in every step, then you have this fantastic relationship from the get-go and where the model of people to people is just literally proven in everything you do.
>
> It's not just a matter of strategy, but it's almost like a matter of philosophy.

Idea #2. Relevance matters, too

Lecinski made the point that along with relationships, relevance is part of the B2i marketing concept.

> At Google, we talk about the concept of relevance, which I know many companies, many marketers are thinking a lot about, and obviously, I can have the best relationship with you as a customer, whether that's a B2B customer or a B2C customer, if I can have a relevant conversation with you or talk with you about things that you find relevant.
>
> So, the only way I can know what's relevant to you is to have some sort of two-way discussion or two-way relationship with you, and if I have that ability, then we can have a B2i type conversation as opposed to either a much more mass B2C or mass B2B-type conversation.

Idea #3. The customer is now completely in charge

This is a concept marketers have hopefully been hearing for a couple of years at the very least — the idea the customer is now in charge of the buying process.

A 2011 study by the Corporate Executive Board and the Marketing Leadership Council with 1,500 participants found for B2B companies, those prospects complete 57% of their research before the first engagement with Sales.

In speaking with industry thought leaders, most believe the number is even higher today. There isn't research to cite, but thought leaders feel B2B prospects are likely completing 70% to 85% of their research before ever even raising their hand. Sales loves this because these prospects are essentially self-qualifying. For marketers, it's a challenge.

Ni said consumers — and this includes B2B buyers — are more empowered than they ever have been before.

"In fact, they are buying more like 'prosumers,' especially as it relates to digital goods," he added.

Ni said people can go online and drive the conversation.

"It's really self-directed. And, this gets to now fundamentally how it's changing the touch points, and how marketers have to think about how they treat the customers every time they engage with them. Because, customers clearly are engaging any time, any place. Whether it's online, on their [mobile] device, in social — and they expect to be serviced."

He continued, "They expect it on their own terms … you see that businesses are buying more like consumers. The ability to pay as you go, taking down the upfront costs."

Ni made the point that individuals at companies can now buy technology directly with corporate credit cards incrementally without having to go through a more arduous process through accounting. When these individuals need some sort of asset, they now just go out, do some research online and buy the smallest piece of what they need and get the higher level buy-in at the company later when that piece needs to be expanded upon.

For more tactical advice, Ni said companies should make it easy for those prospects to conduct self-discovery and self-service. His advice was to provide content and tools that enable those potential prospects to make the decision to buy from you.

The following are three tactics from Ni to help you implement B2i to your B2B target customer.

> B2i represents a shift for B2B marketers in terms of how to engage, transact and continually service the new buyer expectations.
>
> Here are three specific tactics to try and implement B2i.

1. Can your customers buy online, via a self-service channel? Most B2B marketers are familiar with lead nurturing and invest a lot of time in content marketing and other tools, but fail to acknowledge that there are some buyers who will never convert to a large deal as required by their direct sales team, even though they are real, qualified prospects.

Adding a self-service, e-commerce site will immediately add a new revenue line, albeit small, justify marketing spend and provide a path to future growth.

2. Can your e-commerce site co-exist with direct sales in a symbiotic relationship? There is often an artificial wall separating e-commerce from Direct Sales, usually with channel conflict concerns. In the new B2i world, every prospect can be thought of originating as a smaller deal, and leveraging the e-commerce channel as an upsell path to direct sales. Addressing incentives on both teams will see a boost in revenues, as product usage guarantees a different kind of sales conversation — one that is consultative versus a hard sell.

3. Can your contact center seamlessly sell and service your customers? In the B2i world, every touch point needs to be prepared to transact, as necessary, at all times. Contact centers need to be able to easily upgrade, downgrade, pro-rate, co-terminate and extend contracts — including first-time trials — and ensure long-term customer satisfaction. This means that there is a prior knowledge of the customers' purchases, interactions and intent during the moment of truth that empowers the agents to act in real time during the conversation.

Marketers can achieve this by making the latest promotions/offers available and integrated into their commerce system of record. Begin with on-the-glass integration, and execute a deeper business process integration over the long term.

Idea #4. Pay attention to the behavior of your prospects

Fleck said at Responsys, the team uses analytics to track behavioral cues from those digital visitors and then uses that information to create what he described as "engagement paths" to guide those prospects along.

Two segmentation areas based on behaviors were "recencies and frequencies."

For example, Fleck explained, "We have a problem here if this person hasn't clicked in 37 days. They are two times more likely to opt out and become inactive. [So] taking those kind of cues and building out programs that would drive that person back into active status [is a lead nurturing goal]."

Fleck also offered a couple of tactical points:

- **B2i segmentation:** target customers based on their current activity level in email. B2B customers go through a lifecycle (New, At-Risk, Active, Inactive) just like B2C customers — it's just that their stages and timing in the stages are different. So, implementing a activity-based approach is a key component of moving to a B2i strategy.

- **Lead nurturing:** understanding the different stages of lead nurturing, based on customer behavior, is a key success factor in driving more B2B engagement. Leveraging automations to target the different stages is an important component of targeting B2B customers in this important stage.

Ni added testing is important in this process as well. He suggested A/B testing.

"How do people buy? Do they engage at this price point? Or, do you have to move through resellers [that] puts a very specific context for that buyer to buy in?" Ni asked.

Idea #5. Speak directly to your prospects

Lecinski said it's important to provide personalized messaging. His main point was, "people sell brands to people," not brands selling to brands. He added personalization does involve a lot of gathering personal data on your prospects, so be sure and be transparent about what you are collecting and how you plan on using it.

The smart B2i marketer is aware of the privacy concerns of those people who are engaging with you — even if they've yet to raise their hand.

Solis agreed that people buy from people, not companies, as the managing director of MECLABS, Flint McLaughlin, has said many times.

> It really is that simple. Right? And, also, in that simplicity, is its true promise.
>
> People do buy from people and I think that for some reason just we've forgotten that. I mean, we're now investing in the most clever marketing strategies, the most clever technologies, and most capable solutions to try to reach as many people as possible, and then even if you look at the promise of social media, where the keyword there is social, we're still using them as sort of broadcast mechanisms, as ways to sort of not engage or build relationships but just to reach you and hold you.
>
> When we look back to the tactical data, it's almost like we have to press pause on all of this stuff. OK, what are we trying to do? You know, what it is?
>
> If we know this is about people-to-people, then what does the relationship look like? What does the experience look like? What do we want people to feel, what do we want people to say? What would referrals look like?
>
> I believe that [the B2i concept] is at the beginning. You know this is something where you can literally talk about it as this idea of experience, architecture where you bring in the elements of user experience and you bring in the elements of surprise and delight, and then you combine that with everything else in terms of creative marketing, sales, product design, etc., to literally design the experience you want people to have and share, and then the result is that's where people usually share.

Inbound Marketing

Social Media Marketing: Which type of content is appropriate for different platforms?

- Jonathan Greene, Social Media Analyst

When I was a kid fresh out of high school, I was a little socially awkward. I didn't exactly understand the various types of social gatherings to which I was invited to, and I consequentially always showed up dressed incorrectly, saying the wrong things and bearing the wrong gifts. We all know the guy who shows up to the baby shower with a bottle of tequila, right?

Unfortunately, a similar situation exists in marketing circles when advertisers crash the proverbial wedding of social media platforms wearing board shorts and flip flops. That metaphor may be a little dense, so follow me…

For all of the analysis currently existing about how to best leverage social networks for marketing success, we actually understand comparatively little about how the various platforms work. Frequently, despite best efforts to the contrary, marketers end up looking like the odd man out simply by taking the wrong platform-specific tones with their campaigns.

Companies simply can't expect to behave the same at different social functions and receive an overwhelmingly good response. Since we're on the analogy train today, I'll try to keep the theme going.

Facebook is a pub crawl

People spend most of their Facebook time interacting with their "friends." In truth, most of the "friends" with whom we interact with on Facebook are merely acquaintances.

Nevertheless, the environment yields similarities to the dynamics of a pub crawl. Surrounded by acquaintances and, yes, a few old friends, we dive into topics of various levels of seriousness ranging from the patently absurd, to the politically charged before wandering aimlessly from topic to topic for a spell.

We do so without expecting to be inundated with marketing messaging, much the same as we would expect to not be rudely interrupted by an insurance salesman while we were in the middle of telling our best frat house story from college at the local bar.

In order to market effectively on Facebook, you first have to win a seat at the table, or be interesting enough to be the topic of our slightly buzzed conversation.

Twitter is a speed date

You've got 140 characters to impress me, so you'd better make it work for you.

I might spend a few extra minutes after the last round of speed dating with a particularly interesting person (company, product, etc.), but if I do, it will be because you have done or said something particularly compelling in your allotted time slot. Equally as fun as interviewing potential dates, I can wander sneakily around the room to see what other people are saying about me …

"That guy has impeccable taste in clothing," says one. "He's stunningly good looking," says another.

Brands can do the same with Twitter, getting a better idea of how the market is responding to their product offerings. In order to market on Twitter, you have to learn how to answer the question of what you're into right now, and answer it in a compelling enough fashion for me to care when you're done talking.

LinkedIn is an after-work happy hour with the office staff

If you meet me at the Trendy Olive after 5 p.m., you'll probably hear me talking to my boss about my qualifications and why I deserve a raise or a promotion. If that's not happening, I might be talking to the manager of a competing firm at the next table over about possibly getting a new job.

I'm not overly concerned with the "social" aspects of this event, unless it stands to benefit me in the professional arena. I may not even like the people with whom I am communicating, but it's sort of a necessary evil for me.

If you want to market your product to me on LinkedIn, it needs to be done within the context of me talking about myself and trying to sound like an expert in the process. If your marketing detracts from my awesomeness, I might be a lot less likely to pay attention to you.

Well, what say you? Are you loving the metaphor game? If so, I'd love to hear your metaphor for the Google+ platform, or even Tumblr. What can we learn from thinking about social media in more simplistic terms?

B2B Social Media Marketing: DocuSign's targeted LinkedIn InMail strategy creates 3 large pipeline opportunities

- David Kirkpatrick, Senior Reporter

Challenge

Meagan Eisenberg, Vice President of Demand Generation, DocuSign, an e-signature transaction management company, faced a very typical marketing issue — bringing new leads into the top of the funnel, and then once those leads are generated, building a pipeline through to that final conversion.

She said, "I think it is better if you're able to build a relationship, and build a community of people coming to you for content."

Eisenberg added, "The goal of this particular project was to build out a sales guru community of people engaging and talking about the pain that they were feeling, and working with others to deliver solutions to those pains."

A very typical marketing problem is generating leads and then creating a Marketing/Sales pipeline, and a common goal is looking to build a community to draw new leads in and keep them engaged through the pipeline.

If you think this is going to be a typical lead generation case study, think again, because Eisenberg and her team uncovered a very novel channel to execute this campaign.

LinkedIn is considered the "B2B social media platform" by most industry thought leaders. What made this effort different was the novel way the team at DocuSign was able to leverage that platform.

This case study should inspire you to occasionally really think outside the box and find interesting angles to take advantage of within marketing areas where there might already be some ingrained practices in place.

Read on to find out how DocuSign used a social network to add more than 350 registrants to the online community, and led to three large pipeline opportunities.

Campaign

This entire campaign was designed around leveraging knowledge about LinkedIn InMails.

Step #1. Find out about a new marketing channel and take advantage of that knowledge

Not long before launching the campaign, Eisenberg learned something interesting about LinkedIn InMails.

"I had always known that they had InMails, but I didn't realize that you could sponsor InMails in bulk and you could pick the audience you wanted to target," Eisenberg said.

Targeting included:

- Geographic area
- Company size
- Specific job title

For this effort, DocuSign decided to target U.S. companies with more than 500 employees, and within those companies, only people holding the title of Vice President or Director of Sales and Field Operations.

After research, Eisenberg said the team found the Linked database held about 8,800 sales ops executives, and the LinkedIn campaign was able to reach around 7,000 of that group.

A bug, or maybe a feature depending on how you view it, with targeted sponsored InMail is each person could only receive one sponsored InMail every 60 days.

Eisenberg explained why this turned out to be a feature, and not a bug.

She said, "It was intriguing to think about doing a series of these InMails. So, you would send one, wait 60 days and send a second one."

The team decided to do a series of three sponsored InMails, perfectly timed to essentially "lock up" the sponsored InMail their target audience could receive for about six months.

Step #2. Use messages from third parties to increase the impact of each send

Instead of having the messages come from DocuSign, the team decided to use third parties for each message drawn from DocuSign's customer base.

"[To] take it to the next level, we know that peers would rather hear from their peers, and it would be more impactful if the actual InMail came from someone who was one of their peers that was also on LinkedIn," Eisenberg explained.

Step #3. Take advantage of early-stage marketing platforms

Eisenberg said this DocuSign campaign was the first for LinkedIn with multiple messages locking in a target audience for an extended period of time.

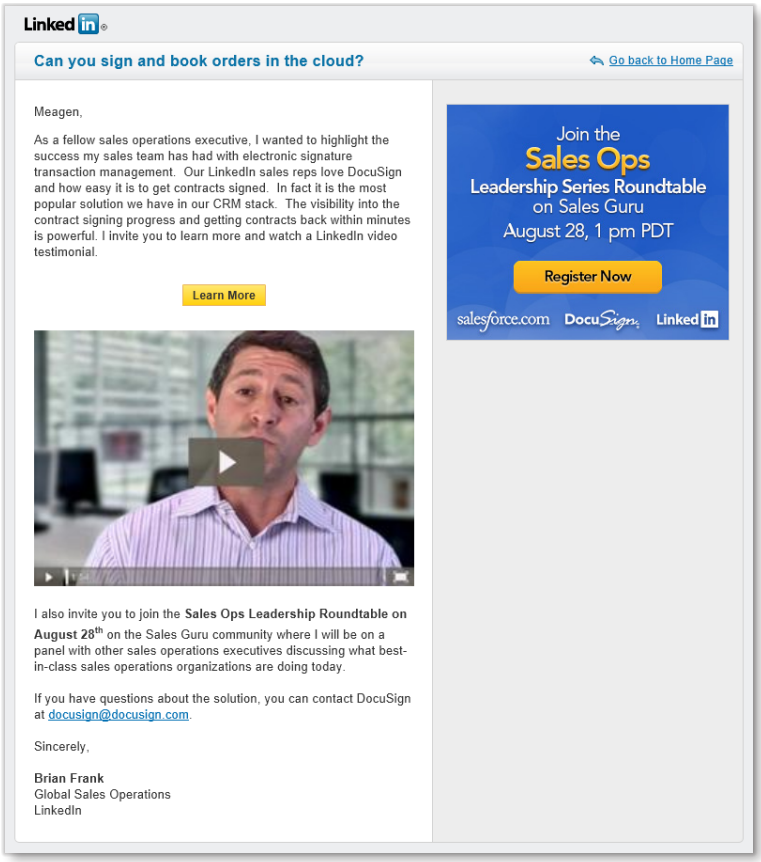
Previously, every use of sponsored InMail by other marketers had been a single message to the targeted group.

Because of this, the LinkedIn team had to work closely with DocuSign's team to manually lock down the targeted group over the three sponsored InMail time period.

Step #4. Execute the campaign

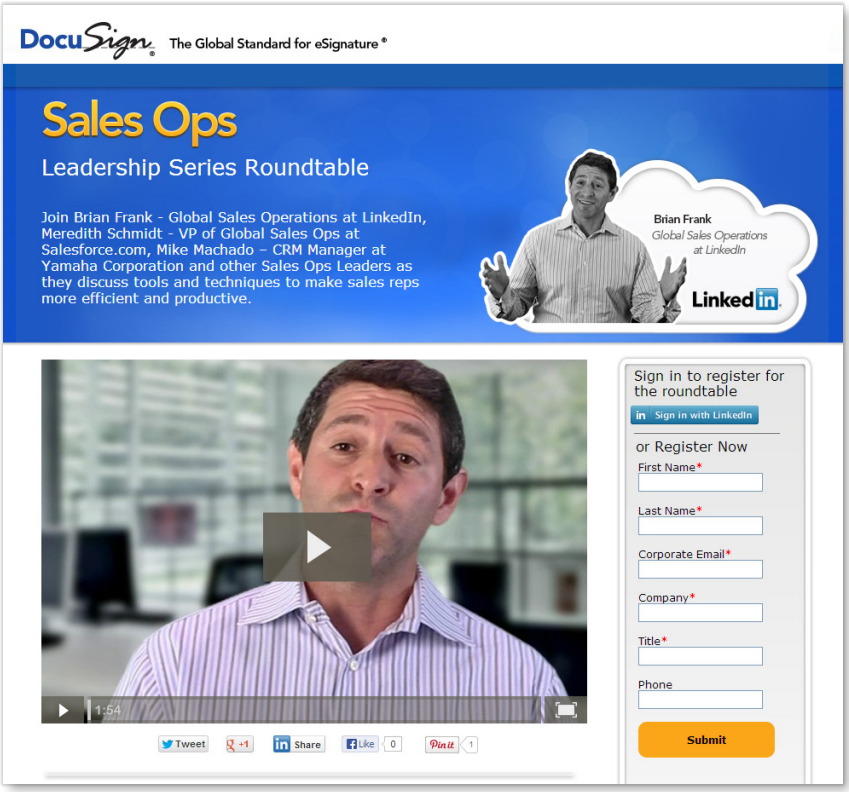
Executing the InMail effort involved several stages of development, including:

- Working with DocuSign's customer base to determine the three third parties the messages would be coming from. For this effort the team uncovered "featured sales operations leaders" from Salesforce.com, LinkedIn and Yamaha.
- Creating the messaging for each InMail and securing approval cycles through PR.



- Creating an ad that appeared within the sponsored InMails.

- Building three landing pages, one for each sponsored InMail.

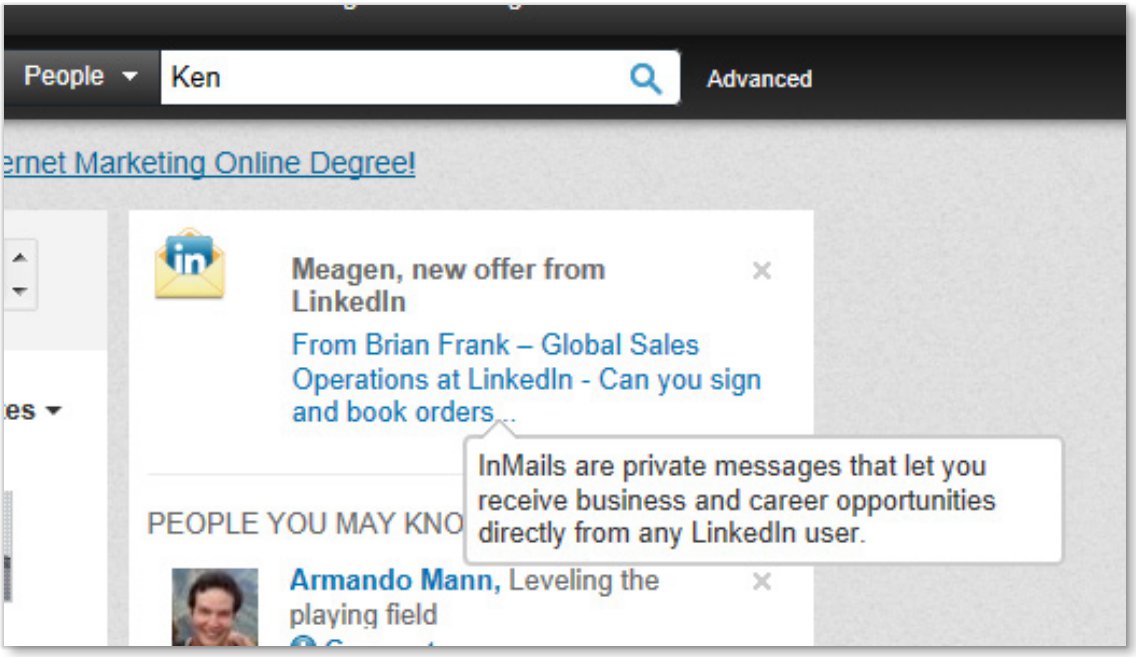


Eisenberg said DocuSign had customer success managers who work with the company's accounts, and the team utilized those managers to find the third-party sources for the InMail messages.

For messaging, she said the call-to-action was based on three objectives:

- **Attract** — compelling thought leadership, top-of-funnel content
- **Engage** — peer-related
- **Convert** — focus on roundtable and webinar discussion, elements that convert well for DocuSign

The draw for the chosen individuals serving as "sales ops gurus" was the opportunity to show thought leadership to their peers. These three people provided the messaging for the three InMail drops, and also served as the "from" field for their respective InMail.



She added it was key for the actual messaging to be general best practices in the sales ops area, and not about DocuSign.

"When you are trying to do top-of-funnel reach out to new people," Eisenberg said, "make sure you are engaging with them on a topic that is not product specific, [but] is more business pain point specific."

Landing page strategy

Each InMail featured a call-to-action to visit a dedicated landing page for "sales ops guru" featured in the InMail, and each landing page featured a video of the message sender along with other documents, such as a case study.

There was a registration requirement for the roundtable panel featuring each third-party guru. Along with a form, the page offered social sign-in through LinkedIn, a natural fit since the campaign was run through the LinkedIn social media platform, and Eisenberg said 25% of the people took advantage of social sign-in.

After registration, there was a redirect to thank the person for registering along with providing information for joining the roundtable.

For the InMail from the LinkedIn and Yamaha DocuSign gurus, the redirect went to the DocuSign sales op guru community. For the Salesforce.com guru, the redirect went to DocuSign page on the Salesforce AppExchange to take advantage of the brand tie-in.

With all the elements in place, the first sponsored InMail went out, and Eisenberg described it as a success with "a ton of people" going to the landing page and signing up for the roundtable.

After 60 days, the second InMail went out, and it "wasn't as successful" according to Eisenberg.

Step #5. Hit a snag and understand the nature of the problem

"The second [InMail] drop wasn't as successful as the first one in that we had less people open it, and less registered from it," Eisenberg said.

The difference wasn't dramatic, but there was a drop off in InMail open rate, and registrants for the roundtable featuring the second guru.

In trying to determine the problem with the second of three sponsored InMails, Eisenberg realized the problem was timing. The second InMail went out the second to last day at the end of a quarter.

The target audience was sales operations, a group of people who are traditionally very busy at the end of each quarter.

Eisenberg said she was relieved to uncover that detail because there was initial concern the audience was tiring of the DocuSign sponsored messaging with one more InMail to send.

"The challenge with InMail is the audience 'unlocks' every 60 days, so you have to hit the time [when] it unlocks because if you don't, they can give that audience away to someone else," she explained.

In hindsight, Eisenberg said she should have noticed the timing element and begun the series two weeks later to avoid the last week of a quarter.

Step #6. Maintain the online community

Beyond the dedicated landing pages for each sales ops guru featured in the campaign with video and case studies, and each guru's online roundtable discussion, each roundtable registrant became part of DocuSign's online sales operations "guru" community.

Eisenberg said the team continued to foster that community after the initial series of three roundtables with additional content.

She said, "We continued to post information and content, and have future webinars and roundtables."

Part of this ongoing community outreach involved bringing in additional third-party gurus to present to the community.

Eisenberg said the idea was to build a platform and an audience that could bring new members who are part of the targeted segment into the community beyond the sponsored InMail campaign.

Results

Even though the campaign was run through LinkedIn, the community DocuSign created was on its website rather than through a LinkedIn Group.

This campaign brought the DocuSign Sales Guru community involvement from around 550 to more than 800 participants.

Here are results comparing the first two InMail drops (both about 7,000 recipients):

The first drop had more than 1,700 InMail's opened and more than 140 clickthroughs.

The second, less successful, drop had more than 1,100 opens, and more than 100 clickthroughs.

Overall results from the LinkedIn InMail campaign:

- More than 350 registrants for the Sales Guru — Sales Ops Roundtable
- Three, what Eisenberg described as "large" pipeline opportunities

- Around 25% of registrants opting for social sign-in to register for the roundtables rather than filling out the long-form on the landing page

Eisenberg said there were three elements with social sign-in:

- Make registration easy and lower abandonment rate. The less visitors have to fill out, the more likely they are to register and boost conversion rates.
- "They were coming from LinkedIn, so we assumed they all could use LinkedIn social sign-on."
- "We wanted to use modern social tools — like sign-on — [as a] technically savvy company."

From the InMail sends, the team learned more people clicked on the video graphic than the ad or the "learn more" button.

Eisenberg said enlisting DocuSign customers as the messengers for this effort was tied to the community building and brand awareness aspects of the campaign.

"You have to sponsor thought leaders, you have to sponsor influencers," she said. "You invite them to come and speak about topics that are hot. Social selling is a hot topic, so if we want to hit the sales audience, we need to bring topics that they want to learn about."

LinkedIn InMail was chosen for this community building to "get through the noise of the email inbox."

"Even though you can buy targeted lists, accuracy is off and [the] email channel is still busy," Eisenberg explained. "With LinkedIn, you have validation of the user — even if they change jobs, their profile still exists."

She added InMail is also a much less busy channel and compared her 500 email each day against 130 InMail received over the lifetime of the platform.

Another aspect of this campaign was no community members went into DocuSign's lead nurturing efforts without a further raise of the hand in the form of downloading additional white papers or registering for other Docusign webinars.

Eisenberg said the end result of this campaign was learning the LinkedIn InMail channel was worthwhile and will remain part of DocuSign's overall marketing strategy.

As an added benefit, she said DocuSign's senior leadership team was "thrilled with the program."

"They loved that we were being very targeted in our approach and marketing spend. And, they loved to see the innovation," Eisenberg explained.

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

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

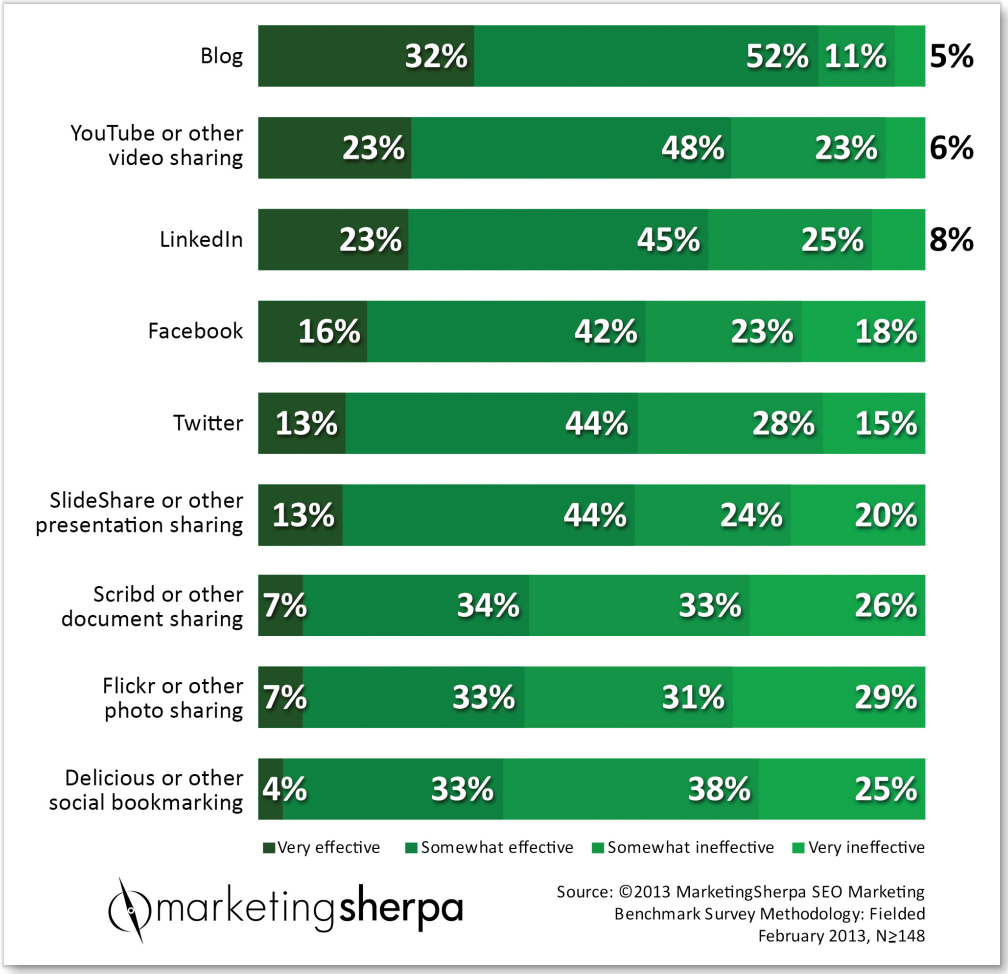
Search engine optimization (SEO) is difficult for many reasons. For one, it is dominated by an opaque set of rules set by a dominant industry player.

But another factor that makes SEO difficult is that it is not just one thing.

SEO cannot be conducted in a vacuum. It is the essence of integrated marketing communications. It is both a subset of inbound marketing and a superset of not just technical specifications on a website, but also elements like content creation and social media marketing.

So, in the 2013 MarketingSherpa SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey, we asked marketers to…

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



As you can see, marketers told us that blogs are most effective, with 84% of marketers rating blogs as either somewhat or very effective.

After that, the effectiveness largely mirrors the size of the social platforms mentioned, with the notable exception of Facebook being a little farther down the list, even though it has more than one billion users.

You've seen the data, now put it to use. Too often in marketing, we move rapidly to execute on plans or utilize platforms (especially in social media) without thinking through the most effective ways to use those platforms, or if we should utilize them at all.

So, feel free to use MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week as a regular touchpoint with your team to consider industry data while asking how it can help you shape your own initiatives to make them more effective. To that end, we've developed these points for your team to consider.

Points to consider

Which social media platforms have had the biggest impact on your SEO efforts? On your inbound marketing in general? On conversions? How do you track conversions from social media platforms?

Do you employ multi-touch attribution, giving social media partial credit for a conversion? Or do you favor last-touch attribution, where social media only gets credit if it is the final point of conversion?

And what types of conversion have you seen from social media? Are you only converting current customers, or are you attracting net new customers as well?

What are your current social media challenges? Are you able to post consistently? Do you deploy your posts on a set schedule? Have you created an editorial calendar? If so, have you been able to meet those deadlines?

How do you determine what content to write? What videos to produce? Do you have guidelines for messaging to different audiences?

How responsive are you to follower comments and other social media (like customer or industry blog posts)? Are you actively listening to conversations on social media networks that occur on your branded accounts? Do you listen for only mentions of your brand, or for industry keywords in general?

What recurring obstacles do you encounter?

Share your experiences with the MarketingSherpa community

Use the above questions internally with your own team to help improve your social media efforts, and also share your actionable advice and inspirational stories on the MarketingSherpa LinkedIn Group discussion about this chart for a chance to be featured in a future blog post.

Social Media Marketing: Can you compete with your customer's mom?

- Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content

At MarketingSherpa Email Summit 2013, I interviewed our keynote speaker – Jay Baer, President, Convince&Convert – about the book he was writing. *Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is about Help not Hype* was recently released, so we're sharing that interview with you now …

This video plays on YouTube: http://youtu.be/V9yWLYEZo1A

A few key takeaways from Jay …

1:00 – Brands have to compete with customers' friends and family on social media and in email.

1:27 – So how are you going to compete with friends and family? Just be useful.

1:41 – Make your marketing a benefit, not a burden.

2:16 – Hilton Worldwide's instruction to employees monitoring social media – "Pay attention to Twitter. If you can find a place you can help, just help."

3:02 – The difference between helping and selling makes all the difference.

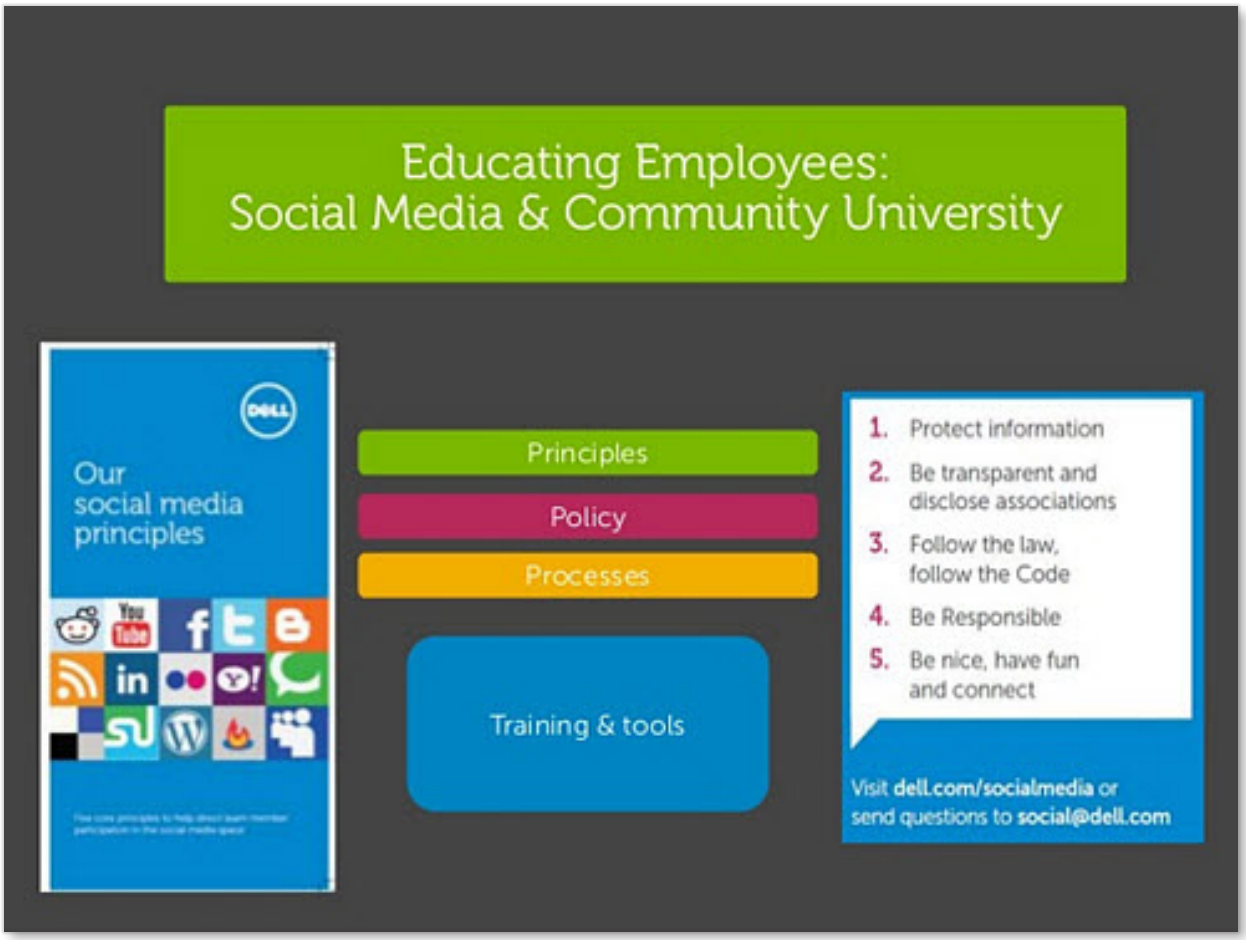
Social Media Marketing: Dell reveals how it turns thousands of brand detractors into fans

- Andrea Johnson, Editorial Manager

Five years ago, Dell had little presence on social media. That changed when the computer company realized 4,000 conversations about the brand were happening online every single day and the company was not present.

Since then, Dell has invested millions of dollars' worth of time and resources to join those conversations. In fact, one in 12 of Dell's more than 105,000 employees have attended its Social Media & Community University, which encompasses up to 12 hours of training on how to best represent Dell online.

In addition, Social Outreach Services, a team representing 14 languages, actively monitors and participates in social media.



A lot has changed since 2006 and these changes have paid off handsomely for Dell – especially for its B2B business, says Richard Margetic, Director of Global Social Media, Dell.

"Social media has made more of an impact, significantly on B2B than B2C," he said.

"For us, B2B is about relationships, and social media is all about relationships," he added.

While Margetic cannot share specific numbers, he says B2B social media initiatives drive "a significant chunk of their B2B business."

Here's where he can provide specifics:

Every week, Dell's Social Outreach Services team addresses approximately 3,000 issues. All but 3% of those issues come to some kind of resolution, and 40 to 50% – about 1,200 – of the people who initiated them end up speaking positively about Dell online.

Conceivably, by participating in social media, Dell transforms approximately 62,000 brand detractors into fans every year.

Margetic said your business can achieve similar results – just start paying attention to what is being said online about your business and industry. By doing so, in addition to having a chance to recruit some brand converts, you'll acquire what you need to develop a core marketing strategy:

- You'll identify who is talking about you – the influencers.
- You'll find out what they're talking about and how they're saying it. This will give you the key words, messaging points and pain points from which you can build marketing materials.
- You'll find out what social media platforms they're using and, consequently, identify where to focus your marketing budget.

Here are the free tools Margetic advised using immediately to hear the social media conversations impacting your business:

Google Alerts: Whenever your company or your industry is mentioned online, Google will notify you. You can have these delivered daily, weekly or as they happen.

Twitter search: Type in your company name, keywords or industry to find out what people are saying in real time.

"You'll quickly get insight into who your marketplace influencers are," Margetic explained.

LinkedIn: Type your business name, industry or keyword into the search box to identify where you are being mentioned on LinkedIn. You can look at your first- and second-level connections and beyond to hear what they have to say about any topic you want, and filter conversations by geography, company size, industry and more.

"This is a phenomenal tool, especially when you consider that more than 85% of the visits to LinkedIn have nothing to do with job hunting. Instead, people are sharing information and driving relationships," Margetic said.

Pinterest: Find out if your content is being repinned by going to "http://pinterest.com/source/your company's URL." For example: http://pinterest.com/source/marketingsherpa.com.

You can invest in a social media monitoring tool, as well. Dell has designed its own platform to monitor conversations, but Margetic noted there are plenty of other solutions for businesses wanting to do more than manually search social media sites. These platforms allow you to manage and search multiple sites simultaneously, and see results in real time.

Margetic believed monitoring social media should be considered a key lead generation activity.

"It's just fundamentally sound business practice," he insisted. "Paying attention to what is being said [about you and your industry] online will tell you which people are talking, what they're saying and where they're saying it, which will help focus your lead-generation efforts.

"If you're not involved in these conversations, you need to reconsider your priorities," Margetic concluded.

Content Marketing

E-commerce: How Wine Enthusiast increased organic traffic 154% with content marketing

- Adam Sutton, Senior Reporter

In content marketing, every brand is a publisher. The opposite is also true at Wine Enthusiast Companies. The publisher of Wine Enthusiast Magazine has sold wine and wine accessories for more than 30 years.

The monthly magazine is nearing its 25-year anniversary and is available as a paid subscription in print and digital formats. Its website is bursting with content, such as wine reviews, articles, videos and more. The company sells subscriptions and advertising, but it also uses the content to attract customers for its two e-commerce sites.

"We put time into creating helpful content that helps people either make a buying decision or entertain them. 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," said Erika Strum, Director of Internet Marketing, Wine Enthusiast Companies.

Strum's team uses the content to build an audience, earn its trust and drive sales.

Working with the company's online content last year yielded good results:

- 104% increase in traffic to the magazine site in 2012
- 154% increase in organic traffic to the site
- 50% increase in monthly email opt-ins

"In general, the larger our email list, the greater an opportunity for sales through either ads based on our total send count or direct sales from our e-commerce properties," Strum said.

Below, we highlight the tactics Wine Enthusiast used to increase traffic, build lists, and integrate its magazine and e-commerce sites.

Tactic #1. Connect content and e-commerce

Wine Enthusiast operates three websites:

- *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* — the site of the paid-subscription magazine
- WineExpress.com — e-retail shop for wine

- Wine Enthusiast Catalog — e-retail shop for wine accessories

The team hosts most of its content on the magazine site. For this content to effectively attract people and encourage them to shop, the site has to be clearly connected to the online stores. The primary way the team achieves this is with a simple three-tab navigation bar at the top of every page.

This tool stays with visitors throughout the three sites. A visitor can hop from the magazine site to a retail site with a single click, and vice versa. This creates constant cross-promotion between the channels and provides a simple way to organize the experience.

Step #2: Determine value of product(s)

"We like to make our customers and our readers feel that we are really the best source for everything wine," Strum said.

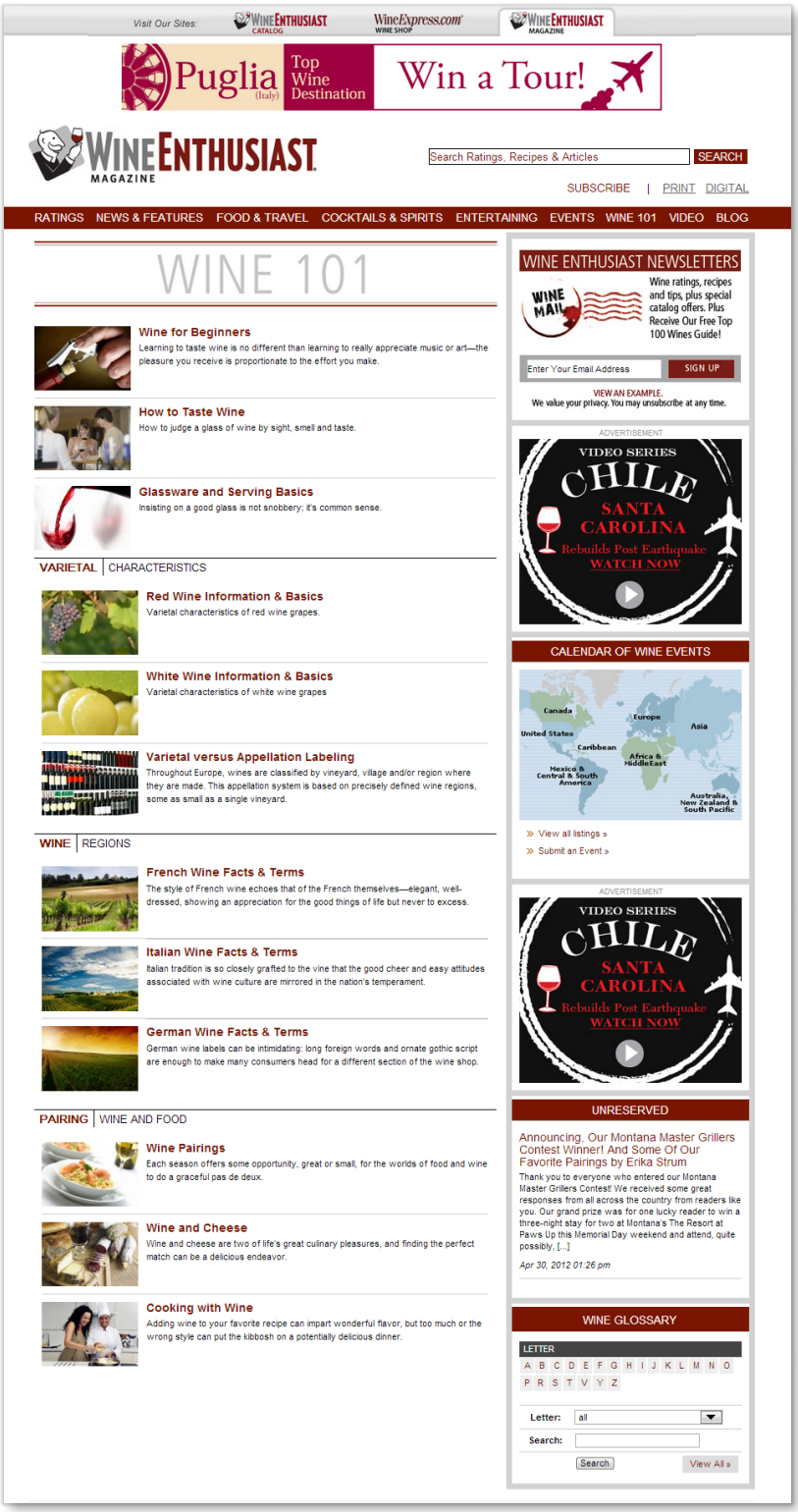
Wine Enthusiast has arguably achieved this goal by providing a vast and growing library of content. The following is a list of just some of the material the company publishes. We will dig further into several of these areas later in the article.

- **Print and digital magazine** — *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* is a paid publication offered in print and digital formats.

- **Buying guide** — this searchable database of wine reviews is hosted on the magazine site. The reviews are performed and written by Wine Enthusiast. Access to the database used to require a subscription, but the team removed the pay wall and it is now a free resource.

- **Wine tasting videos** — the team publishes a daily video of a wine tasting and review on WineExpress.com. The videos are fast and easy to shoot, and they are integrated into the wine store's e-commerce strategy.

- **Wine 101** — this section of the magazine site gives budding wine connoisseurs in-depth articles to teach them fundamentals such as how to select wines and pair them with food.



- **Email newsletters** — the company maintains two email lists that it sends wine-related content and offers.

- **And there's more** — the team also publishes blog post and recipes, and it often repurposes content for infographics, PDFs and contests.

  "Even though all this content is available online in different articles, we find that people actually like to download a beautiful multi-page PDF to will help them cook, plan parties and that kind of thing," Strum said.

Tactic #3. Aim for "simple and effective"

The company has a big team of photographers, designers, copywriters, editors and other people who create and publish the content. Even with these resources, efficient production remains important.

The team's wine tasting videos are an example of how it stays efficient.

These clips are shot daily and featured on WineExpress.com. They are created with a small budget and shot on a simple, fixed set that never changes. The production is not as sleek as the company's Wine Enthusiast TV videos — but it works.

"It is tremendous in terms of helping sell wine," Strum said. "The videos we develop are often the number-one most popular area in our emails for clicks. For example, on a recent Wine Express email, the video was directly linked to 20% of the revenue."

The videos are published and promoted throughout WineExpress.com, such as in:

- Product pages for a corresponding wine

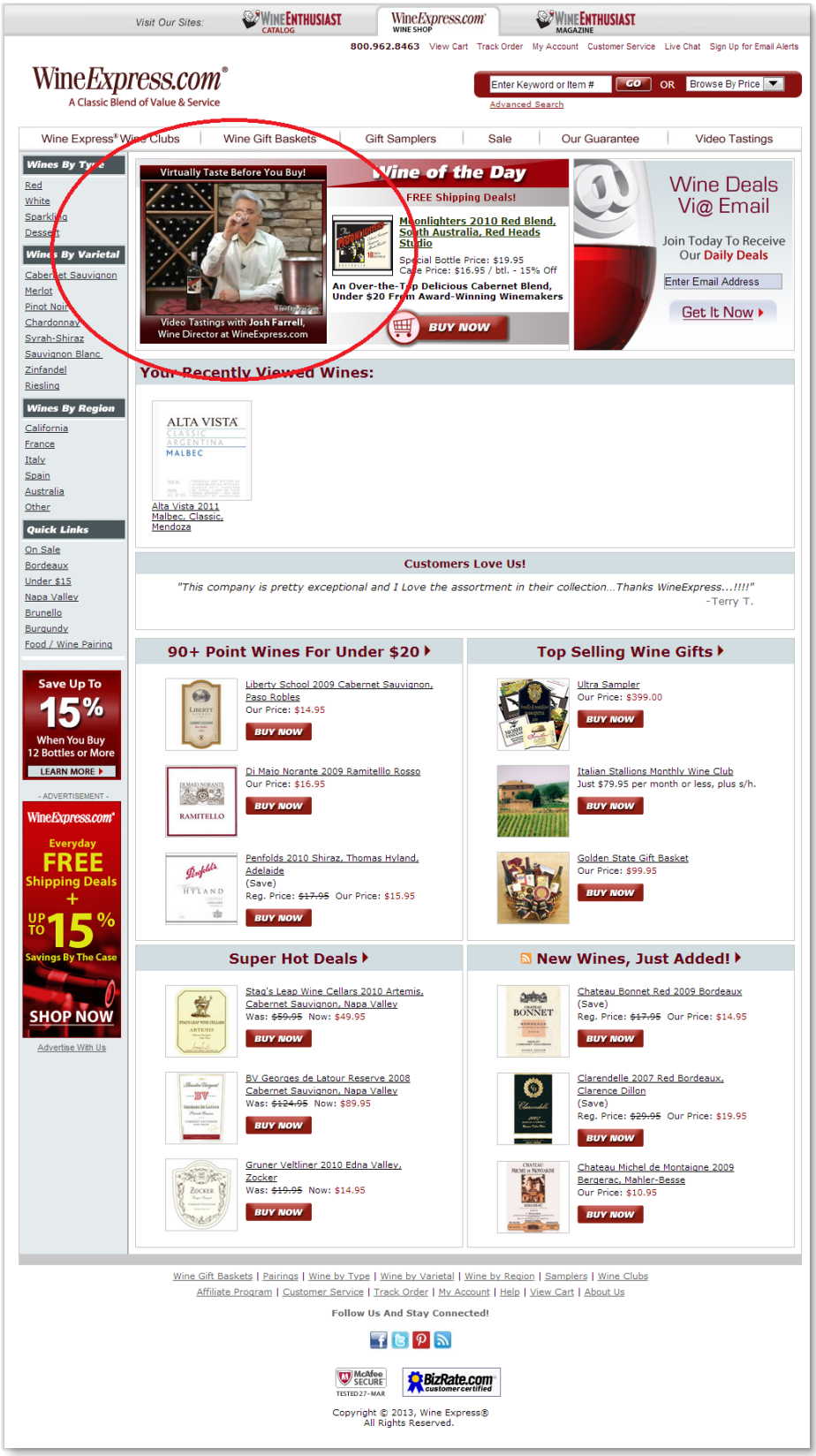
- The "Wine of the Day" spot on the homepage

- A page dedicated to promoting a free video library

- Email newsletters when a corresponding wine is on sale

WineExpress.com also displays a small video icon next to the titles of wines that include a video tasting. The icons are used on product category pages and search result pages.

Product pages for a corresponding wine



The "Wine of the Day" spot on the homepage

Visit Our Sites: WineEnthusiast Catalog | WineExpress.com Wine Shop | WineEnthusiast Magazine

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Wines By Varietal
Cabernet Sauvignon
Merlot
Pinot Noir
Chardonnay
Syrah-Shiraz
Sauvignon Blanc
Zinfandel
Riesling

Wines By Region
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Italy
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Decoy by Duckhorn 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County

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A page dedicated to promoting a free video library

Malbec 2009 Pascual Toso, Maipu Vineyards View Online

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Video Tastings with **Josh Farrell**, Wine Director at WineExpress.com

Malbec 2009 Pascual Toso, Maipu Vineyards

Bottle Price: **$11.95**
Special Case Price: **$10.75/bottle**
(10% Savings)

BUY NOW

6+ Bottles
Ship Free

Our most popular Malbec of all time, the 2006 was selected as Wine Enthusiast Magazine's #1 Best Buy of the Year! This 2009 continues the amazingly consistent quality and value that this wine is famous for. Paul Hobbs is the consulting enologist here. His California experience has steered this established Argentine property in the direction of full flavors, rich fruit and beautiful balance. The Wine Advocate said of this '09 "Forward, savory, racy style, smooth texture." Customers rave with each vintage, saying 'has made me a Malbec lover' and 'everything that was promised and more.' It's a crazy value you'd be a fool to pass up, with free shipping on 6 or more!

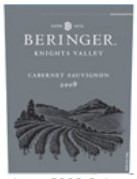
Tip: With over 300 cases sold and 66 rave customer reviews, the Malbec Pascual Toso is our most popular Malbec of all time, as voted by you!

Did You Miss These? Recent E-mail Offers:

Clarendelle 2005 Red Bordeaux, Clarence Dillo

Trinchero 2008 Meritage Red Blend, Napa Valley

Jordan 2007 Cab Sauv, Alexander Valley



Beringer 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon, Knights Valley

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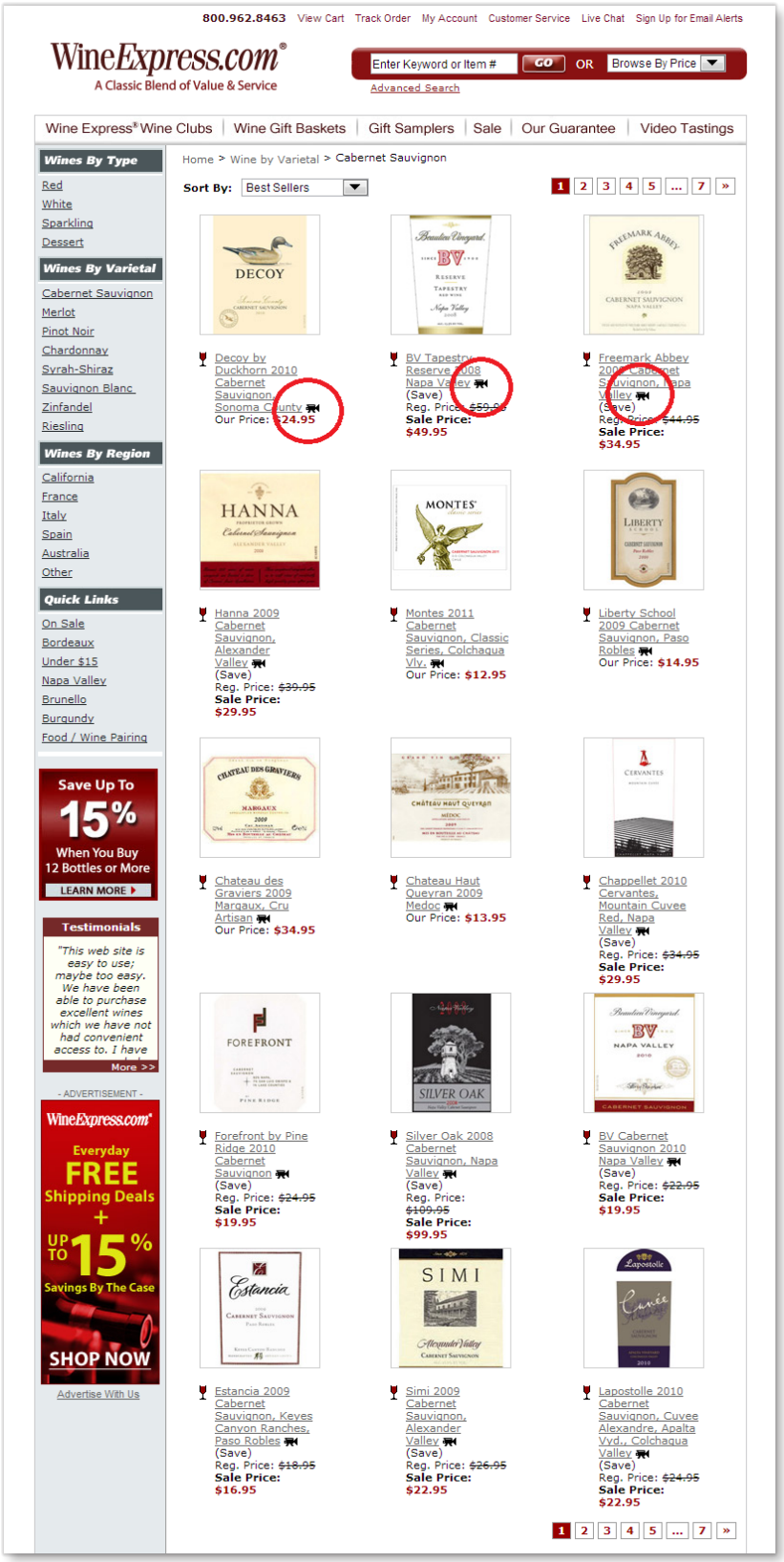
Email newsletters when a corresponding wine is on sale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Red
White
Sparkling
Dessert
Wines By Varietal
Cabernet Sauvignon
Merlot
Pinot Noir
Chardonnay
Syrah-Shiraz
Sauvignon Blanc
Zinfandel
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Wines By Region
California
France
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Spain
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1 2 3 4 5 ... 7 »
Decoy by Duckhorn 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County
Our Price: $24.95
BV Tapestry Reserve 2008 Napa Valley
(Save)
Reg. Price: $59.95
Sale Price: $49.95
Freemark Abbey 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley
(Save)
Reg. Price: $44.95
Sale Price: $34.95
Hanna 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley
(Save)
Reg. Price: $39.95
Sale Price: $29.95
Montes 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon, Classic Series, Colchagua Vly.
Our Price: $12.95
Liberty School 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles
Our Price: $14.95
Chateau des Graviers 2009 Margaux, Cru Artisan
Our Price: $34.95
Chateau Haut Queyran 2009 Medoc
Our Price: $13.95
Chappellet 2010 Cervantes, Mountain Cuvee Red, Napa Valley
(Save)
Reg. Price: $34.95
Sale Price: $29.95
Forefront by Pine Ridge 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon
(Save)
Reg. Price: $24.95
Sale Price: $19.95
Silver Oak 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley
(Save)
Reg. Price: $109.95
Sale Price: $99.95
BV Cabernet Sauvignon 2010 Napa Valley
(Save)
Reg. Price: $22.95
Sale Price: $19.95
Estancia 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon, Keyes Canyon Ranches, Paso Robles
(Save)
Reg. Price: $18.95
Sale Price: $16.95
Simi 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley
(Save)
Reg. Price: $26.95
Sale Price: $22.95
Lapostolle 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cuvee Alexandre, Apalta Vyd., Colchagua Valley
(Save)
Reg. Price: $24.95
Sale Price: $22.95
1 2 3 4 5 ... 7 »

Video icons

Tactic #4. Take down the pay wall

The buying guide is one of the most popular areas of Wine Enthusiast's magazine site. It is a database of more than 134,000 wine ratings, and new entries are added each month.

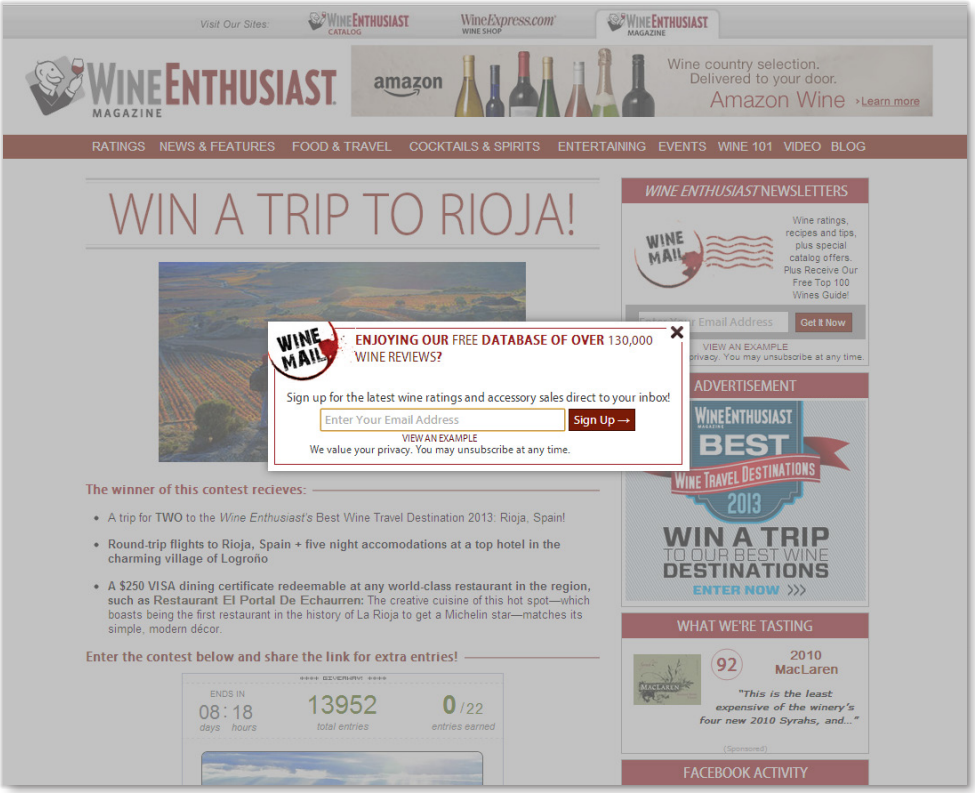
The company used to charge customers to access the guide, but the team decided to monetize it in another way.

"Our competitors put the content behind a pay wall, but we made a pretty big decision to give the content away for free," Strum said. "It built tremendous traffic for the site."

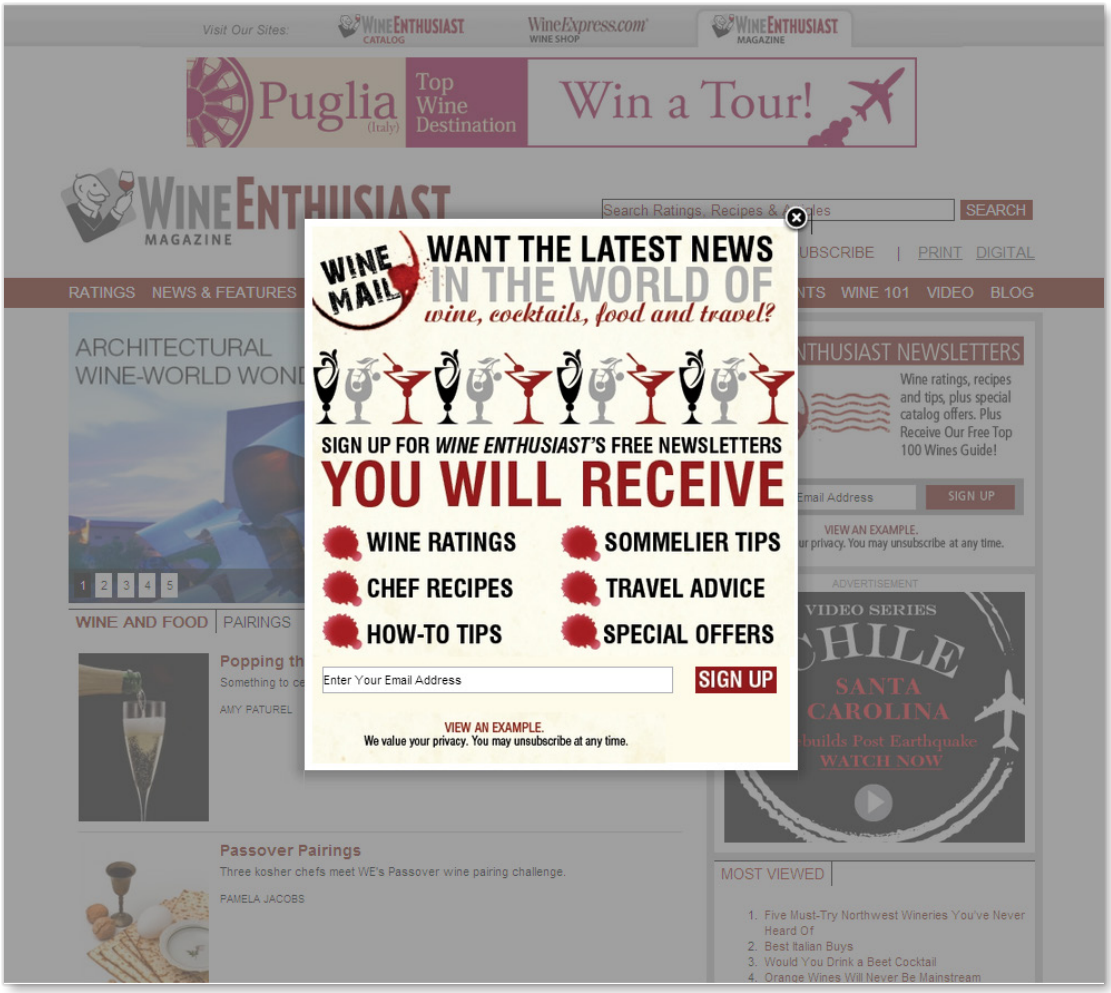
Much of this additional traffic came from natural search. In addition to pulling more people within reach of the team's e-retail sites, the boost helped in two other ways:

- **Ad revenue** — the magazine site includes third-party display advertising. Increases in traffic help the team sell the ads.

- **Email subscribers** — when new visitors spend time on the site, a lay-over ad periodically encourages them to join one of the team's email lists. These ads are customized for context, such as whether the visitor is viewing the buying guide or homepage.



Buying Guide



Homepage

"We find that if people are enjoying our content, they are happy to hear more from us, and something like an email address can be very valuable to us," Strum said.

Tactic #5. Separate the email lists

People come to Wine Enthusiast's sites for many reasons. Some want to browse content. Others want to buy wine. Others want to research wine accessories.

The team uses two email programs to help meet these varying needs:

- **Retail** — people who opt-in on WineExpress.com mostly receive discount offers for wines. This list receives a higher frequency of emails.

- **Magazine and catalog** — people who opt-in on other sites receive emails with content and offers. This list receives a lower frequency of emails.

"We like to keep it separate because we feel the right frequency for promoting things like wine cellars and wine glasses is lower than for promoting wine," Strum said.

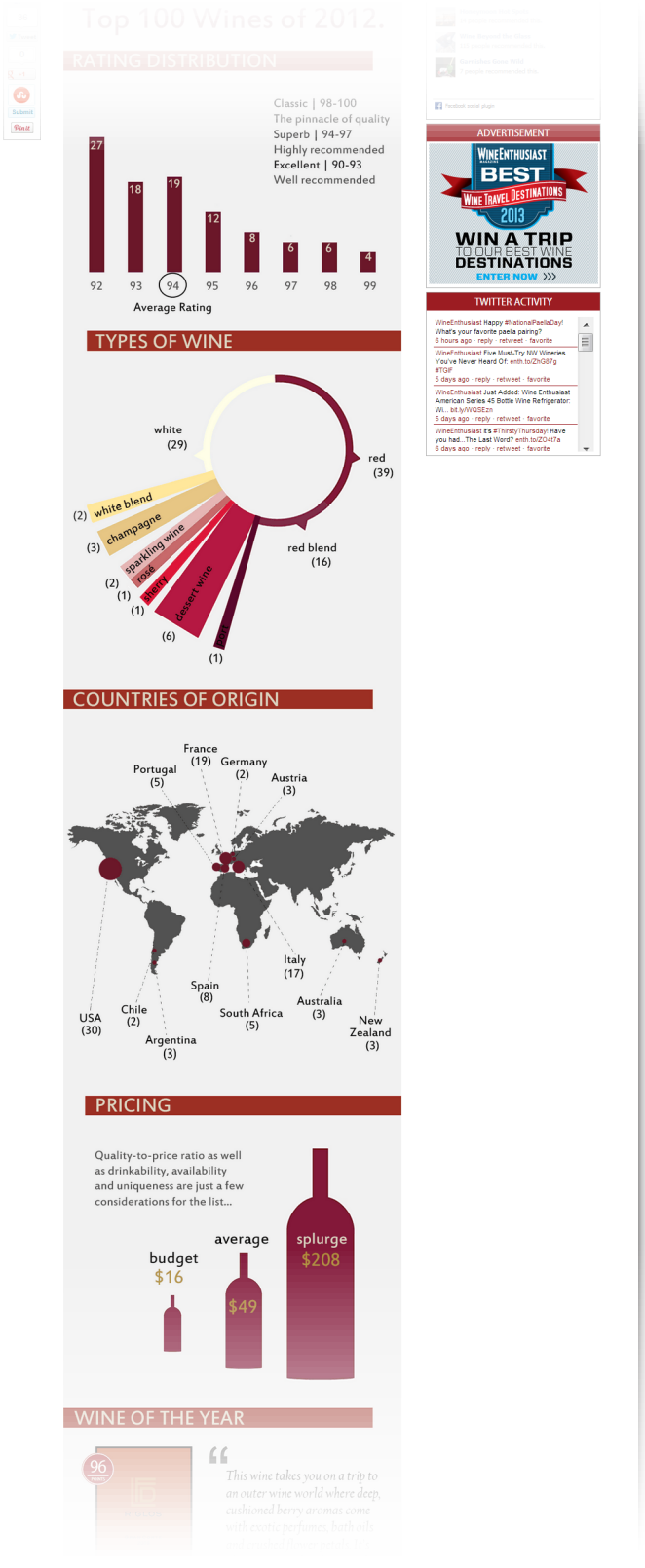
Tactic #6. Repurpose content for SEO

The team works with an agency to maintain and improve its search engine optimization. The agency helps target keywords, find opportunities, and optimize videos, articles and other content.

Here are a few ways the team improves results in organic search:

- **Link building** — some of the team's content is great link bait. For example, the team publishes an annual list of the top 100 wines. The list and corresponding information is published in a variety for formats, such as a premium PDF, infographic and in the buying guide. Once the content is live, the team promotes it to media sources and bloggers to earn backlinks.

Infographic

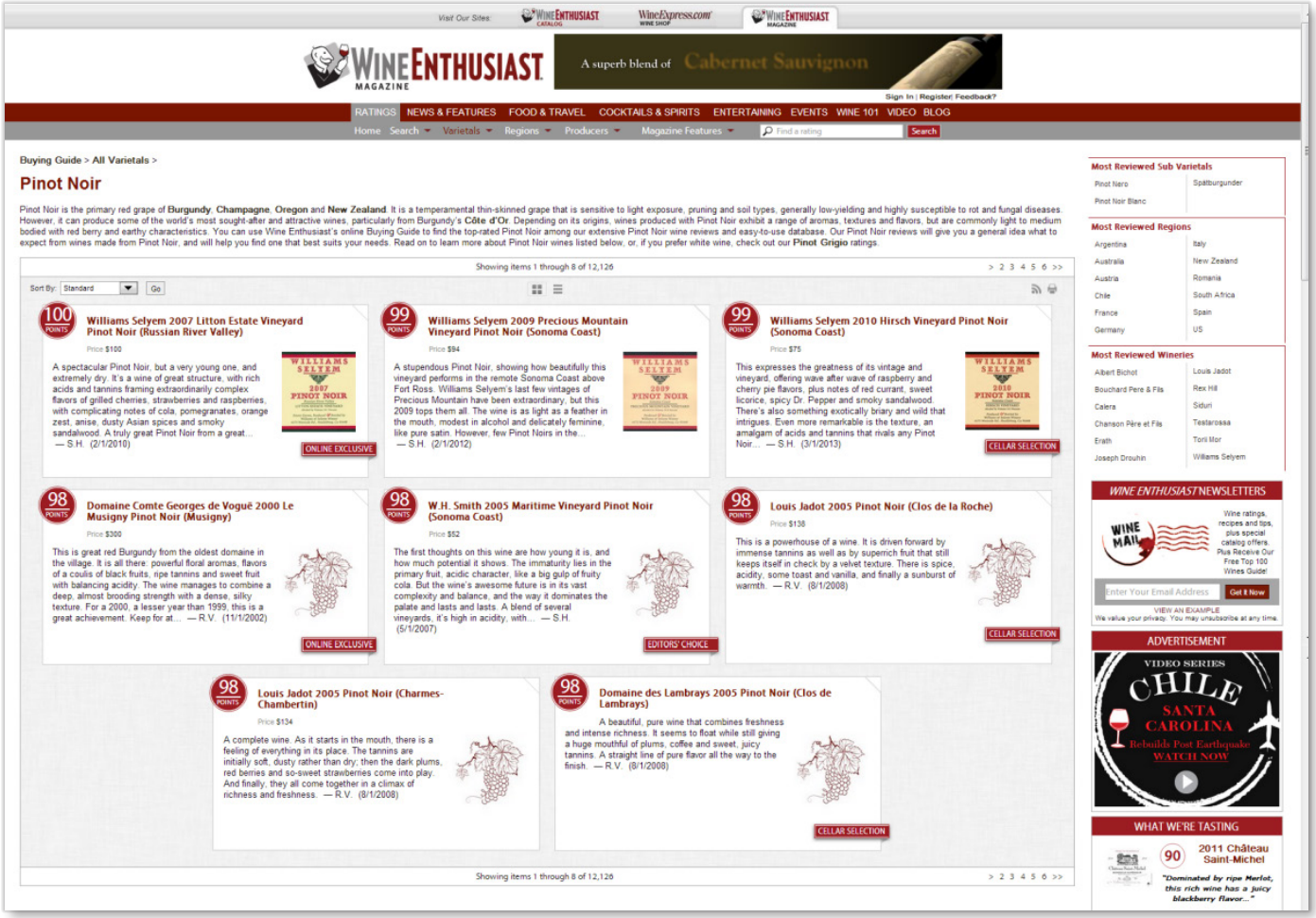


Infographic cont.

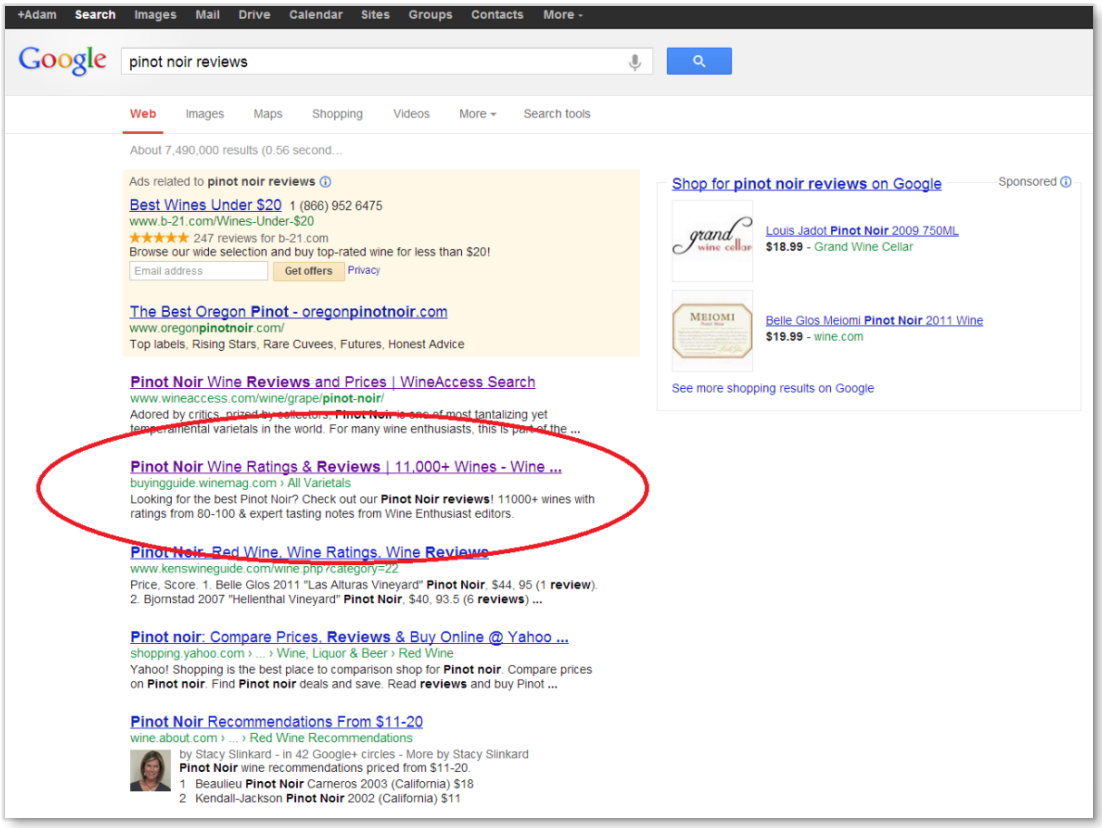
- **Topic hubs** — with so much content, the team can easily aggregate material on a given topic to create a great resource. For example, the team once wanted to improve rankings for terms related to "pinot noir reviews," Strum said.

  The magazine had thousands of related reviews on its site, so it aggregated them onto a single page. The result: the page is now the second natural result in Google for the phrase "pinot noir reviews" and the top natural result in Bing.

"No matter what somebody sells, there is someone out there who is excited about it. You can take what you already have and use it to your advantage rather than always feeling bogged down by the need to create new stuff," Strum said.



Single page of reviews



Second natural result

Tactic #7. Find more ways to repurpose

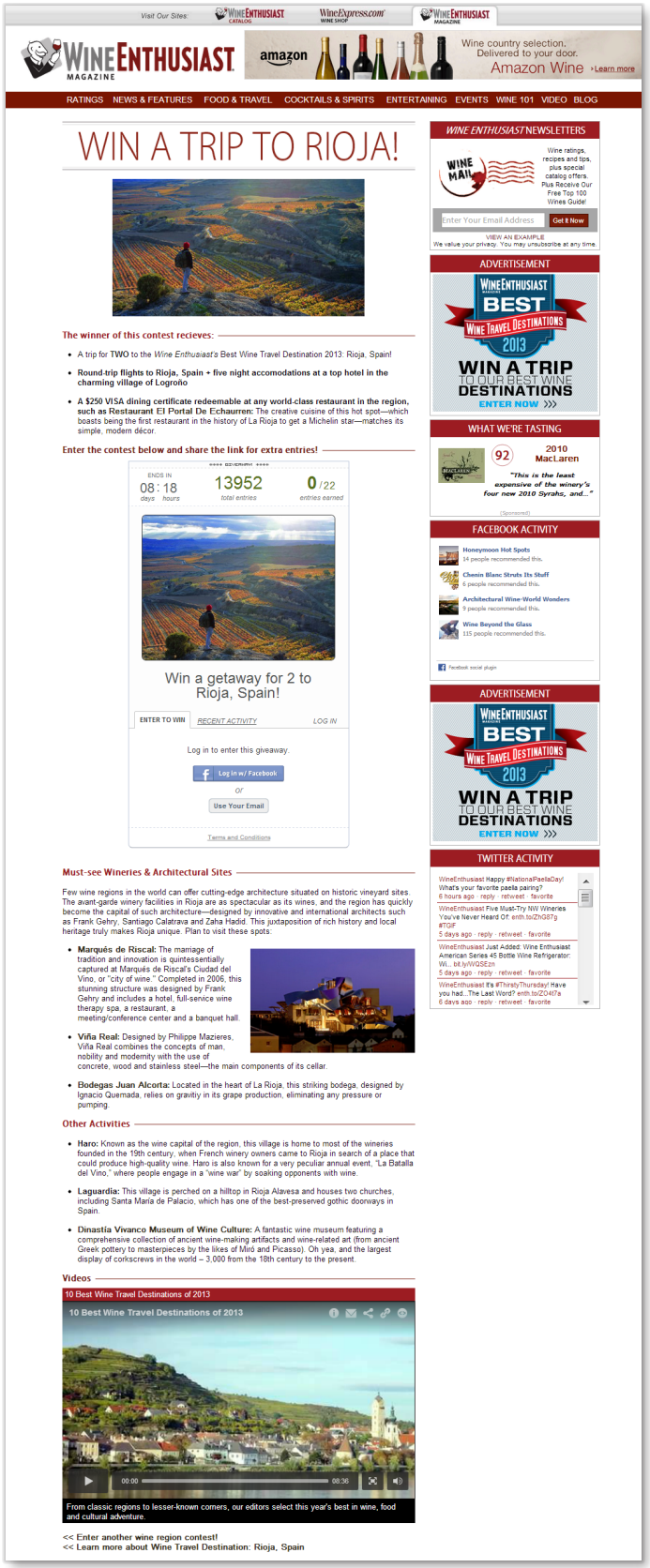
Contests are another way Wine Enthusiast builds lists. The team repurposes content to help promote these campaigns.

"We just launched a contest based on our 10 Best Wine Travel Designations … We have over 10,000 entries and the contest still has two months left, so it's pretty incredible," Strum said.

For example, one of the team's contests is giving away a trip. The page includes repurposed content such as:

- Architectural highlights of the destination
- Activity highlights
- Video for the 10 Best Wine Travel Destinations of 2013

The page includes all the information regarding the contest. Visitors can sign up with an email address or Facebook account, and they can leave comments at the bottom of the page. Combined with the repurposed content, the page provides a hub for the contest the team can promote to bloggers and the media to build traffic and entries.



Team contest

Content Marketing: 5 tips for WordPress blogging

- Erin Hogg, Copy Editor

Clarity is extremely important when it comes to content, so producing blog posts a reader can understand relies heavily on how it is displayed.

A blog post with photos in random places, sections without a subhead and discussing a process without the use of photos to accompany text are just a few of the millions of ways a reader can get lost in your message.

However, these are all elements you can control.

Here are five tips and tricks I've learned to improve a WordPress blog …

Tip #1: Use invisible tables for side-by-side comparisons

Sometimes, if you have just one image in a blog post, you can get away with setting it on the left, right or even in the center of text. This works great especially if your image can stand alone. However, if you have two images (a before and after example, etc.), it is definitely worth taking the extra time to craft an invisible table and place your photos into the code.

Here is an example from the MarketingSherpa blog post in which I placed two examples of an email side by side for easier comparison.

Default on iPhone

Responsive on iPhone

Takeaway #1: Use mobile marketing and social media to engage a younger demographic

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

Takeaway #2: Consider mobile design, not just content

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

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

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

As you can see, placing the two images next to each other works well in this case. If they were placed one on top of the other, the reader would lose the before and after effect of the email. I would also recommend adding a caption to the photo, if the meaning without it is not very clear.

Coding an invisible table in HTML is an easy process that takes just a few tweaks. You want to start by uploading your images into the WordPress Media Library. Then, within the actual post, switch from the visual editor to the HTML editor. Next, paste the below code where you want your table to be:

```
<table style="border: none;" cellspacing="10">
<tbody>
<tr style="border: none;">
<td style="border: none; vertical-align: middle;"><a href="FILE URL 1"><img class=" wp-image-11378 "
title="IMAGE TITLE 1" src="FILE URL" alt="" width="xxx" height="xxx" /></a>CAPTION</td>
<td style="border: none; vertical-align: middle;"><a href="FILE URL 2"><img class=" wp-image-11379 "
title="IMAGE  TITLE 2" src="FILE URL 2" alt="" width="xxx" height="xxx" /></a>CAPTION</td>
<td style="border: none; vertical-align: middle;"></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Now for the important part. Go back to the Media Library, select "edit" for the image you uploaded, and copy the File URL provided. Paste that URL into your first table box, and return to the upload gallery to grab the image title.

Be mindful if what you're putting into the table does not match the upload information, it will not work.

Once you put the image title in, you will once again need to put in the same image URL. Finally, include the dimensions of the image, indicated by "**xxx**" in the example above. There is no need to change "wp-image" number.

Repeat this process for other photos you want to put into the table. It is also easy to make a third or fourth photo in the table: simply copy one of the table boxes, which is the code in between "<td style… and </td>," and paste it into the code.

Tip #2: Use padding around images to separate from text

When using smaller images, a design that works well is to nestle the photo to the right or left of text. For example, this blog post used a small image placed to the left of the text.

Sometimes, if you put in an image, it may be too close to the text, or might cause strange separation of

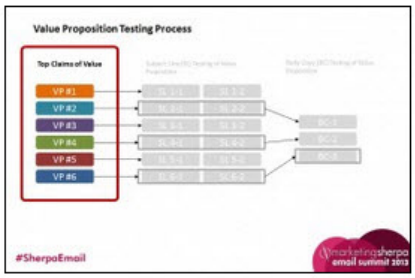
the text. For example, you might have a lost bullet point separated from the list, or maybe a few words orphaned from the rest of the sentence it belongs to tucked away under an image. To fix this problem, play with the vertical and horizontal space of the image to place the text into a desirable format.

In this MarketingExperiments blog entry, the original design plan was to have images larger in size, centered and acting as separators between paragraphs.

However, with multiple images, it is easier on the eyes and for the reader to have them neatly in the margins, sized smaller, but with the ability to be viewed larger once clicked.

Step #1: Identify potential claims of value

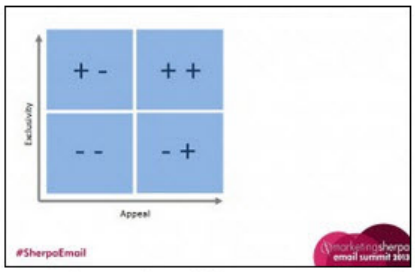
Identifying potential claims of value is really all about brainstorming. The example Austin gave for this was to imagine you are selling mortgages. What would be potential claims of value you could make?



Austin came up with some potential claims of value for selling mortgages:

- Reliability
- Lowest rates
- Easy process
- Brand name
- Payment plan options
- Reduced anxiety
- Service quality
- Community involvement

Step #2: Estimate the force of each claim



You can estimate the force of your claims by using elements of appeal and exclusivity to rank the potential claims you brainstormed for your product.

Austin explained how the elements are perceived by potential prospects.

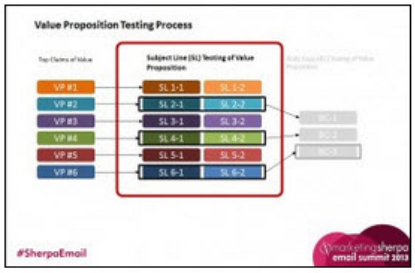
Appeal – "I want this"

Exclusivity – "I can't get this anywhere else"

Some of your offers will have a greater appeal, but they may not be very exclusive. Other offers might be exclusive, but offer little appeal to your customers.

"You want to test claims that have high levels of both appeal and exclusivity," Austin explained.

Step #3: Test within subject lines (Round 1)



Next, Austin showed the audience how ranked value proposition claims should be crafted into competing subject lines and tested using multivariate A/B testing.

Using subject lines in split tests gives marketers a quick way to begin discovering which of your value propositions have greater appeal with your customers. This is also where those large sample sizes come in handy for validating your test results.

"This initial round of testing is where you can eliminate some of the less appealing and exclusive claims," Austin declared.

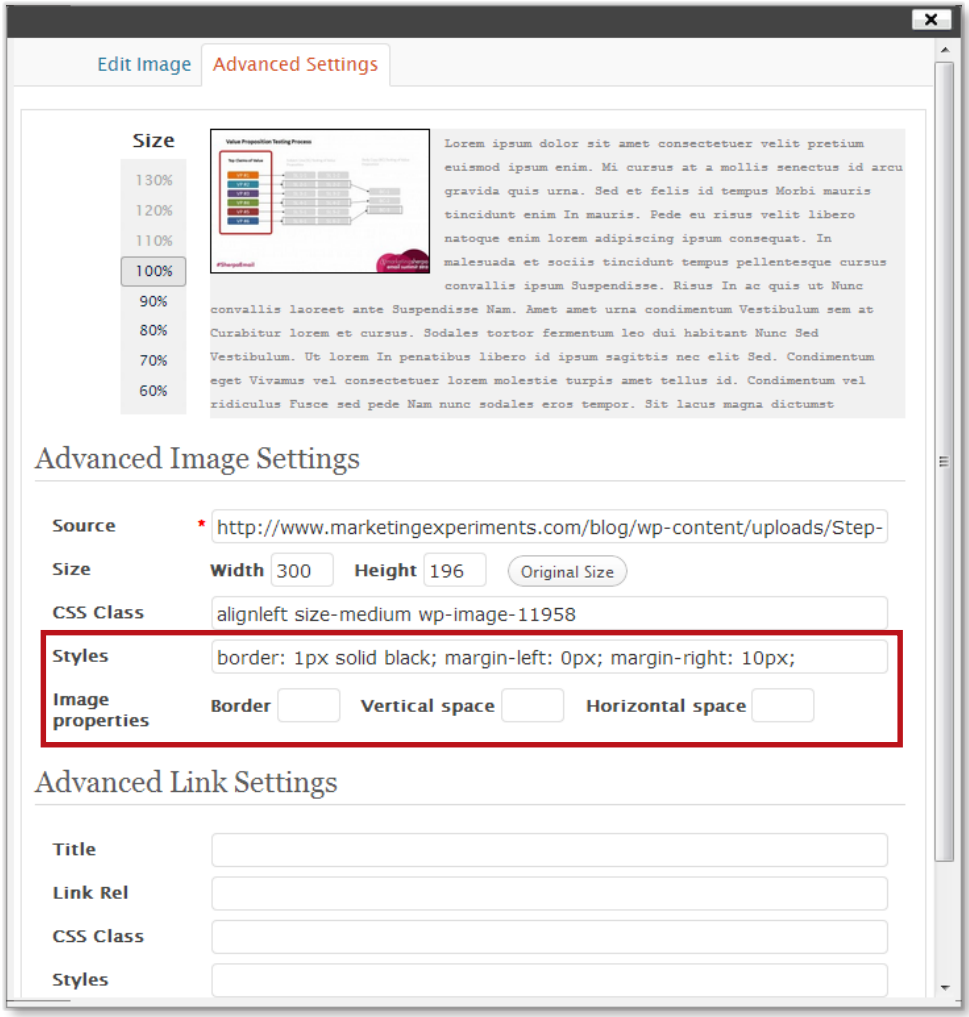
Plus, for a post containing steps, having smaller images adds a level of clarity as the reader can fully see the steps in the subheader and the steps of testing, all without having to scroll all over the page.

For the first image, it was necessary to add a horizontal space to the right of the photo so the bullet points would not overlap over the image. This was done after the photo was uploaded and set into the appropriate spot to the left of the bullet points.

Vertical spacing is also a great and easy way to make sure there is enough space above and below the image.

One important tip to note is moderation is key – you don't want to have an image on the left and an image on the right back to back in the body of your content. Try keeping a series of images or photos all on the same side of the page if they are in close proximity of each other.

Then, by selecting the image in the visual editor and selecting Advanced Settings, you can add any amount of space into the options. Here is what I used:



Tip #3: Schedule blog posts ahead of time (if possible)

At MarketingSherpa, we work hard to plan content ahead on our editorial calendar. After all, even if you think you will have enough time to post the entry a day before you'd like to run it, obstacles always seem to arise when you least expect them.

This is why scheduling blog posts is so important to have content posted on a regular and timely basis. It's a good idea to set the post to "Schedule" before you get too far into your post uploading process. One slip, and you may click "Publish" instead of "Schedule," and your post is live.

Scheduling a blog post is possible on the editing page of a post. Next to "Publish immediately," click edit, and you can decide the date and time you'd like to have the post go live. Once the "Publish" button changes to "Schedule," your post should publish at the listed time.

Just to note, sometimes scheduling blog posts ahead of time is out of the question, and that's alright. Even for MarketingSherpa, live blogging at events makes it impossible to be able to schedule a post ahead of time due to the time crunch and also fulfilling the purpose of a "live" blog.

Tip #4: Customize your blog URLs and add blog categories

Online marketing. Email deliverability. Social media marketing.

Our content is very diverse with many niche focuses.

To simplify how we organize our posts, we have created categories in which each blog post is filed under. For example, Taylor Kennedy's "Online Marketing: 4 sources of customer insight on your website" post is under the category "online marketing" because of its main focus.

Then, after you choose your category, changing your URL to match the headline is also important. Pick three to five words that concisely describe the post, while keeping in mind the selected category.

You don't want to have a URL such as "sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/**marketing-insights**/4-**marketing-insights**." Get creative, and find ways to avoid repeating the category name in the URL.

It doesn't hurt to consider target keywords in your URL, as well. Of course, SEO takes much more than just including a few words in a pretty URL.

Tip #5: Embed media for cross promotion

Finally, with the popularity of social media, you may find embedding media in your post to be much better than just a simple link to a tweet or video. Embedding is incredibly easy and does not take an HTML expert to do.

Twitter

Embedding Twitter posts allows viewers of your page to not only see the tweet, but also to interact with it. Instead of a screenshot, embedding tweets allows for people to retweet, respond, favorite and even follow the tweet's owner. By selecting "Embed tweet" from the "More" drop-down menu on a single tweet, a pop-up appears with an embed code.

Check out the functionality in this example here: http://bit.ly/Z0pkq1

YouTube

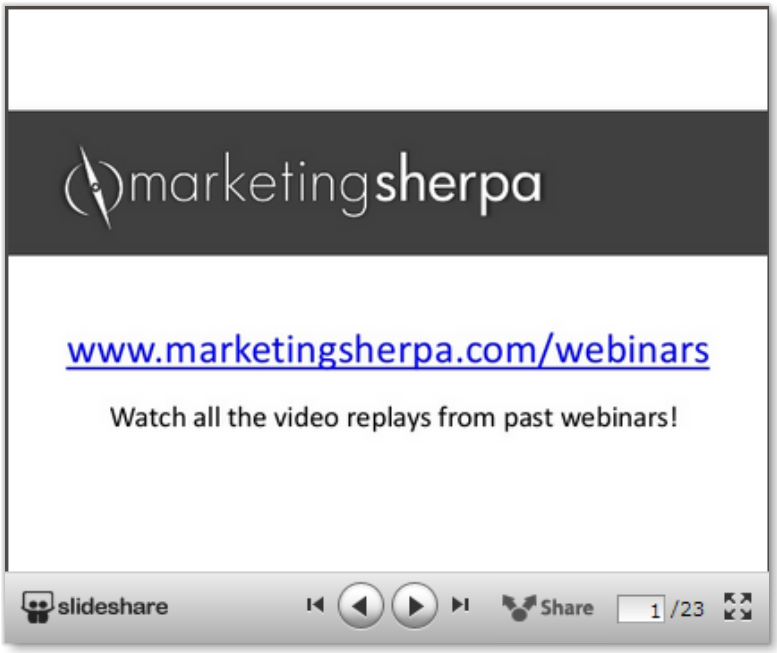
Instead of a link, embedding a YouTube video allows viewers to stay on your website as well as view the video you'd like to feature. Similar to retrieving the Twitter embed code, start by selecting the "Share" tab under a video. Then, select "Embed" to view an HTML embed code to copy and paste to your blog. You may also manipulate how large the video display by changing the width and height in the code.

Check out the functionality in this example here: http://bit.ly/Z0pkq1

SlideShare

SlideShare also has the capability to embed an entire presentation into your blog post. To do this, simply select "Share" on any presentation, and the pop-up box provides an embed code.

Check out this example here: http://bit.ly/Z0pkq1



Optimization: A discussion about an e-commerce company's 500% sales increase
from MarketingSherpa

Marketing Analytics

Marketing Metrics: Do your analytics capture the real reasons customers buy from you?

- Jonathan Greene, Social Media Analyst

How can you track the most impactful elements of your marketing funnel? Let's start with an analogy …

I once had a crush on a girl. I talked to her every day, but she rarely took notice of my existence. She liked the "bad boys," and I was kind of a nerd. It seemed as if the stars were aligned against us.

I tried asking sweetly, coming up with inventive date ideas, even appealing to her sense of pity, all to no avail. Finally, after a year or so of trying, I wrote her a letter telling how I felt. She finally accepted my invitation and we went on a date.

My takeaway from this exchange was letters work best. (Admittedly, my letters are particularly awesome.)

What I *didn't* know was my letter had relatively little to do with her decision. Years later, I asked her why she finally decided to go out with me. She admitted my persistence played a role, but the bigger factor was how she had her heart broken by one of the aforementioned "bad boys," and decided to give a nice guy a chance.

I was floored. I had no idea these events had ever transpired, and more importantly, had vastly overestimated my letter writing ability.

What I had was essentially a last click attribution model. This is the way in which countless organizations currently measure conversions. We, as an industry, have come a long way in terms of being excited about measuring and testing our marketing efforts.

However, looking at the last click before conversion as a sole contributor to the conversion decision is as near-sighted as assuming the young lady accepted my date invitation based upon my letter writing skills. The letter was a factor, but it wasn't the *only* factor.

I need a better model.

Where should I spend my marketing dollars?

Using the last click attribution method, I can determine the value of a conversion generated from an

email campaign. I might arrive at the conclusion my marketing dollars are best spent on building email lists and optimizing email campaigns.

While there may be truth in that statement, it's only partially correct. The real story in this scenario might be a customer first interacted with my brand when a friend shared a product review on Facebook. From there, a likely scenario of events could be:

- The customer visited and liked my Facebook page, and then left.
- Weeks later, I launched a new product via Facebook post. The customer saw the post and then left the platform to do some research.
- While researching the new product on Google, a PPC ad appeared and convinced the customer to click through to my site.
- Once on the website, the customer joined my email list.
- Two weeks later, I sent an email that the customer subsequently viewed and converted, purchasing my product.

From this example, it's obvious the customer was nurtured to conversion through a series of interactions including social media, PPC, landing pages and email. Now, how much of my marketing dollars should go to each channel, since in this case, they were all obviously necessary for conversion?

Attribution models

Solving this problem requires the use of a different attribution model, and not all attribution models are created equal. I remember how happy I was when I learned there were multiple varieties of steak. I had always eaten sirloin, because that's what my dad always cooked. So, you can imagine my excitement the first time I tasted filet mignon!

Similarly, there are a wide variety of attribution models to suit everyone's taste.

One example is the linear ratio model, which is a dynamic model that attributes different values to different purchase and research phases. For instance, it might:

- Attribute 5% of revenue to Facebook for the research and awareness piece of our sample transaction above.
- Assign 25% of that revenue to PPC ads.
- Finish by assigning 70% of the attribution to the email campaign that caused the click.

There are many implications to using a model such as this. The social media manager is very happy because he just went from being a nonexistent entity in this conversion to owning 5% of the revenue.

The email manager might not be quite as happy, but the marketing executive should be thrilled.

There are many more models to experiment with. First-click, U-shaped, custom models and linear modeling are just a few. We're getting closer to really understanding *why* people buy our stuff, and how they arrive on our pages.

Moreover, we've attributed our revenue to particular interactions along the funnel, which should get us started in the process of assigning value to each marketing activity we undertake.

To learn more about each of the above attribution models, see Google Analytics' definitions here: http://bit.ly/143giX3

A brief case study

Electronic Arts (EA), one of the largest video game developers in the world, made some big gains with attribution modeling. Like most gaming companies, short product life cycles and a reliance on blockbuster products was increasing pressure on the marketing department, and causing them to use "gut instincts" to plan marketing operations.

The company's traditional advertising model involved a wealth of offline promotions, theater advertisements and television. Before launching the attribution model, EA campaigns allocated approximately 80% of its ad budget to television, with very little spending on paid search, social media or online video.

Using the attribution, optimization and allocation framework, EA was able to learn several key things about its advertising. First, the in-theater ads – heavily favored by the company – were underperforming. Secondly, significantly more revenue was being attributed to search, online advertising and online video.

Finally, EA discovered its ad campaigns were being timed incorrectly for product launches. The subsequent reallocation of resources resulted in 12% less television spending, 90% more YouTube spending and a 32% increase in paid search. The net impact on the campaign was an estimated 23% increase in sales from the previous product launch.

[Source: Wes Nichols, "Advertising Analytics 2.0," *Harvard Business Review*; March 2013, Vol. 91 Issue 3, pp. 60-68]

It's not a perfect solution

There are still some problems with attribution modeling. The method relies upon Web cookies, which cause underrepresentation on social media and other mediums, which are frequently accessed from mobile phones, apps and other devices.

In addition, attributing offline sales to online activities continues to be problematic. As far as we know, there's really no strong method for tracking view-through conversions caused by content syndication and third-party sites.

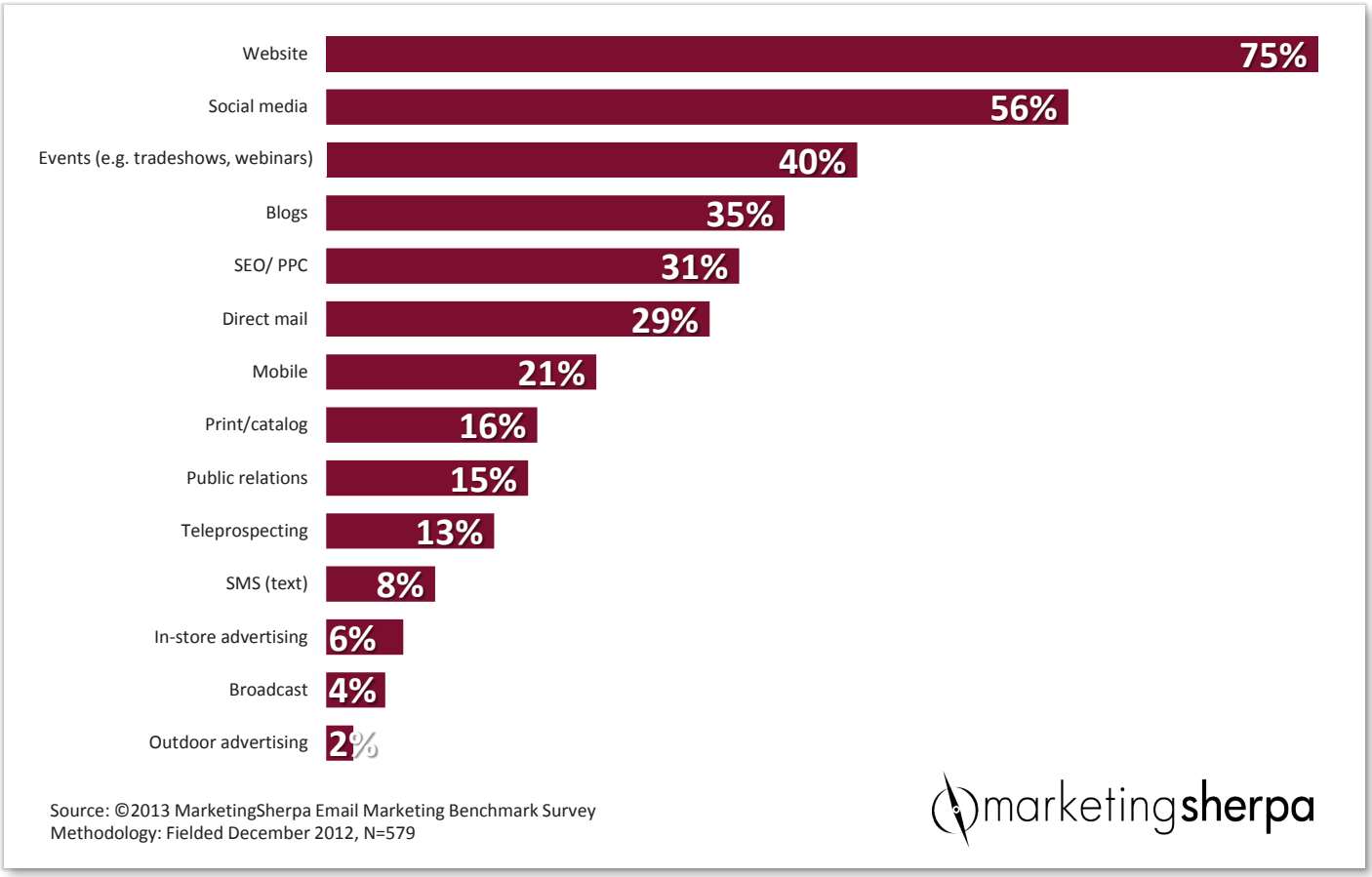
But, in the end, knowing more is usually better than knowing less; it's kind of like how having more steak is usually better than having less, regardless of the cut.

Appendix A:
Marketing Research Charts of the Week

Marketing channel email integration

Q: Which marketing channels does your organization integrate with your email program?

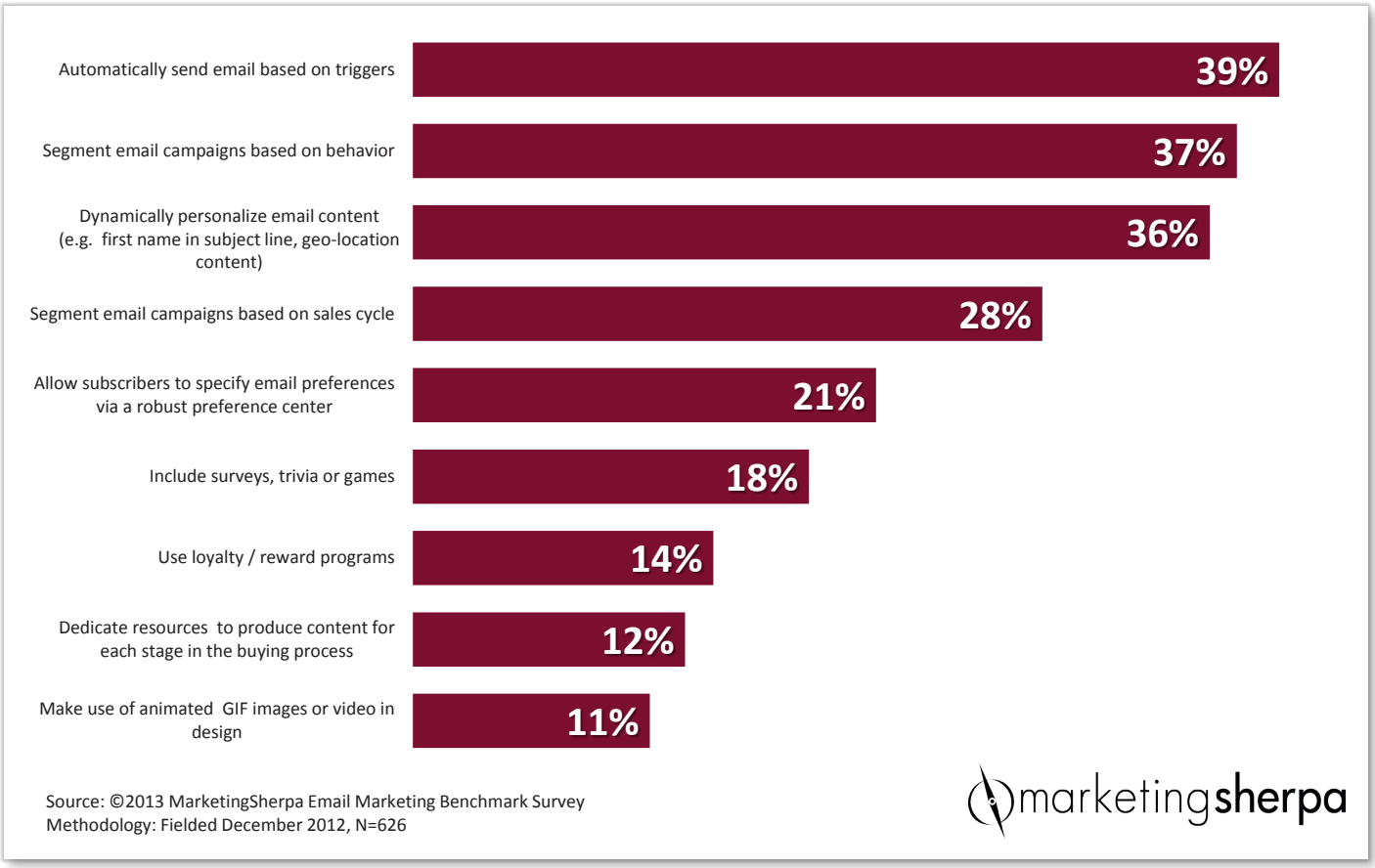
Week of April 02, 2013
From the *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*



Tactics to improve email engagement

Q: Which of the following tactics is your organization using to improve the relevance and engagement of email content delivered to subscribers?

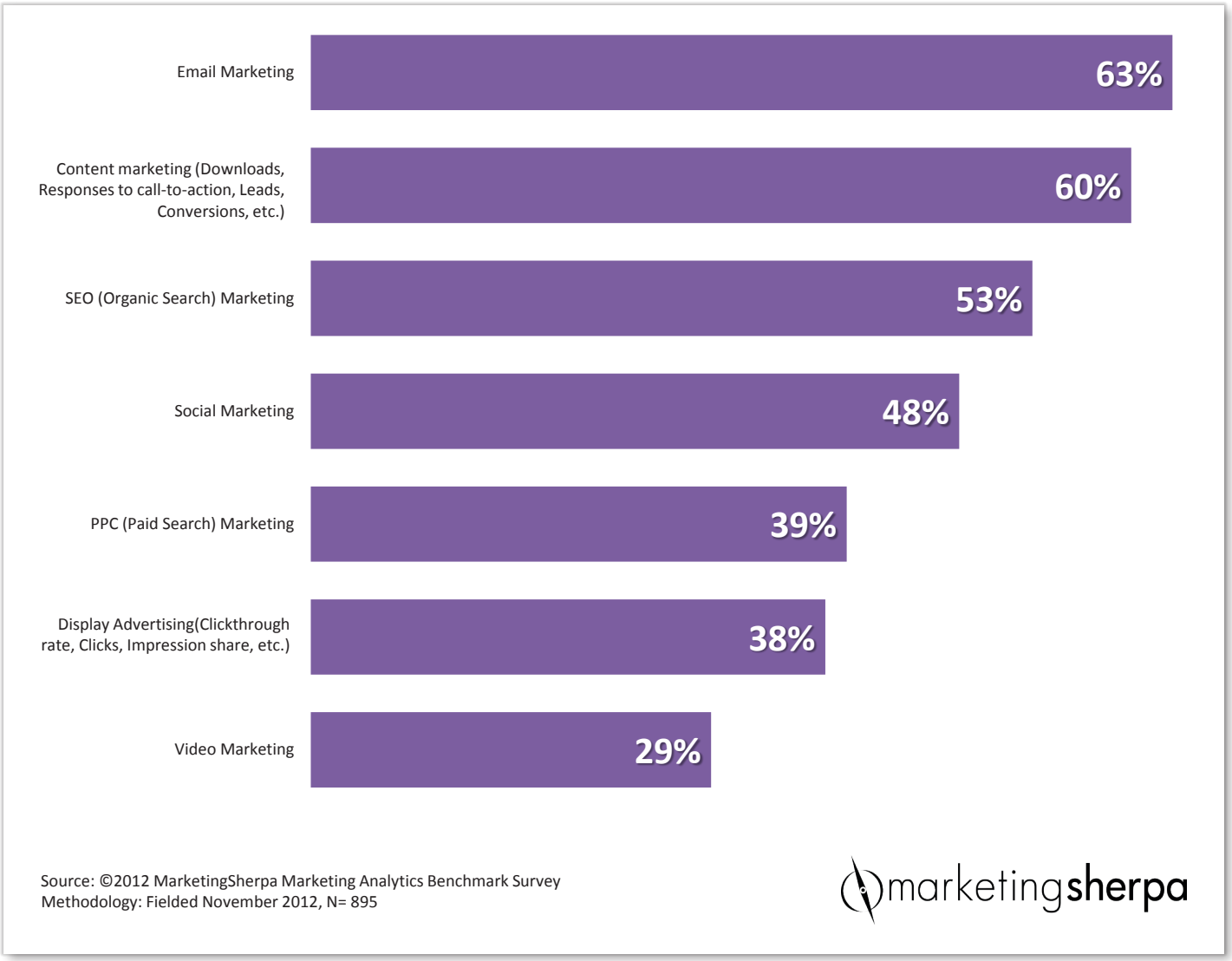
Week of April 09, 2013
From the *2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report*



Channels tracked by marketers

Q: Which of the following are you involved with tracking, analyzing or reporting on for your organization?

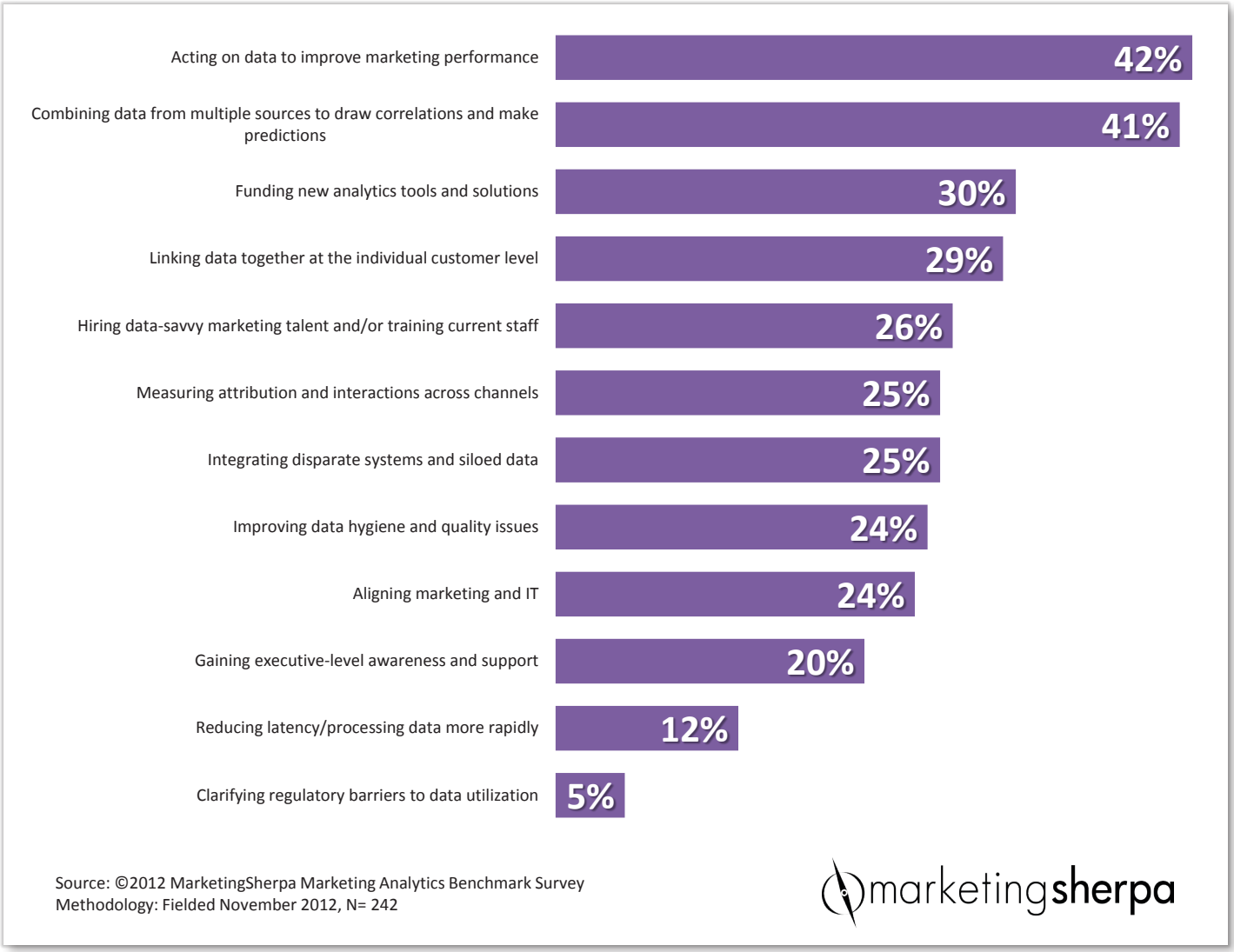
Week of April 16, 2013
From the *2013 Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report*



Marketing analytics challenges

Q: What were your organization's most frustrating challenges with marketing analytics in 2012?

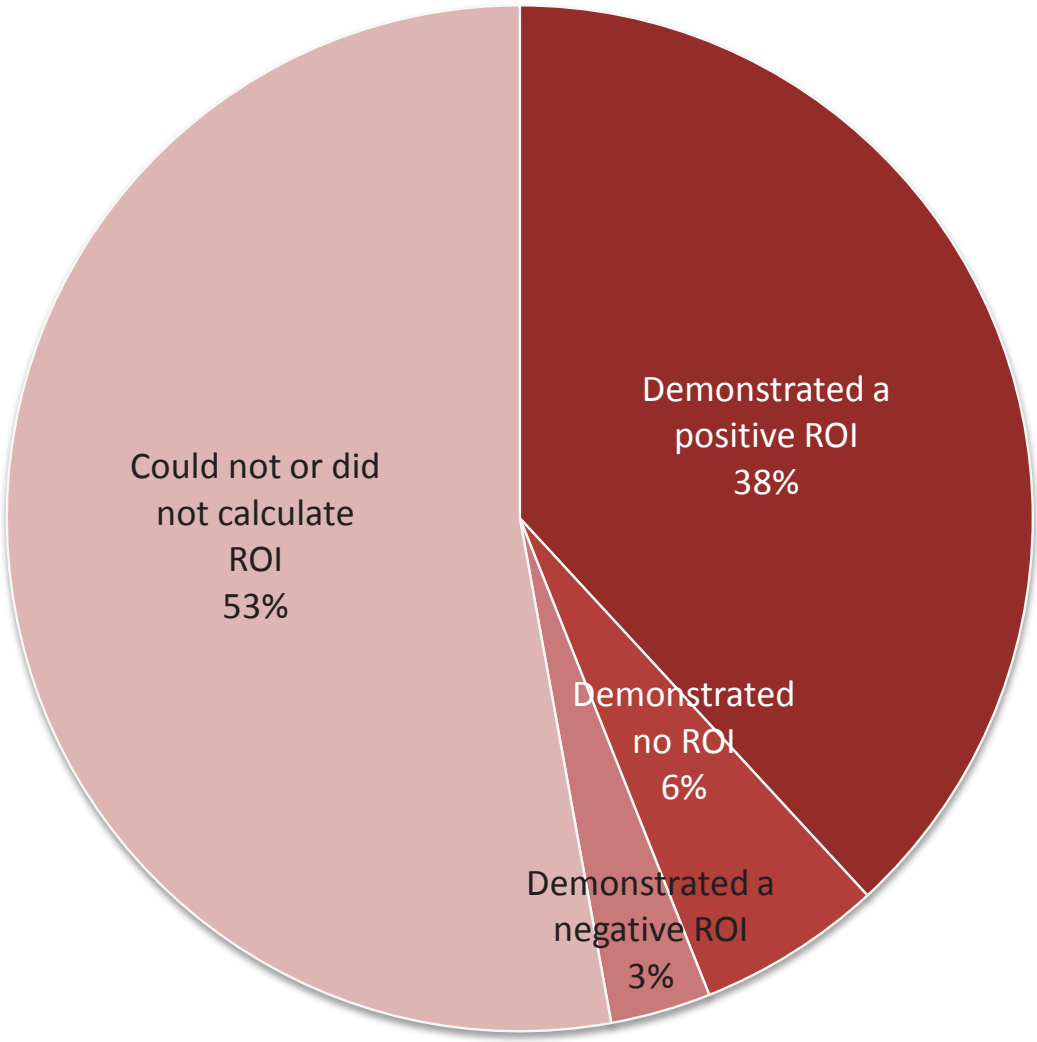
Week of April 23, 2013
From the *2013 Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report*



Measuring website optimization ROI

Q: Did optimization or testing demonstrate ROI in 2011?

Week of April 30, 2013
From the *2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report*



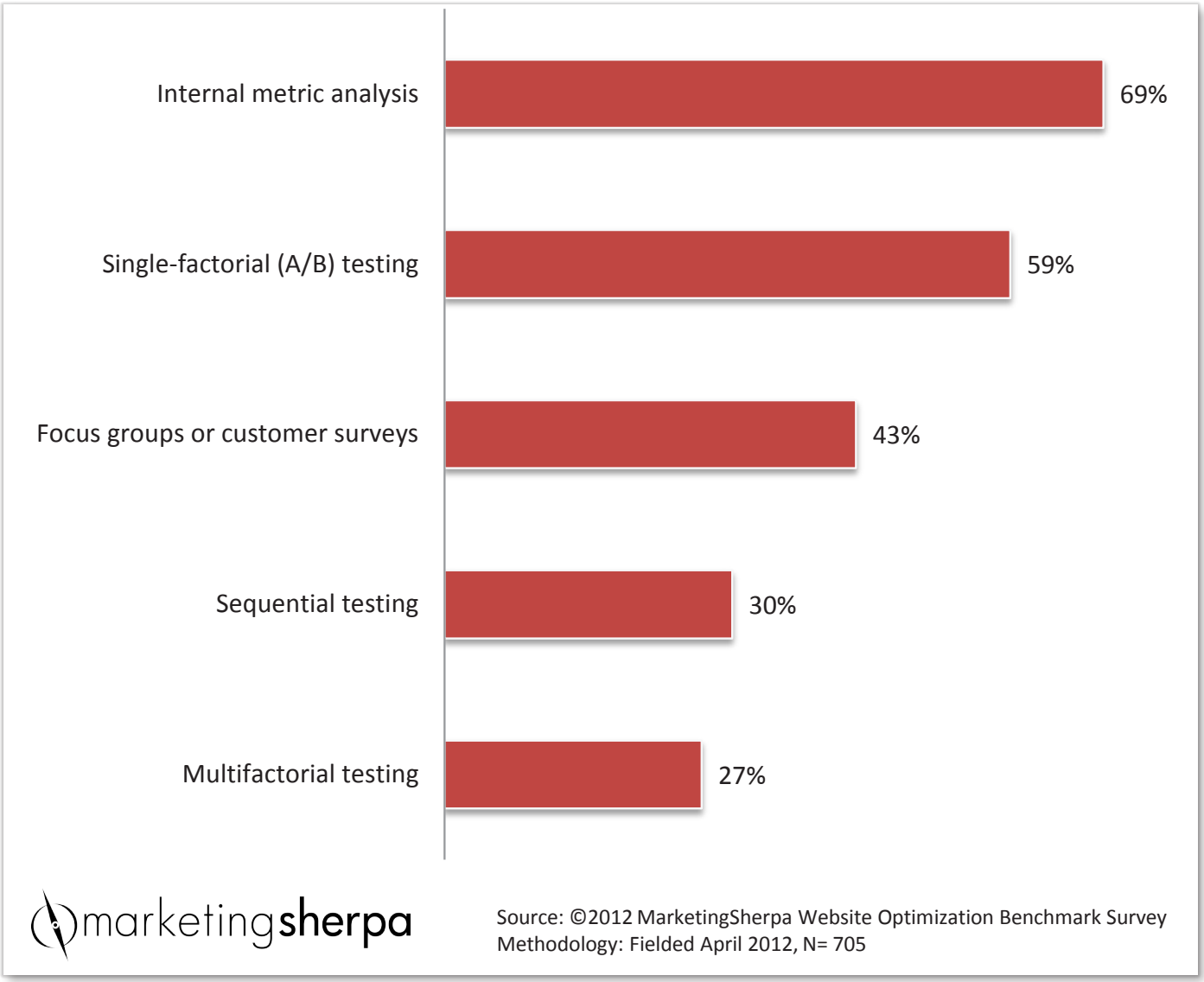
marketingsherpa

Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Website Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2012, N=789

Use of analytics to inform customer theory

Q: Which of the following does your company employ to learn about customers?

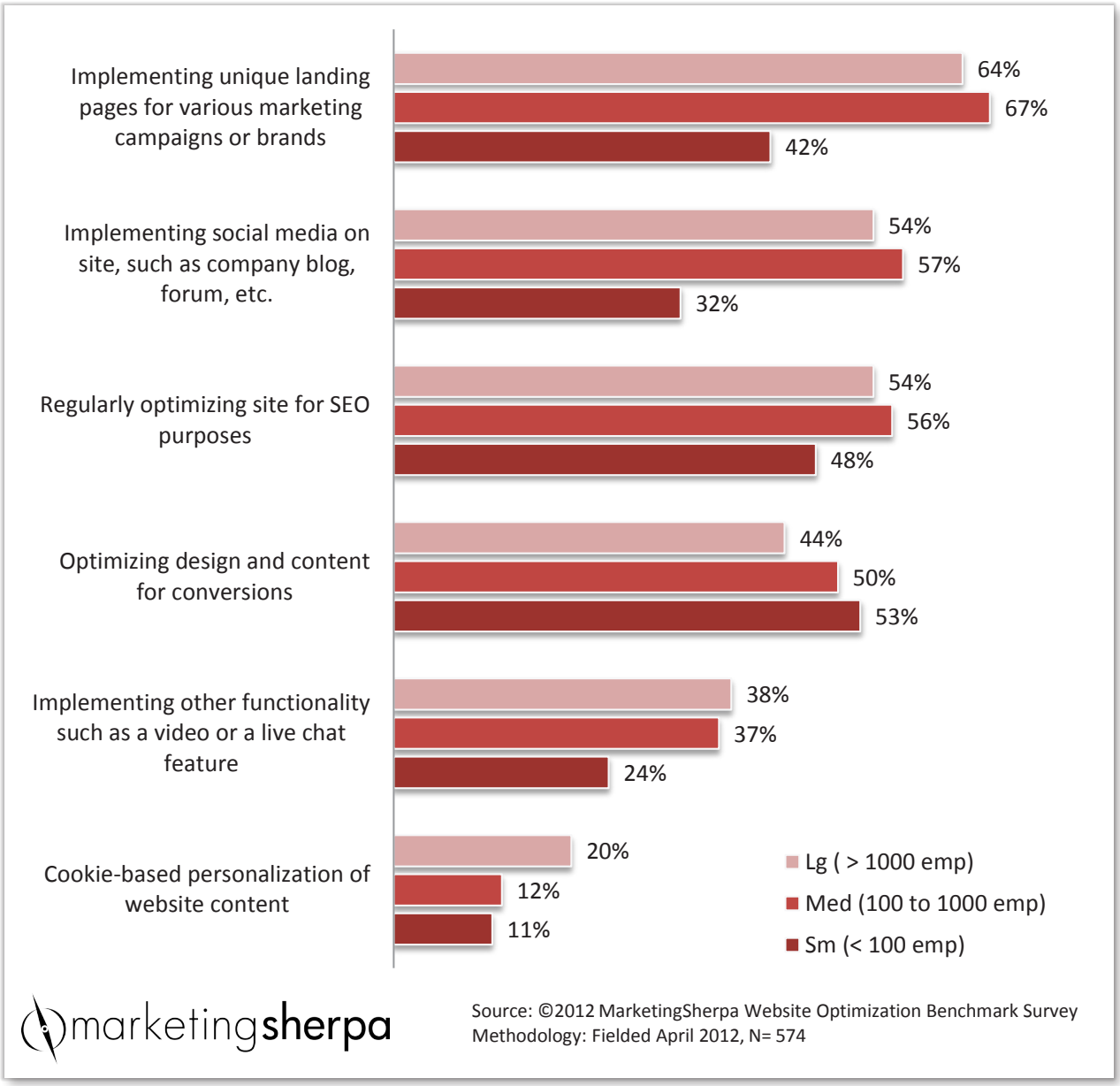
Week of May 07, 2013
From the *2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report*



67% of medium-size companies implement unique landing pages

Q: Which of the following website optimization tactics does your organization currently use?

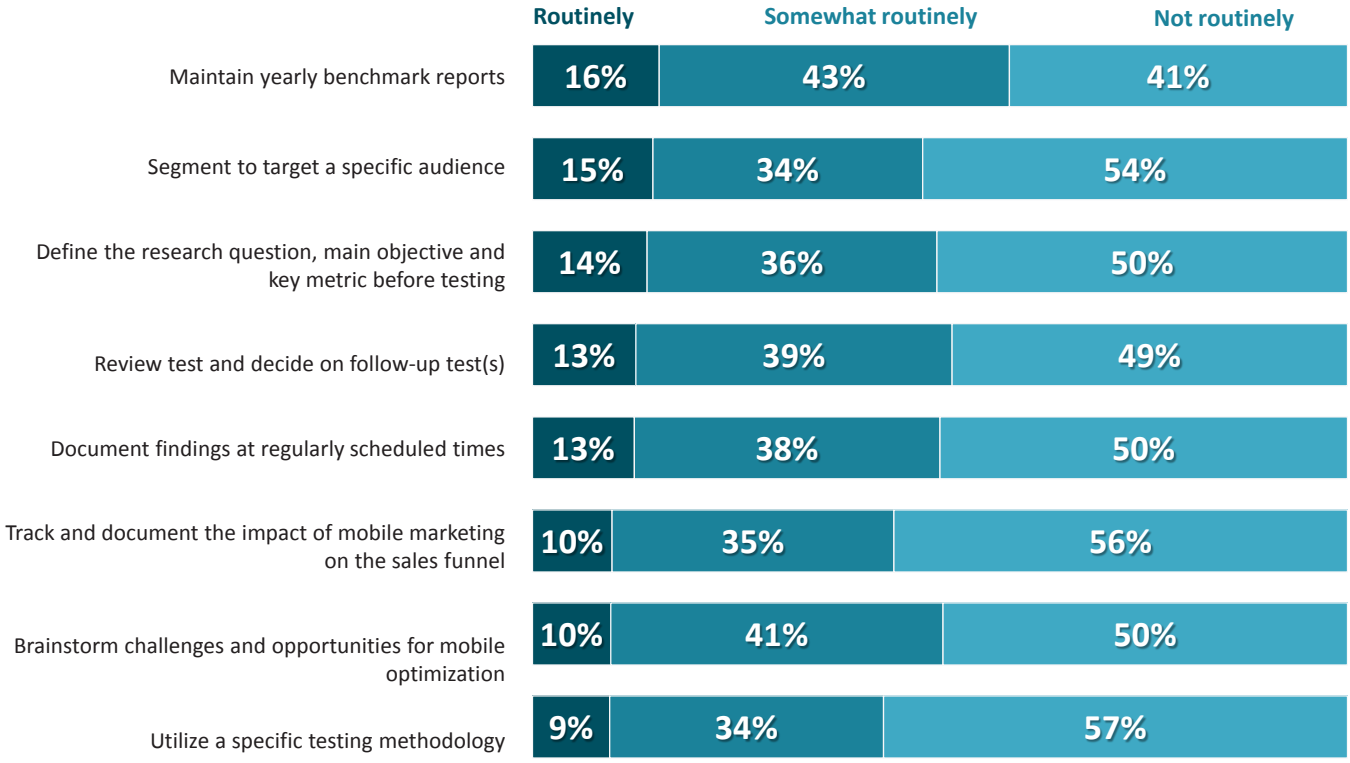
Week of June 11, 2013
From the *2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report*



Implementation of mobile testing

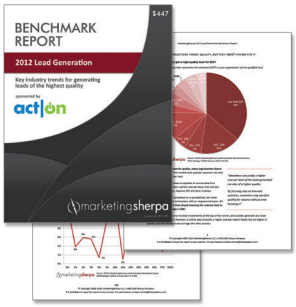
Q: How routinely does your organization implement the following testing practices?

Week of May 14, 2013
From the *2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report*



Methodology: Fielded August 2012, N=154

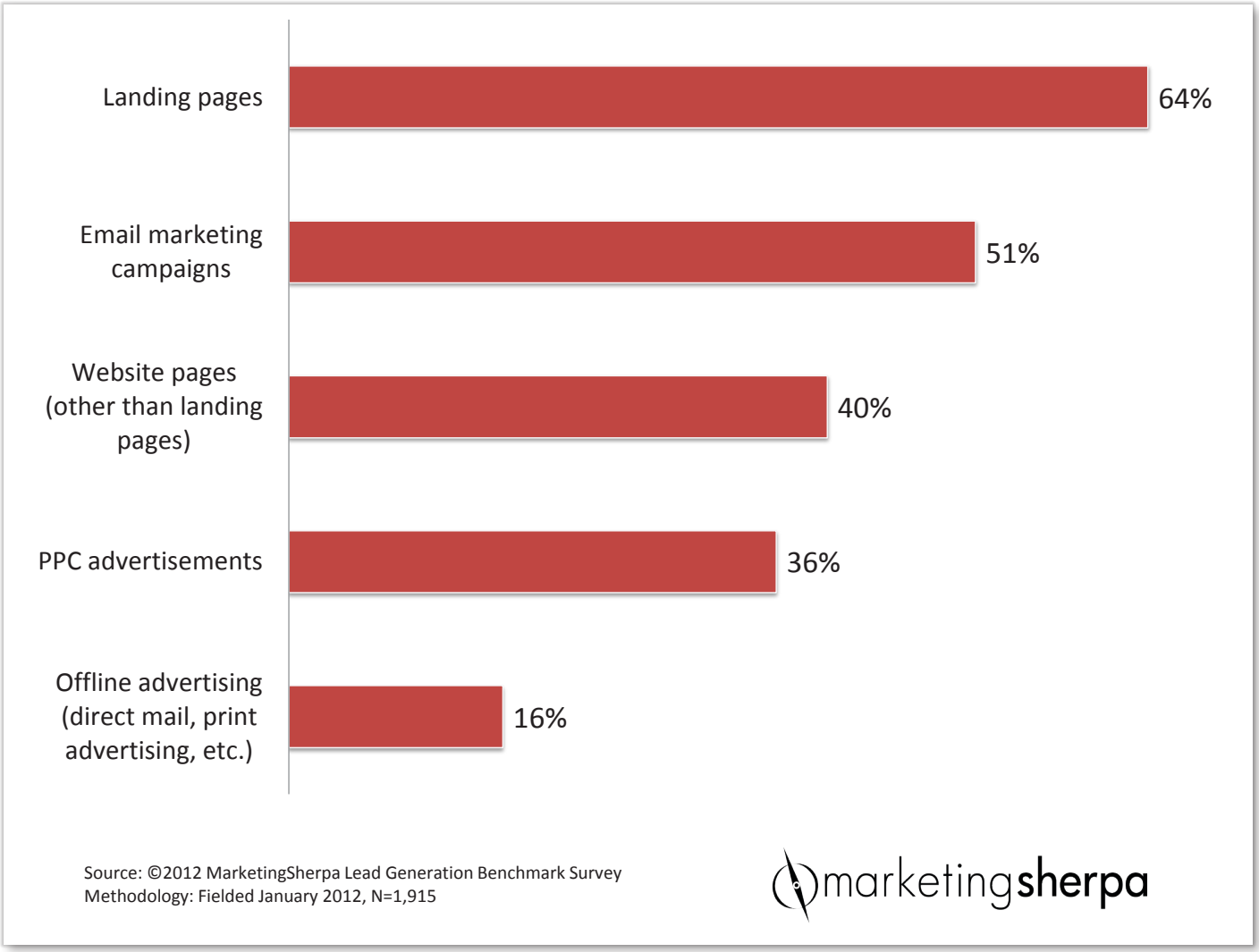
marketingsherpa

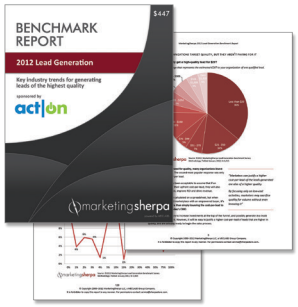


Top platforms for testing value proposition

Q: Which methods have been the most effective at testing your value proposition?

Week of May 21, 2013
From the *2012 Lead Generation Benchmark Report*

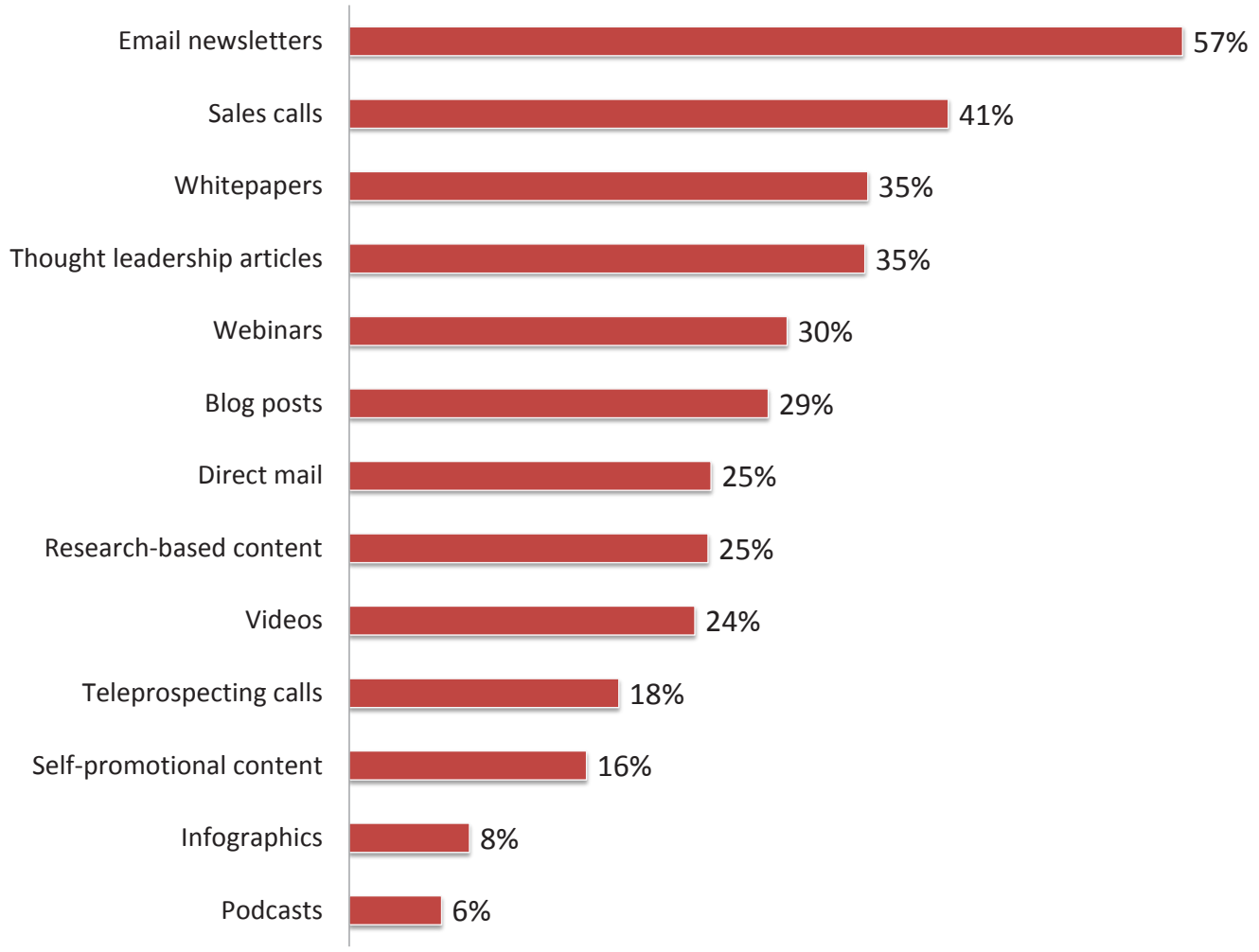




Messaging tactics for effective lead nurturing

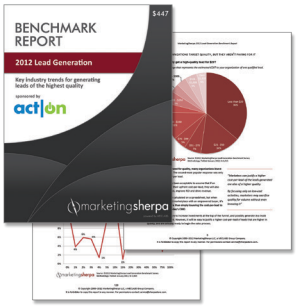
Q: Which of the following have been the most effective for nurturing your leads?

Week of May 28, 2013
From the *2012 Lead Generation Benchmark Report*



Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Lead Generation Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded January 2012, N=1,915

marketingsherpa



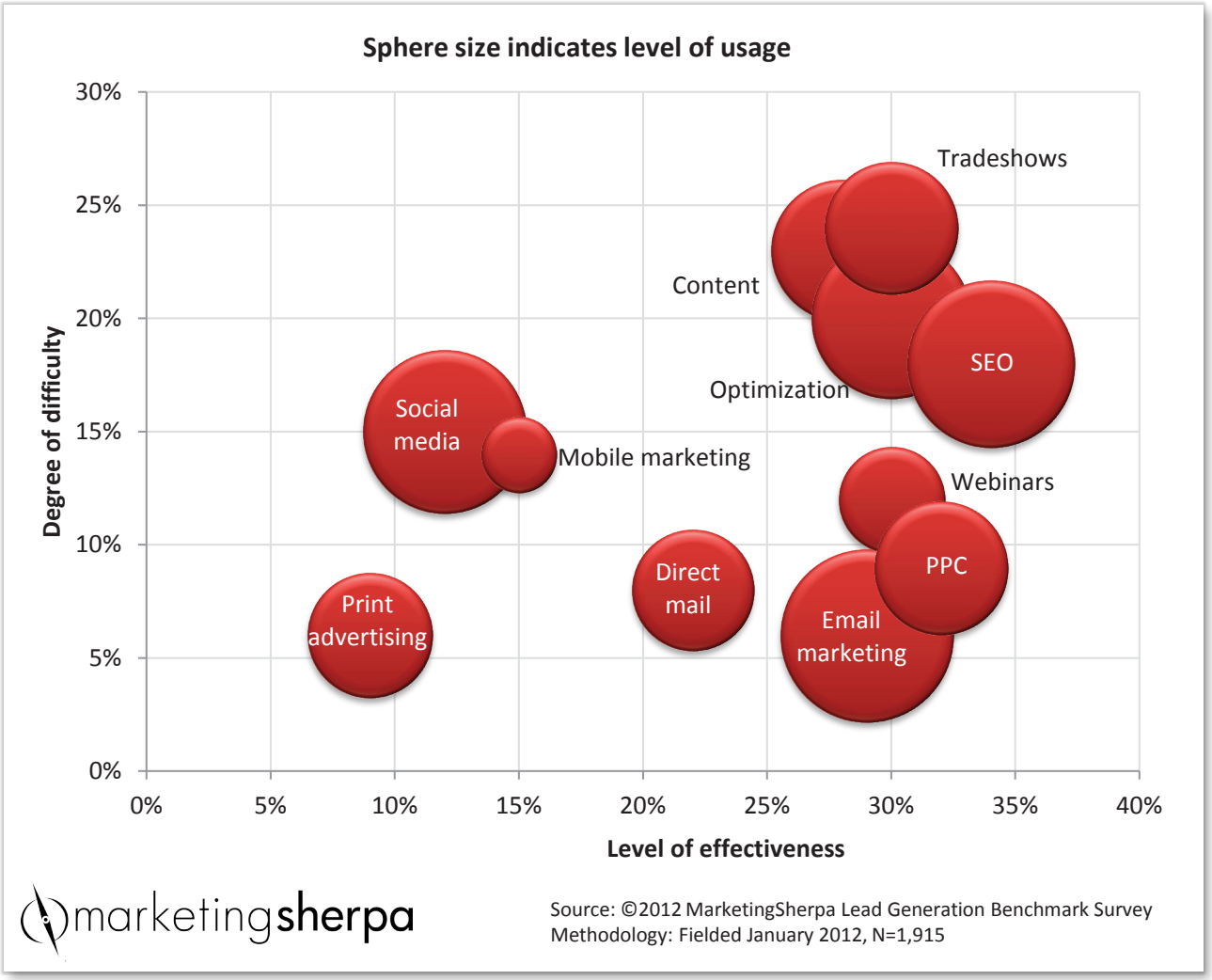
SEO most effective tactic for lead gen, but also among the most difficult

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

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

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

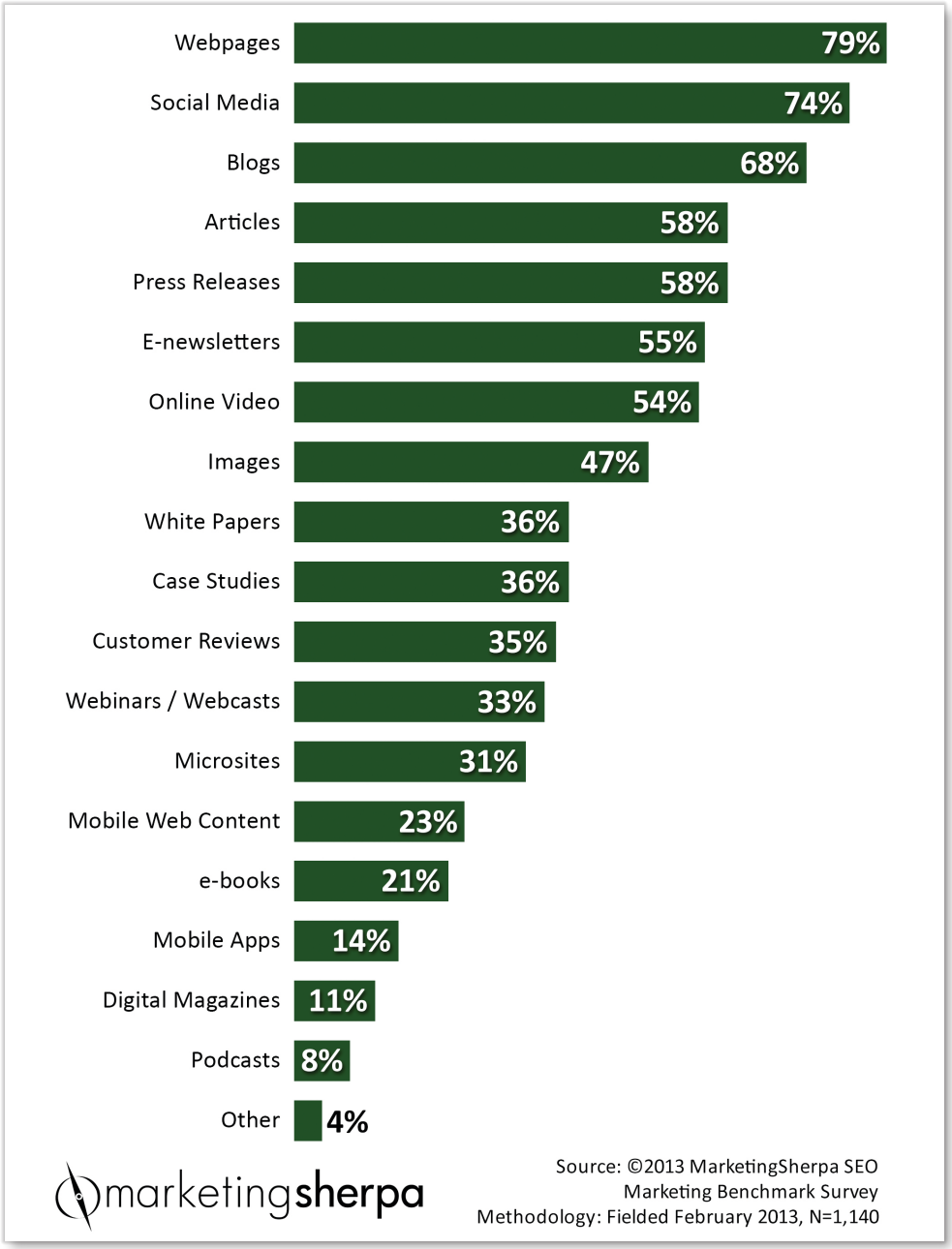
Week of June 18, 2013
From the *2012 Lead Generation Benchmark Report*



Which channels do your peers produce content on?

Q: What mix of content products do you currently use as part of your total SEO marketing strategy?

Week of June 25, 2013
From the *2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey*

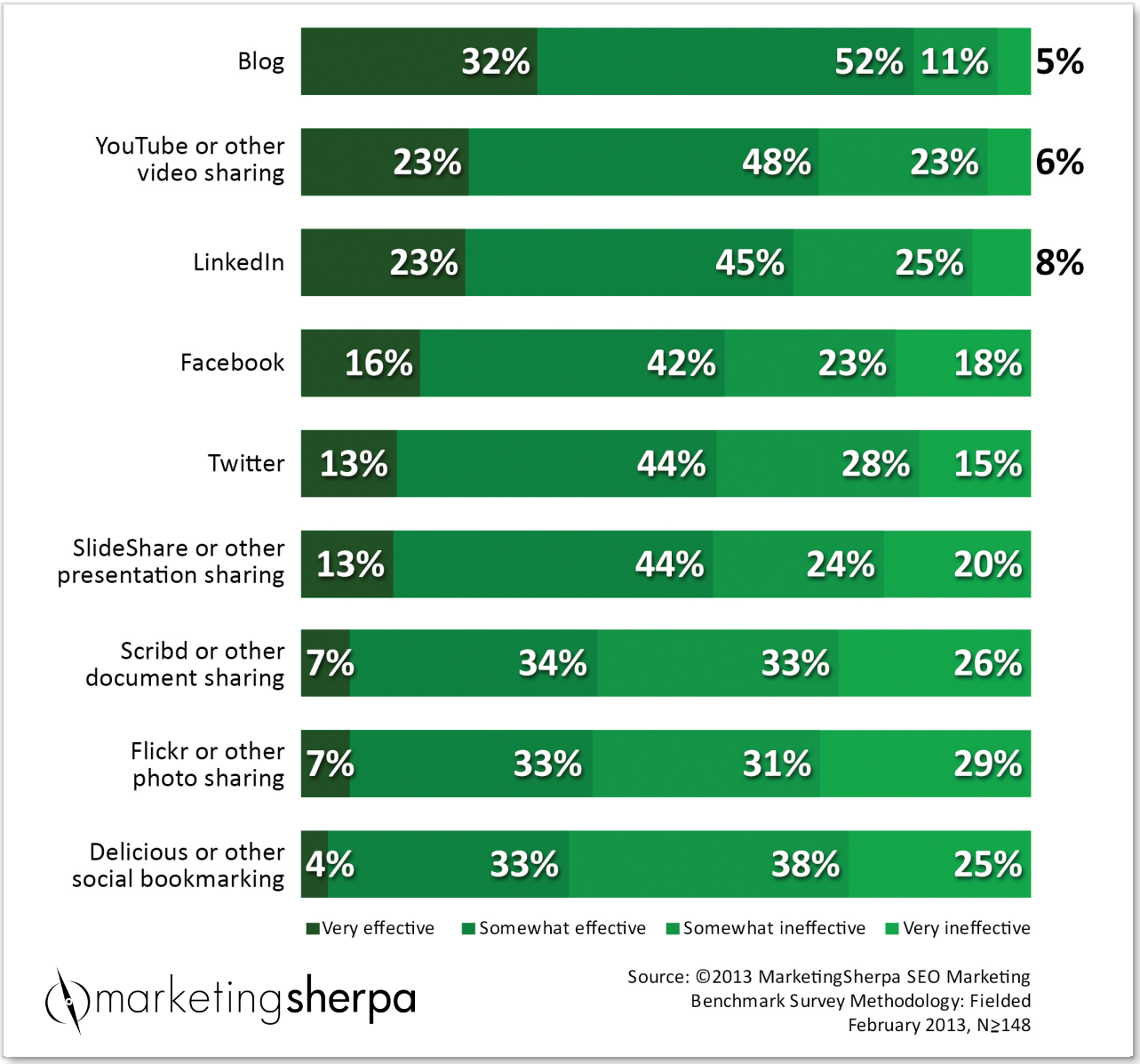


Appendix A: 2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey

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.

Week of June 04, 2013
From the *2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey*



"Too often in marketing, we move rapidly to execute on plans or utilize platforms (especially in social media) without thinking through the most effective ways to use those platforms, or if we should utilize them at all."

– Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS

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

Appendix B:
Content Directory

CONTENT DIRECTORY FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2013

This directory includes all of the content published by MECLABS through its brands, MarketingSherpa, MarketingExperiments and B2B Lead Roundtable, during the second quarter of 2013. You can browse the titles and summaries of this content, and see the full case study, article, video or publication by visiting a content piece's URL.

You can also view more content by visiting one of MECLABS' websites:
MarketingSherpa.com – View additional case studies and how-to articles
MarketingExperiments.com – See the latest discoveries found in the MarketingExperiments laboratory
B2B Lead Roundtable Blog – Learn more about lead generation, lead nurturing, lead management and more

MarketingSherpa Case Studies

Email Marketing: Regional insurance provider uses segmentation to raise brand awareness and fight national competition

Date: Tuesday, April 2, 2013
Summary: To reach consumers at a critical point in its policyholder lifecycle, the team at Capital Insurance Group used email content to highlight services specifically benefiting certain groups of policyholders. Read how CIG increased its inbox placement rate by 25%, and enhanced its communications to compel policyholders to increase coverage.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0242

Social Media Marketing: Travel company uses Facebook as a tool for generating testimonials

Date: Thursday, April 11, 2013
Summary: See how Costa Rican Vacations used Facebook to improve communication with customers via a testimonials tab, and was able to acquire more than 200 testimonials, which are now a welcome addition to its website and itineraries for prospective customers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0143

Email Marketing: CNET increases engagement by cutting nearly half of newsletter portfolio

Date: Tuesday, April 16, 2013
Summary: In this case study, read how CNET came to recognize the issue, the steps it took to cut down the editorial portfolio from 30 to 16 newsletters, and the criteria it used. Plus, learn how the team communicated the changes to all stakeholders – from management to subscribers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0144

Viral Marketing: Month-long sweepstakes generates 1,170% ROI and 488% lift in email subscribers

Date: Thursday, April 18, 2013

Summary: This case study details how November Bicycles achieved a 488% increase in its email subscriber list, and generated 1,170% ROI from a month-long sweepstakes campaign built around a new product release.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0145

Social Email Integration: Sony Electronics nets 3,000 clickthroughs from email to "pin" on Pinterest

Date: Tuesday, April 23, 2013

Summary: In this case study, read how Sony Electronics integrated Pinterest into its product sends. The resulting campaign from this integration won Gold in the Best Email Innovation category in MarketingSherpa's Email Marketing Awards 2013.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0146

Testing and Optimization: SAP's Test Lab increases digital leads 27%, leads to 20% budget savings

Date: Wednesday, April 24, 2013

Summary: This week covers the founding of the program, the overarching strategy behind the Test Lab and aspects of its operational process. Next week, we'll dig deeper into some of the challenges the team at SAP faced with the Test Lab, and how this initiative led to "definitive insights" for SAP's marketing.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0147

E-commerce: How Wine Enthusiast increased organic traffic 154% with content marketing

Date: Thursday, April 25, 2013

Summary: Marketers around the world are learning how to sell more with content marketing. The team at Wine Enthusiast has been doing this for decades. We sat down with this wine retailer and publisher to understand how it uses content marketing to drive e-commerce sales and how the team increased organic traffic 154% last year.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0148

User-Generated Content: Video email contest increases site traffic by 13%

Date: Tuesday, April 30, 2013

Summary: Learn how the marketing team at Visit Carlsbad was able to acquire 21 user-generated videos endorsing Visit Carlsbad, increase open rates, gain more than 12,000 total video views and increase site traffic by 13%.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0149

Testing and Optimization: SAP's Test Lab increases digital leads 27% [Part II]

Date: Wednesday, May 1, 2013
Summary: Last week, we began sharing SAP's Test Lab with you, and this week, we conclude that process with details of actual tests run by the program, and a look at challenges in testing and optimization. Plus, you'll read about the big picture learnings from this impressive effort.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0150

PPC Marketing: Two accidents reduce cost-per-lead 20%

Date: Thursday, May 2, 2013
Summary: In this B2C case study, we look at why a landing page underwent a major redesign, challenging the prevailing conventional wisdom about the customer. After a couple of mishaps with paid search campaigns, the team at firstSTREET also gained valuable learnings about how Google and Bing/Yahoo perform for its audience. The team customized its PPC messages and increased the PPC budget, while driving cost-per-lead down by 20%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0151

[Video] How The Boston Globe used customer insight to create new strategy

Date: Tuesday, May 7, 2013
Summary: Watch a video excerpt from Optimization Summit 2012. Peter Doucette, Executive Director of Circulation Sales & Marketing, The Boston Globe, presented how his company transitioned from a free to paid product. This year, Peter will return to Optimization Summit with a part-two presentation of the transition.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0152

Webinar Marketing: Adobe revamps strategy and achieves a 500% lift in conversion to sale

Date: Wednesday, May 8, 2013
Summary: Adobe wanted to use webinars as guided product tours, which would have been difficult to present in a "one sheet brief," as the senior product marketing manager described it. Learn from the team's impressive turnaround – a 500% increase in conversion to sale through its new webinar strategy – to see how you can improve your own webinar marketing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0153

Social Media Marketing: Doubleday combines geocaching and Facebook to boost sales 23% for John Grisham book

Date: Thursday, May 9, 2013
Summary: Read how Doubleday gained 72,000 new Facebook fans and a 220% increase in reach for author John Grisham by engaging current fans with a geocaching contest. Plus, learn how the organization used targeted Facebook advertising leading up to the release of Grisham's new book.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0154

Sales Enablement: Using email performance data to help salespeople understand lead interest increases sales 48.9%

Date: Tuesday, May 14, 2013

Summary: Learn how a direct-sales company sent a three-part email series to salespeople with fresh data after every promotional campaign. The emails help the sales team track the hottest leads and helped them increase sales 48.9% year-over-year in 2012.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0155

Email Deliverability: Publisher moves beyond double opt-in to avoid 1,000 hard bounces per day

Date: Tuesday, May 21, 2013

Summary: It is becoming more difficult for emails to arrive unscathed to subscriber's inboxes due to new spam traps and other filters. Traditional permissions and other best practices may not be enough to pass through the scrutiny of ISPs. Learn how ArcaMax Publishing fought to keep a stellar reputation and preserve its ROI with subscribers.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0156

Social Media Marketing: Sony Electronics increased new follower growth 200% with charitable Pinterest board

Date: Thursday, May 23, 2013

Summary: In this case study, read how Sony Electronics' social media team leveraged an outside social movement and a larger internal campaign into a charitable campaign that established and expanded its new presence in the Pinterest community.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0157

Email Marketing: Why National Geographic uses business rules and frequency caps

Date: Friday, May 24, 2013

Summary: In this live blog post from Responsys Interact 2013, learn how National Geographic improved its email marketing though frequency caps and understanding the reasons for why people were unsubscribing.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0158

Email Marketing: Airbnb nets 600 bookings with non-promotional email

Date: Tuesday, May 28, 2013

Summary: Airbnb, a travel site, turned the tables and provided subscribers with a tool to send greetings to each other. The viral campaign had no promotional copy, but generated more revenue, clicks and opens for the company than almost any other email of the year.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0159

Lead Generation: Revamped marketing automation and CRM technology drives 75% more leads

Date: Wednesday, May 29, 2013

Summary: Managed Maintenance had marketing automation and CRM software in place, but the programs did not integrate, leaving Marketing and Sales technology siloed. After revamping its entire technology setup, Marketing was able engage in lead scoring and nurturing, and achieved a 75% lift in lead generation in the first year of the new program.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0160

Funnel Abandonment: Shirtmagic brings 14% of customers back to their website with simple reminder email

Date: Tuesday, June 4, 2013

Summary: In this case study, learn how online custom apparel company Shirtmagic stays in the mind of consumers while encouraging them to return to the site to purchase their project.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0161

Email Marketing: Change in incentive offer causes a 25% increase in email subscribers in one day for nonprofit

Date: Tuesday, June 11, 2013

Summary: Some offers will garner instant conversions, but some require a little nurturing first. After an initially disappointing campaign, see how Israel 365 changed to "more of the marathon approach than a sprint" by switching its goal from direct conversion to email capture.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0244

Landing Page Optimization: Simple, value-infused page increases leads 8% in 24-hour test

Date: Wednesday, June 12, 2013

Summary: At Optimization Summit 2013 in Boston, the marketing audience helped design a winning landing page that increased leads by 8% in a 24-hour live test. Read on to discover the steps MECLABS and Hoover's took to plan, design and launch a landing page test live at Summit.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0245

Mobile PPC Advertising: 25% more calls, 103% more conversions using these 5 tips

Date: Thursday, June 13, 2013

Summary: This marketing team at King Schools used ads to convince 25% more of its mobile visitors to call on the phone instead of clicking to the website. Learn five tips to help you weigh the opportunity, choose better keywords and connect with mobile searchers.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0246

Email Marketing: How charity: water increased donations by $800,000 using video, increased send schedule

Date: Tuesday, June 18, 2013
Summary: Overloading inboxes is a common worry, but this past September, marketers at charity: water proved more email can equal more engagement, and more money. In this campaign, learn how the team was able to use compelling content to increase the amount of emails sent while decreasing the amount of times they asked for donations.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0247

PPC Marketing: Call tracking increases leads 98%, decreases CPA 43%

Date: Wednesday, June 19, 2013
Summary: In this article, learn how Paychex went from a multiyear trend of rising cost-per-acquisition on its paid search to increasing its lead generation 98% while decreasing CPA 43%, all by adding the ability to differentiate between phone leads and form leads on its SEM landing pages.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0248

Email Marketing: Segmentation, triggered sends generate twice the revenue with half as many email sends for furniture company

Date: Tuesday, June 25, 2013
Summary: After switching email service providers, the team at Smart Furniture was able to grow from five to 30 list segments and implement a welcome, cart abandonment and post-purchase email series. Read how they grew open rates to 311% by developing this action-triggered series.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0249

Ad Retargeting: How Corel Software increased revenue 106% with hyper-retargeting

Date: Thursday, June 27, 2013
Summary: Basic ad retargeting can earn a positive ROI, but the marketers at Corel Software wondered if it could do more. Could the targeting improve, and would that increase returns? Corel upgraded its retargeting program and increased revenue 106%. In this case study, you'll read how the team mapped the funnel, segmented the audience and tested improvements.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0250

MarketingSherpa How-To Articles

Social Media Marketing: Which type of content is appropriate for different platforms?

Date: Tuesday, April 2, 2013
Summary: Are you using the right social media platform for your marketing? Read this MarketingSherpa blog for insights into the personalities of each major social media platform, with a metaphorical twist.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0162

Social Media Marketing: Is in-stream e-commerce possible?

Date: Thursday, April 4, 2013
Summary: In-stream e-commerce on social media is a hurdle many marketers have faced. While e-commerce on Facebook has failed (just 2% of people with a Facebook account have made a purchase on Facebook), marketers can still find ways to market their products on the social network.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0163

Email Marketing: 77% of marketers use website registration pages to build email lists

Date: Friday, April 5, 2013
Summary: In the MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report, 77% of marketers surveyed indicated they use website registration pages to build email lists. Read on to hear your peers' reactions to this data and some insights into email list building.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0164

Email Deliverability: Only 39% of marketers maintain an opt-in only subscriber list

Date: Tuesday, April 9, 2013
Summary: With email marketing, your email recipients can affect your ability to reach other potential customers by, for example, marking your email as spam. To help you improve your company's email deliverability, three of your peers shared their tips and questions on a previous Chart of the Week.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0165

Retargeting: 5 tactics from drip email to lead generation

Date: Wednesday, April 10, 2013
Summary: Read on to find out what four expert sources said about retargeting in multiple marketing channels including email, online advertising and paid search in part one a two-part retargeting how-to series.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0166

Online Marketing: 4 sources of customer insight on your website

Date: Thursday, April 11, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog post, Taylor Kennedy, Senior Research Manager, MECLABS, explains how to gain customer insights using four sources on your website.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0167

Email Marketing: Only 21% of marketers integrating mobile with email

Date: Friday, April 12, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog post, we hear from two of your peers on their thoughts on marketing channel integration with email. In the 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report, only 21% of marketers indicated they integrate mobile with email.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0168

Marketing Metrics: Do your analytics capture the real reasons customers buy from you?

Date: Tuesday, April 16, 2013

Summary: Read on for tips and a brief case study about using analytics to capture the real reasons why customers purchase your product or service. Also, learn how to apply different attribution models to understand why people buy and how they arrive at your pages.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0169

B2B Retargeting: 5 tactics from burn pixels to Facebook

Date: Wednesday, April 17, 2013

Summary: Read on to learn what three of our sources said about retargeting in multiple marketing channels including email, online advertising, paid search and social media. The tactics covered include using analytics coding instead of website coding for retargeting, and tailoring your message for specific audiences. Plus, you will learn the importance of burn pixels, retargeting on Facebook and why you need to test your retargeting campaigns.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0170

Value Proposition: 3 techniques for standing out in a highly competitive market

Date: Thursday, April 18, 2013

Summary: Marketing in highly competitive environments can be difficult as pressure mounts to stand out amongst fierce competitors in a constantly shrinking market space. Read further for three ways you can use value propositions to differentiate your marketing in a crowded marketplace.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0171

Email Marketing: Segmentation, integration, automation and personal interaction

Date: Friday, April 19, 2013

Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog post, we received feedback from one of the previous Chart of the Week discussions on LinkedIn. Read on to hear from four of your peers on the subject of email marketing.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0172

Who's Running Your Marketing Department, You or Legal?

Date: Tuesday, April 23, 2013

Summary: During the course of testing and optimization, a roadblock for many marketers is getting approval from Legal. Read on to hear about those challenges in this MarketingSherpa blog post, written by Emily Rogers, Research Manager, MECLABS.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0173

Testing: Go big, or go home?

Date: Thursday, April 25, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog post, hear from Tony Doty, Senior Manager of Optimization, MECLABS, on the benefits of the perfect blend of radical and conservative redesigns.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0174

Marketing Analytics: Managing through measurement and marketing as revenue center

Date: Friday, April 26, 2013
Summary: According to the 2013 Marketing Analytics Benchmark Report, 63% of marketers surveyed indicated they are involved with tracking email marketing analytics. Read on for takeaways from your peers about marketing analytics including measurement and marketing as a revenue center.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0175

Infographic: Customer experience in the digital age

Date: Tuesday, April 30, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog post, we analyze an infographic discussing customer service in the digital age. Learn how only 7% of marketers felt their brand experience was affected by social networks, and why that may or may not be the case.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0176

Test Planning: Create a universal test planner in 3 simple steps

Date: Thursday, May 2, 2013
Summary: Running a test smoothly can be a challenge, especially when testing is a continuous cycle of motion. Use these three tips for creating a universal test planner in your organization to help smooth the process and communication of running online tests.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0177

Marketing Analytics: Now that marketers can collect data, interpretation is the top challenge

Date: Friday, May 3, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog post, hear feedback from two of your peers about a Chart of the Week discussion on LinkedIn on marketing analytics.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0178

Social Media: Why Facebook's new Graph Search will change social media marketing

Date: Friday, May 10, 2013
Summary: Facebook's new Graph Search tool will possibly have far reaching implications for social media marketing. Read further to learn more about Facebook's Graph Search tool and how you can leverage new opportunities with it.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0179

Competitive Analysis: Stepping outside the industry and ahead of the competition

Date: Tuesday, May 14, 2013
Summary: Far too often, marketers become so ingrained within their own industry they fail to look elsewhere for valuable insights. Read on to learn more about how a cross-industry competitive analysis can help you understand what your competitors are doing in the marketplace.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0180

Search Marketing: 3 common mistakes marketers make using Google AdWords

Date: Friday, May 17, 2013
Summary: A highly effective paid search campaign using Google AdWords starts with knowing the basics. Read on to learn three common mistakes marketers make with Google AdWords and how you can avoid them.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0181

Value Proposition: 4 questions every marketer should ask about value prop

Date: Tuesday, May 21, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa live blog post from Optimization Summit 2013, learn four questions every marketer should ask about value propositions. View the details from the session, "Value Proposition: How to turn that shiny, new value prop into a high-performing page."
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0182

Content Marketing: 5 tips for WordPress blogging

Date: Tuesday, May 27, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog post, learn five tips to improve your blogging efforts with WordPress. These tips and tricks are simple to use and do not take an HTML expert to use in daily blogging.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0183

Email Marketing: Your questions about personalization and length

Date: Friday, May 31, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog post, hear feedback on email marketing questions submitted by your peers and answered by Rich Fleck, Vice President of Strategy, Responsys. Learn about personalization in emails and how long email copy should be.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0184

Social Media Marketing: 4 questions to ask yourself about social media buttons

Date: Tuesday, June 4, 2013
Summary: You see it everywhere. Social media icons on landing pages, in emails, even in print ads. But how can you earn the most value from your social media icons? And, should you use them? Here are four questions your team can ask itself about use of social media buttons.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0185

Social Media Marketing: A quick look at Facebook EdgeRank

Date: Friday, June 7, 2013

Summary: Plenty of marketers take a "more is better" approach to their Facebook campaign strategy. But is this always the best approach? Read further to learn about how Facebook's EdgeRank algorithm impacts your content's exposure.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0186

Social Media Marketing: Can you compete with your customer's mom?

Date: Tuesday, June 11, 2013

Summary: In this MarketingSherpa blog post, watch a video interview featuring Jay Baer, President, Convince & Convert. In his interview, he explained how helping customers makes for marketing success and the challenges brands face with customers' friends and family on social media and email.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0251

Testing: 3 common barriers to test planning

Date: Friday, June 14, 2013

Summary: While there are some very legitimate barriers to testing that arise during planning, the most common explanations of "We can't do that" rarely outweigh the potential revenue being left on the table. Read on for three of the most common barriers to testing and why your marketing team should avoid them.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0252

Display Advertising: 3 basic questions every marketer should ask themselves about banner ads

Date: Tuesday, June 18, 2013

Summary: Considering low costs and the potential return of driving significant volumes of traffic to your homepages or landing pages, banner ads would seem a safe bet to count as one of the most important elements of a successful marketing strategy. Yet in reality, most banner ads become lost in the afterthoughts of marketing campaign planning. Read on to hear three questions every marketer should ask themselves about their banner ads.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0253

Content Marketing: Your questions on B2B online lead gen, metrics, content from SMEs and more

Date: Friday, June 21, 2013

Summary: Content marketing is a tactic marketers intensely struggle with as effective strategies for everything from B2B content marketing to niche markets are few and far in between. So read on as Eric Webb, Senior Marketing Director, Corporate Marketing & Brand, McGladrey, answers your peers' questions and offers a free downloadable tool you can use to aid your content marketing efforts.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0254

Marketing Process: Managing your business leader's testing expectations

Date: Tuesday, June 25, 2013
Summary: Everybody wants a lift with every test, but sometimes, those lifts aren't achievable without first learning more about customers. Read on to see how using alternative approaches to test planning can help you manage your client's expectations.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0255

Five Ideas on the Business-to-Individual Concept for B2B Marketers

Date: Wednesday, June 26, 2013
Summary: This B2B marketing article covers the business-to-individual (B2i) concept. Read on for five lessons on why you should be marketing to the individual, even as a B2B marketer.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0256

Inbound Marketing: 15 tactics to help you earn attention organically

Date: Friday, June 28, 2013
Summary: According to SEO MOZ, interruption marketing and inbound marketing are two common tactics marketers utilize to draw attention and hopefully interest to their offers. Read on for a mixture of quantitative metrics, case studies, how-to articles and other resources to help you improve your own inbound marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0257

MarketingSherpa Research Charts

Marketing Research Chart: Marketing channel email integration

Date: Tuesday, April 2, 2013
Summary: In this Chart of the Week, we learn about the types of marketing channels organizations integrate with email programs. Overwhelmingly, 75% of surveyed marketers indicated they integrated their websites with email. Read on for more data from this research.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0187

Marketing Research Chart: Tactics to improve email engagement

Date: Tuesday, April 9, 2013
Summary: In this Chart of the Week, we learn about the types of tactics marketers use to improve their emails' relevance and engagement. Our respondents claimed automatic, triggered emails as the most-used tactic for improving customer email engagement.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0188

Marketing Research Chart: Channels tracked by marketers

Date: Tuesday, April 16, 2013
Summary: When selecting email marketing metrics, identifying what to measure and understanding a metric's purpose are the first steps. This chart explores the types of channels marketers track and analyze to make improvements to their marketing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0189

Marketing Research Chart: Marketing analytics challenges

Date: Tuesday, April 23, 2013
Summary: In this chart, we learn about the types of challenges marketers face when using marketing analytics. Marketers reported acting on data to improve marketing performance and combining data from multiple sources to draw correlations and make predictions as their most pressing challenges.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0190

Marketing Research Chart: Measuring website optimization ROI

Date: Tuesday, April 30, 2013
Summary: This Chart of the Week looks back to the 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report to learn how effectively marketers were using website optimization.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0191

Marketing Research Chart: Use of analytics to inform customer theory

Date: Tuesday, May 7, 2013
Summary: In this chart, we look back to the MarketingSherpa 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report to discover how marketers used analytics to learn more about their customers. Nearly 69% of firms use some form of internal metric analysis to better understand its customer base.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0192

Marketing Research Chart: Implementation of mobile testing

Date: Tuesday, May 14, 2013
Summary: In this Chart of the Week, we look at the MarketingSherpa 2012 Mobile Marketing Benchmark Report to learn how marketers implemented mobile testing efforts. Just 43% of surveyed marketers said their companies routinely, or somewhat routinely, utilize a specific testing methodology.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0193

Marketing Research Chart: Top platforms for testing value proposition

Date: Tuesday, May 21, 2013
Summary: A value proposition is a highly valuable and organic tool that must be generated from a need in the marketplace, and infused throughout the entire organization. This Chart of the Week looks turns to the 2012 Lead Generation Benchmark Report to learn how marketers tested their organizations' value propositions.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0194

Marketing Research Chart: Messaging tactics for effective lead nurturing

Date: Tuesday, May 28, 2013

Summary: In this week's chart, we look at the MarketingSherpa 2012 Lead Generation Benchmark Report to learn about the messaging strategies marketers use to nurture leads. Email newsletters were rated as the most effective channel for nurturing leads by our surveyed marketers.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0195

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

Date: Tuesday, June 4, 2013

Summary: Social media is an integral element of search engine optimization and inbound marketing. To discover which platforms your peers find most effective, along with points to consider with your team as you optimize your own social media efforts, read this edition of the MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0196

Marketing Research Chart: 67% of medium-size companies implement unique landing pages

Date: Tuesday, June 11, 2013

Summary: In this week's chart, we look at data from the MarketingSherpa 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report to discover which website optimization tactics are most frequently used by your peers.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0258

Marketing Research Chart: SEO most effective tactic for lead gen, but also among the most difficult

Date: Tuesday, June 18, 2013

Summary: In this week's chart, we look at data from the MarketingSherpa 2012 Lead Generation Benchmark Report about the difficulty, effectiveness and usage of lead generation tactics.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0259

Marketing Research Chart: Which channels do your peers produce content on?

Date: Tuesday, June 25, 2013

Summary: While tactics such as URL normalization and site structure are a few of the many technology elements comprising the brain of search engine optimization, content is at the heart of SEO. In this week's chart, we review where your peers focus their content-producing efforts.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0260

MarketingSherpa Webinars

Email Marketing: 5 tactics to personalize your email message for better results

Date: Tuesday, April 9, 2013
Summary: Personalization is about striking delicate balance. In this webinar replay, Daniel Burstein and Courtney Eckerle teach you how to get just the right amount of information from the consumer, why you should extend personalization to the landing page, tips on how to quickly personalize a template and more.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0197

Search Marketing: Turning an 82% bounce rate into a 400% conversion increase

Date: Monday, April 22, 2013
Summary: See a real-world success story from brand-side marketer Jennifer Stagner, Mechanical Support Manager, TOPS Products. Learn how she was able to make a simple fix that took inbound traffic and drove it a 400% increase in conversion.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0198

Testing: A discussion about SAP's 27% lift in incremental sales leads

Date: Tuesday, May 6, 2013
Summary: In this SherpaWebinar, we spoke with Shawn Burns, VP, Digital Marketing, SAP. Watch his real-world success story regarding how he built the right team, laid out a process, and implemented a platform for a testing program, as well as a testing culture.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0199

Optimization: A discussion about an e-commerce company's 500% sales increase

Date: Thursday, May 30, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar, we spoke with Steve Parker, Vice President, Direct Marketing, firstSTREET. Learn how his one-man team used a radical redesign to achieve radical results, thanks to the power of compounding multiple wins over time. See how Parker achieved a 3,566% increase over the control page right away, and how he continued on to a 500% sales increase.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0200

Content Marketing: A discussion about McGladrey's 300% increase in content production

Date: Wednesday, June 20, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingSherpa webinar, watch Daniel Burstein, Director of Editorial Content, MECLABS, interview Eric Webb, Senior Marketing Director, Corporate Marketing and Brand, McGladrey. You'll hear how Webb's team developed a content creation engine to drive increased thought leadership and lead generation.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0261

MarketingExperiments

Marketing Career: Don't overlook these 4 marketing fundamentals

Date: Monday, April 1, 2013
Summary: Bob Kemper, Senior Director of Sciences, explains the history of the MECLABS methodology and the mechanics of the foundational heuristics. Read on to learn four fundamentals in online testing.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0201

Paid Search Marketing: A/B split test produces 144% increase in total leads

Date: Wednesday, April 3, 2013
Summary: Testing and optimizing elements of your PPC ad campaigns can increase conversion significantly when done strategically. Read further to learn how the MECLABS Research team used strategic keyword placement and an A/B split test to achieve a 144% increase in total leads.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0202

Marketing Optimization: The 3 phases of evidence-based marketing

Date: Friday, April 5, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments blog post, learn the three phases of evidence-based marketing. Use the tips from this post as well as the related resources to improve your own marketing efforts to rely on science, not a gut feeling.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0203

[Video] Testing and Optimization: Involve IT when prioritizing testing sequences

Date: Monday, April 8, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments blog post, watch an excerpt from an Optimization Summit 2012 session, "Where to Test, What to Test, What to Ask." In this excerpt, hear from Tony Doty, Senior Research Manager, MECLABS, on involving IT when prioritizing the testing sequence in a testing and optimization program.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0204

Value Proposition: How do you create an effective value prop?

Date: Wednesday, April 10, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments blog post, we hear from the MarketingExperiments community about value proposition. Watch the Web clinic replay of Austin McCraw, Senior Editorial Analyst, MECLABS, discuss how to use email to discover your unique value proposition.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0205

[Video] Landing Page Optimization: Tips when making a radical redesign decision

Date: Friday, April 12, 2013
Summary: Last year at Optimization Summit 2012, Steve Parker, Vice President, Direct Marketing Division, firstSTREET, presented a case study on how he implemented a radical redesign to a landing page, and saw a dramatic increase in sales. Watch this excerpt from his session, and attend his session at Optimization Summit 2013, May 20-23, in Boston.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0206

Web Usability: When should you avoid navigation?

Date: Monday, April 15, 2013
Summary: Watch the video excerpt to learn more about one of the four most surprising discoveries of how Web usability practices relate to optimization and how you can use the transferable principles from that discovery to aid your optimization efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0207

Web Usability: Long landing page nets 220% more leads than above the fold call-to-action

Date: Wednesday, April 17, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments blog post, find out how a below the fold call-to-action lead to a 220% increase in leads for Sierra Tucson.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0208

[Video] Email Marketing: Use website content to increase list size

Date: Friday, April 19, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments blog post, view a video excerpt from a session at last year's Optimization Summit featuring The Heritage Foundation's strategy with using its website content to increase email list size.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0209

Paid Search Marketing: 3 optimization ideas to test in your next PPC campaign

Date: Monday, April 22, 2013
Summary: Increasing the likelihood of conversion requires testing, learnings and more testing as underperforming elements in your marketing are identified and optimized. Read further for three optimization suggestions from the MECLABS research team using a real-world example you can use to aid your optimization efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0210

Product Pricing: 4 tips for communicating price in your marketing

Date: Wednesday, April 24, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments blog post, we heard from a member of the MarketingExperiments community on how to communicate price in your marketing. Read on for four tips and be sure to watch the Web clinic today, "When Should You Reveal Price? The 3 principles of presenting price that helped generate a 97% increase in conversion."
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0211

Online Marketing Testing: A research manager's view of balancing risk and reward

Date: Friday, April 26, 2013
Summary: Taking risks with testing is sometimes necessary, but can be an intimidating process. Learn from a MECLABS research manager on how to balance risk and reward and get the most out of your testing efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0212

Landing Page Optimization: Simple color change increases conversion 10%

Date: Monday, April 29, 2013
Summary: When it comes to how color design is affecting a site's performance, simple changes can produce a significant lift. Read further to learn how the MECLABS research team used a background color test on a landing page to increase account sign-ups 10%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0213

A/B Testing: SAP increases conversion 62% by using images

Date: Wednesday, May 1, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments blog post, hear how SAP increased conversion 62% by using images on its site pages. Learn more from SAP's Test Lab at MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments Optimization Summit 2013, May 20-23, in Boston.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0214

Web Usability: People don't need many options, they need the right options

Date: Friday, May 3, 2013
Summary: Are more choices better for visitors to your website? Watch this video excerpt to learn more about how Web usability practices can impact optimization.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0215

Copywriting: How long (or short) should your copy be?

Date: Monday, May 6, 2013
Summary: In a recent Web clinic, Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS, unpacked what more than 10,000 webpage tests reveal about optimal webpage copy length. But first, hear from three of your peers about how long, or short, webpage copy should be.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0216

Landing Page Optimization: Help improve this page for a chance to win an LPO Online Course

Date: Thursday, May 9, 2013
Summary: At Optimization Summit 2013, we conducted a live test as a teaching lesson to help marketers better understand optimization and testing. In this MarketingExperiments blog post, the audience had an opportunity to share their test ideas as a comment in the post for a chance to win a free LPO Online Course.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0217

Lead Generation: 6 steps to correctly setting customers' expectations

Date: Monday, May 13, 2013
Summary: Knowing what your customers will experience through your lead generation funnel is key to delivering on the expectations derived from your offers. Read further to learn six simple steps you can use to meet customer expectations and improve your lead generation efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0218

Landing Page Optimization: Color emphasis change increases clickthrough 81%

Date: Thursday, May 16, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments blog post, learn how a simple change in color emphasis increased clickthrough 81%. Read on for test details and for a link to the entire Web clinic replay discussing four more surprising findings about website colors.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0219

Marketing Optimization: Are you tracking website optimization ROI?

Date: Monday, May 20, 2013
Summary: Live from Optimization Summit 2013, read on to discover how data has changed the way marketers develop more informed and better tracked ideas.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0220

Analytics and Testing: 3 tips to optimize your testing efforts

Date: Thursday, May 23, 2013
Summary: Prior customer behavior can reveal current opportunities for testing and optimization in your sales funnel if you take the time to look in the right places. Read further to learn three steps you can use to optimize your sales funnel and gain customer insights.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0221

Analytics & Testing: 3 statistical testing methods for building an advanced customer theory

Date: Thursday, May 30, 2013
Summary: Variables from gender, age, income, education and geographic location will likely play a role in why your customers say yes to your offers. Selecting a test methodology robust enough to explore statistical relationships among variables is more important than ever to your marketing efforts. Read on to learn more about three statistical testing methods how you can use them to build an advanced customer theory.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0222

Lead Generation Optimization: Two simple changes increase lead rate 166%

Date: Monday, June 3, 2013
Summary: One of the most effective ways to increase conversion is by decreasing the amount of perceived resistance and aggravation your prospects experience in your lead capture process. Read further to learn more about how the MECLABS research team made two simple changes to a lead capture process that increase lead rates 166%.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0223

Marketing Metrics: Can you have one number to rule them all?

Date: Thursday, June 6, 2013

Summary: A common question about test metrics focuses on what metrics should marketers use to track and evaluate tests as the central tendency is to seek out a single metric to be used as the measure of success. Read further to learn more about why using a mixture of metrics and methodology is an optimal approach to gaining customer insights.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0224

Online testing: Two common reasons to use a radical redesign test approach

Date: Monday, June 10, 2013

Summary: Testing can become an exercise in frustration after a few test cycles of consistent underperformance. But don't quit. Get radical. Read further to learn more about two common reasons to consider a radical redesign testing approach.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0262

Analytics and Testing: An approach to the delicate balance of confidence and uncertainty

Date: Thursday, June 13, 2013

Summary: One of the challenges in interpreting results is the constant struggle between projecting confidence in the reliability of those results and a scientist's obligation to portray limitations that exist. Read further to learn more about how one data analyst approaches building a client's confidence in test results while keeping the integrity of data intact.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0263

Test Planning: 3 simple tips to keep your test planning and optimization on the right track

Date: Monday, June 17, 2013

Summary: Developing test planning and optimization strategies is a long, bumpy road of trial and error before you reach a true discovery about your customers. Read on for three simple tips you can use to keep your testing and optimization strategy planning on track.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0264

Conversion Rate Optimization: 3 factors to ensure your results are reliable

Date: Thursday, June 20, 2013

Summary: Fluctuations in customer behavior are bound to happen over time due to random variation, seasonal trends or other factors. Or, perhaps your website could convert more prospects by optimizing a specific aspect like hidden friction that is not necessarily obvious at first. Read on for three factors every marketer should consider to ensure their test results are reliable.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0265

Social Media Marketing: Have you tested your website's social links and buttons?

Date: Monday, June 24, 2013
Summary: In this MarketingExperiments blog post, learn about how testing your social links and buttons is a crucial part of your website's success. Leave your tips and results in the comments section of this blog post to share what works and what doesn't with social media sharing options.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0266

Website A/B Testing: 4 tips to beat an unbeatable landing page

Date: Thursday, June 27, 2013
Summary: Improving a highly optimized page is difficult, but not impossible. Read on for tips you can use to beat your unbeatable landing pages. Our goal is to provide marketers with a few insights you can use to aid your testing and optimization efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0267

MarketingExperiments Web Clinics

The Usability Myth - 4 surprising discoveries we learned after testing the most common usability principles

Date: Thursday, April 4, 2013
Summary: In this Web clinic, Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS, explored how Web usability best practices impact optimization. You'll also see how an addiction and mental health rehabilitation facility increased its conversions 220% by utilizing a science-based approach to Web usability and optimization.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0225

How You Can Use Email to Discover the Essence of Your Value Proposition (in 5 Simple Steps)

Date: Thursday, April 18, 2013
Summary: In this Web clinic replay, Austin McCraw, Senior Editorial Analyst, MECLABS, explained how your email campaigns can help you understand the core motivations of your audience. Learn a systematic approach for using email to discover the essence of your value proposition.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0226

When Should You Reveal Price? - The 3 principles of presenting price and how they helped one company generate a 97% increase in conversion

Date: Thursday, May 2, 2013
Summary: Price is one of the biggest factors impacting the success of a marketing campaign, yet it can be one of the most difficult aspects of an offer to message properly. In this Web clinic, Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director, MECLABS, revealed three key principles every marketer should know for presenting price in a sales funnel.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0227

Long Copy vs. Short Copy - How discovering the optimal length of a webpage produced a 220% increase in conversion

Date: Thursday, May 16, 2013
Summary: The question of long copy versus short copy is not new, and there is no shortage of differing opinions. Watch this Web clinic replay to learn three key principles on how copy length impacts conversion to aid your copywriting optimization efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0228

Reducing Cart Abandonment - 4 main reasons why customers leave your shopping cart and how a few tweaks can stop the leak

Date: Thursday, June 20, 2013
Summary: According to the MarketingSherpa 2012 Website Optimization Benchmark Report, shopping carts are ranked as one of the least optimized processes, yet they can be one of the most strategic aspects of a conversion process to optimize. Watch this Web clinic replay to learn four key reasons why customers abandon shopping carts and how you can decrease cart abandonment and increase ROI.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0268

B2B Lead Roundtable

Lead Generation: 5 tips to generate leads faster on LinkedIn

Date: Monday, April 1, 2013
Summary: Wouldn't it be great if you could just collect hot leads by spending a few minutes a day on LinkedIn? Read on for five tips for generating leads on LinkedIn.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0229

Direct Marketing: 6 steps to drive more through sales pipeline

Date: Monday, April 8, 2013
Summary: Despite print media taking a hit in the digital age, prospects are still paying attention to print. Joy Gendusa, Founder and CEO, Postcardmania, and Ken Pikulik, Director of Process and Strategy, ResponsePoint, have learned to expertly combine the best of old techniques with new technology. They offer these tips to help you do the same.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0230

How Reversing the Funnel Increased Sales by 14% for a Sales Incentive Company

Date: Monday, April 15, 2013
Summary: Certif-A-Gift Company had always invested most of its time and resources at the very top of the marketing funnel by building awareness among its channel partners. Read on to find out how reversing the funnel led to a 14% sales increase for the company.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0231

Email Marketing: 4 steps to relevancy 85% of B2B businesses probably aren't taking

Date: Monday, April 22, 2013

Summary: In this B2B Lead blog, read about the four steps to relevancy 85% of B2B marketers are not taking. By answering four key questions before any email send, marketers will be well on their way to achieving relevancy.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0232

Referral Marketing: 8 tips for building a powerful referral channel

Date: Monday, April 29, 2013

Summary: In this B2B Lead blog post, hear from three sources on how to build a powerful referral channel for your marketing. Tips include knowing audience motivations and promoting your program across all marketing channels.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0233

Social Media Marketing: Dell reveals how it turns thousands of brand detractors into fans

Date: Monday, May 6, 2013

Summary: Learn how Dell went from a non-existent presence on social media, to establishing its own Social Media & Community University to help Dell employees learn how to engage with B2B businesses online. Learn some tips from its director of global social media on some ways to track what your audience is saying about your company.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0234

Digital Marketing: B2B marketers can get fresh, new ideas from B2C

Date: Monday, May 13, 2013

Summary: When it comes to digital marketing, regardless of whether you're selling to people who are purchasing something for their workplace or themselves, you're still selling to people. Read further to learn insights and tactics from your marketing peers that you can use to aid your lead generation efforts.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0235

Digital Marketing: How to craft a value proposition in 5 simple steps

Date: Monday, May 20, 2013

Summary: There's a fundamental question every customer wants answered that directly impacts your ability to convert – "If I'm your ideal prospect, why should I buy from you rather than any of your competitors?" So read further to learn more about how you can identify and express a value proposition in five simple steps using the MECLABS value proposition worksheet.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0236

Social Media: How Motorola Solutions uses Facebook to generate more engagement

Date: Monday, June 3, 2013
Summary: In this B2B Lead blog, read how Motorola used Facebook as a platform for generated engagement. Learn how the team developed a Motorola Solutions Facebook business page, and how it is used to start conversations with its audience.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0237

Lead Generation: How well do you really know what your customers want?

Date: Monday, June 10, 2013
Summary: Different tactics work for challenging different aspects of your value proposition, but only if you make an investment in testing. Read further to learn more about testing value proposition from your marketing peers.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0269

Webinar: Inside Sales Virtual Summit reveals selling best practices

Date: Monday, June 17, 2013
Summary: On Thursday, June 20, at the Inside Sales Virtual Summit, Brian Carroll, Executive Director of Applied Research, MECLABS, will reveal selling best practices. Read this blog post to learn details of the Summit, and who will be speaking at the event.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0270

Marketing Optimization: 3 steps to gain C-suite buy-in

Date: Monday, June 24, 2013
Summary: Marketers who have the respect of the C-suite can connect their efforts to driving revenue. So read on to learn three steps marketers can use to get buy-in from the C-suite for testing and optimization that you can use to aid your conversion rate optimization efforts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest02701

Video Presentations

Where to Test, What to Test, What to Ask

Date: Wednesday, April 3, 2013
Summary: This Optimization Summit 2012 presentation video provides a broad overview on the subject of testing and optimization programs that offer marketers actionable advice. Also, learn actual examples of those concepts in practice from MECLABS optimization experts.
URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0238

The WOW! Computer: How firstSTREET applied a radical redesign to deliver a 500% sales increase

Date: Thursday, April 4, 2013

Summary: At Optimization Summit 2012, Steve Parker, VP Direct Marketing Division, firstSTREET, shared how radically redesigning a landing page led to a 500% increase in sales.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0239

Air Canada Case Study: The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made

Date: Tuesday, April 9, 2013

Summary: In this Optimization Summit 2012 presentation, Tim Burgess, Web Analytics Manager, Air Canada, details the steps taken to develop a test within Air Canada, reveals the mistake he made, and shares the takeaways from it.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0240

The Boston Globe: Managing a transition from free to paid product

Date: Thursday, May 16, 2013

Summary: At Optimization Summit 2012, Peter Doucette shared the steps taken to develop a new business model for *The Boston Globe*. See how Doucette and the team at *The Boston Globe* discovered their value proposition, promoted the new paid-subscription site and how they created and tested their new business model.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0272

Content Marketing: How McGladrey built a strategy around content development

Date: Wednesday, June 5, 2013

Summary: In this B2B Summit 2012 video replay, watch a presentation from Eric Webb, Senior Marketing Director, Corporate Marketing & Brand, McGladrey, with Pamela Markey, Senior Director of Marketing, MECLABS, about the four steps McGladrey took to improve its content marketing efforts.

URL: http://mecla.bs/digest0241

About MarketingSherpa LLC

MarketingSherpa is a primary research facility, wholly-owned by MECLABS, dedicated to determining **what works in marketing** via exclusive case studies, surveys, and results data analysis. Then we publish what we learn so our community of marketers and weekly readers can improve their results and train their teams.

Praised by *The Economist*, Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge Site and Entrepreneur.com, MarketingSherpa is distinguished by offering **practical, results-based marketing** information researched and written by a staff of in-house reporters.

MarketingSherpa features:

- **Best Practices:** 1,000+ brand-side marketer case studies and 3,500+ creative samples
- **Research:** 2,000+ marketing and research abstracts
- **Instruction:** 800+ how-to articles
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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, 9:00am-5:00pm ET)
service@marketingsherpa.com
1-877-895-1717 (outside the U.S. call 651-294-6356)

Call for Research Partners

Over the last 20 years, MECLABS has conducted more than 10,000 webpage experiments to understand why people say "yes." This research is obtained through Research Partnerships, where we apply our science and methodology to their websites to achieve customer learning and increase conversion rates. We help to uncover relevant, practical insights that enable our Research Partners to discover what works – for their products, with their target customers, in today's ever-changing marketplace.

We are currently looking for Research Partners with real-world challenges, deadlines, and budgets in the following areas:

- E-commerce performance
- Subscription growth and retention
- Lead generation capture and management (including lead nurturing)

Current and Past Research Partners include:

1-800-flowers | The New York Times | Johnson & Johnson | American Express | Reuters | Cisco

To learn more about Research Partnership opportunities, please visit meclabs.com/Partnerships or call (800) 517-5531

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