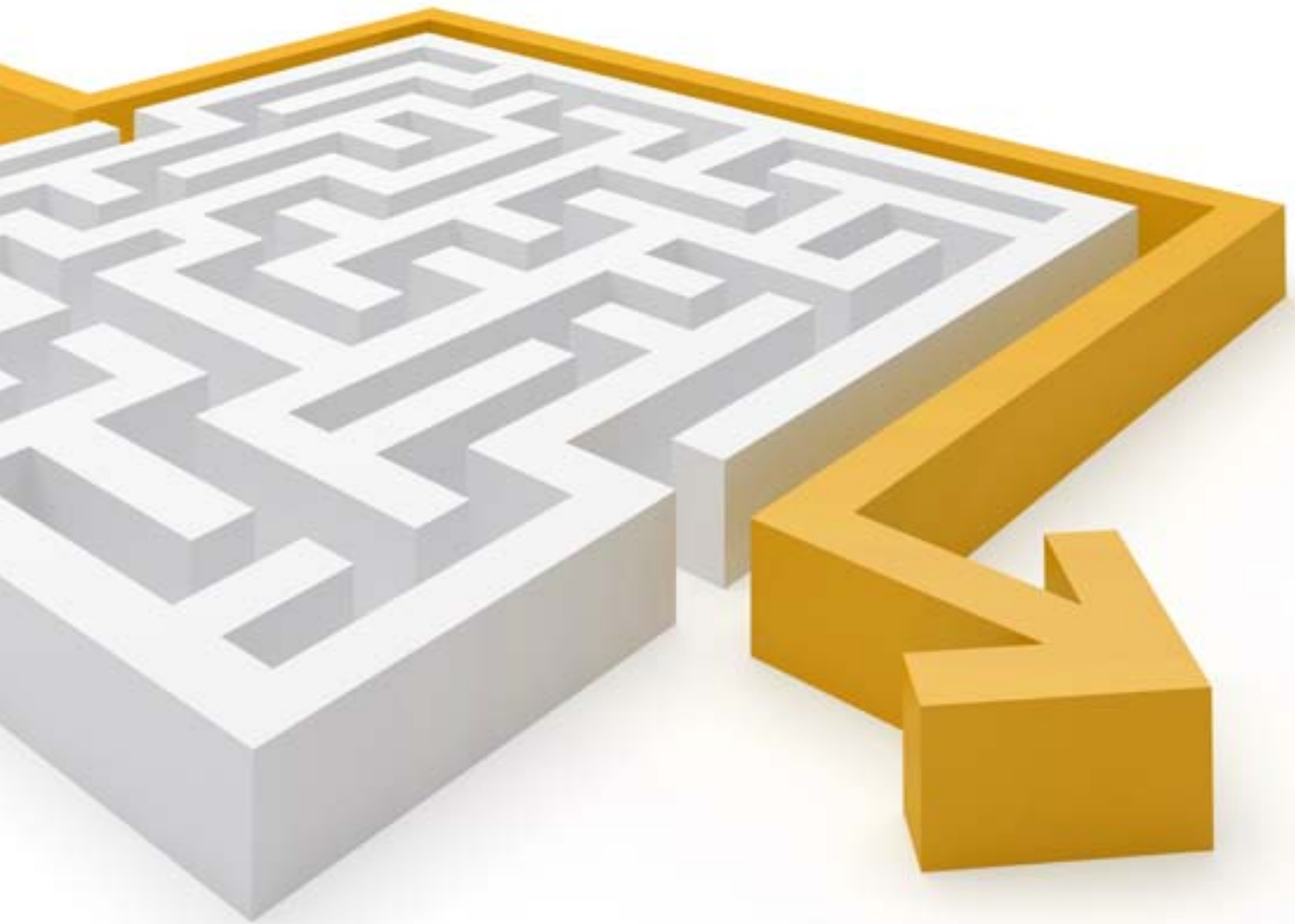
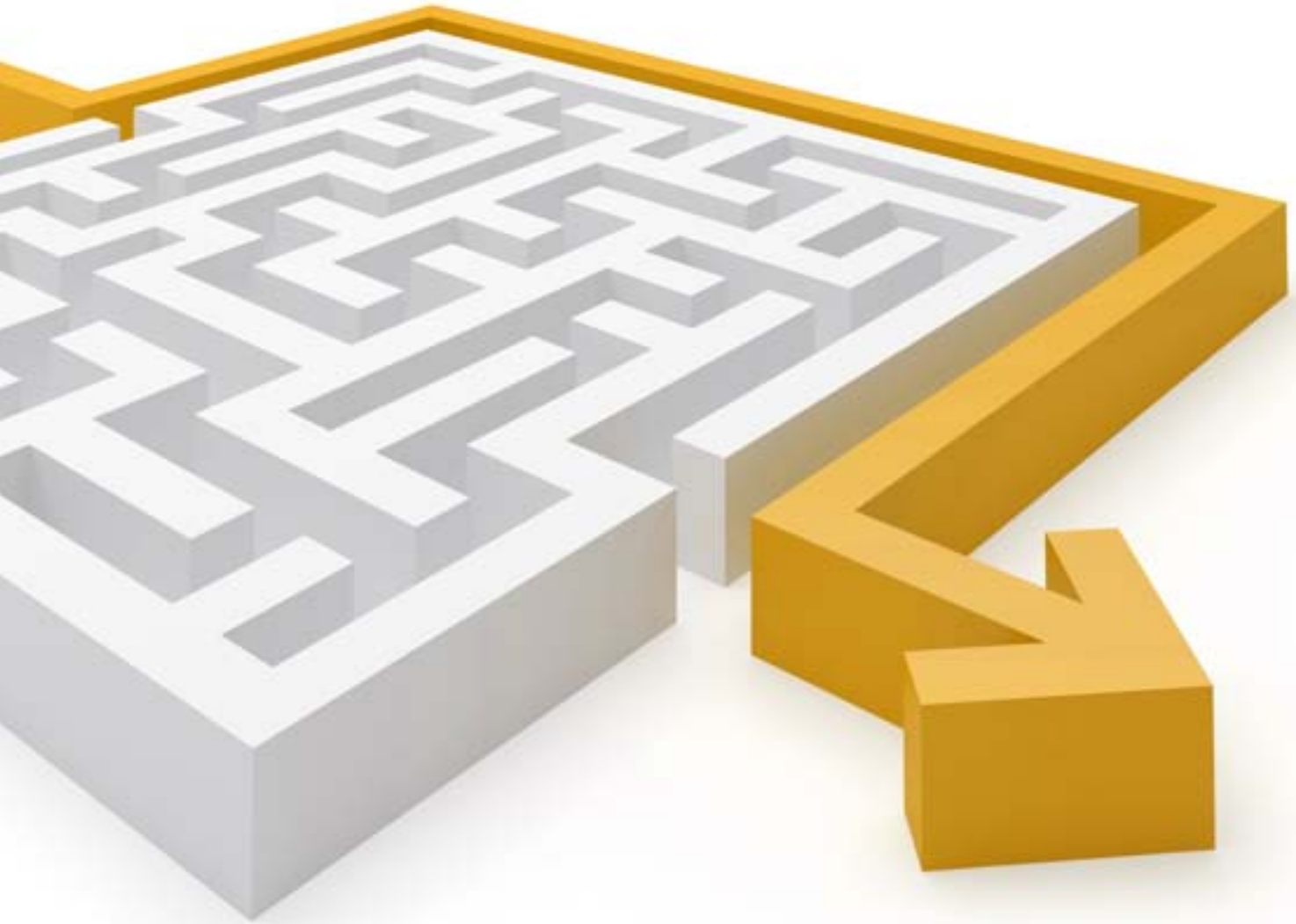


Simplified Guide to

Landing Pages



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You know you need a landing page.

It's an excellent means to quickly focus your prospect's attention on your offer's principal benefits, and promotes actions that generate qualified leads and increased sales. But what does the landing page look like that optimizes the visitor's experience?

This guide is a quick reference to answering the visitor experience question. Each section includes key optimization techniques when building landing pages. The internet is continuously evolving, and your customers will continue to expect more relevant and personalized experiences from their interactions with you. You can exceed their expectations with the tips presented in this guide.

For you, this is an easy to reference guide with four key areas to keep in mind when building your landing pages (avoiding the messy maze of results-driven marketing).

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Simple is better.

At first glance your page should appear inviting and easy to navigate. Provide the visitor with a clear benefit, and an equally clear path to attaining it.

Use white space liberally and avoid cluttered designs. This helps draw attention to text regarding your offer's benefits, as well as your primary call-to-action (CTA).

For standalone landing pages: remove site navigation bars, header tabs, external links, and other distractions. This helps to eliminate extraneous clicks and keeps visitors focused on the primary goal — your CTA.

Keep content above the fold (when possible).

Displaying the majority of information in one monitor screen gives visitors sufficient information to make a bail/no bail decision and highlights CTA. There are some situations where longer copy is necessary (i.e. technological products or services); in this case, it's best to repeat the CTA below the fold.

Fold Dimensions¹

Monitor size	Typical resolution (in pixels)	Width (with scrollbar)	Width (no scrollbar)	Height (first fold)	Height (in inches)
15" monitor	640 × 480	584	599	290	3.87"
17" monitor	800 × 600	744	759	410	5.47"
19" monitor	1024 × 768	968	983	578	7.71"

Focus on the call-to-action.

Make your call-to-action button big, bright, bold, and attention-grabbing. So let's talk about three things: size, color, and placement.

• Size

Ask yourself: Can I see my CTA button from across the room? If you can't answer the question with a resounding "yes", consider making it larger.

• Color

Three strategies to think about when choosing color (these can be used individually or in tandem):

1) Pick a color not prominently featured on the page.

Is your page primarily grey? Try a red CTA button to draw the eye to the call to action.

2) Choose the complimentary color to your main color.

Remember the color wheel from school? These are the colors which are opposite from each other.

Example: If your page is primarily blue, consider choosing orange for the CTA.

3) Use the psychology of colors to send a certain message.²

Blues imply trust and security; orange is more aggressive; black is powerful and sleek.

What message are you sending?

• Placement

CTA buttons on the left and center of the page with authentic "trust marks"

(certifications, seals, and guarantees from resources such as the Better Business Bureau, Trustee, Verisign, etc.) help conversion rates.³

Direct your viewer's eye.

Viewers scan a web page in an "F" pattern.⁴ Control the flow of the eye on the page with directional cues such as boxes and arrows.

Maintain consistency across mediums.

Visitors may link to your site from email, web banners, or direct mail. Make sure they have a single, unified experience. Use the same visual elements throughout the campaign (color palette, logos, design) throughout all media. Wherever they're coming from, visitors should know instantly that they are in the right place to receive your offer.

Design Resources

The Fold:	Color:
First-fold Dimension Guide: (http://www.motive.co.nz/glossary/fold-ill.php)	Color Scheme Calculator: (http://www.perbang.dk/color+scheme/)
Pixels to Inches Converter: (http://auctionrepair.com/pixels.html)	Psychology of Colors: (http://blog.kissmetrics.com/color-psychology/)
Fold Tester (www.wherethefold.com)	

¹<http://www.motive.co.nz/glossary/fold.php>, ²<http://blog.kissmetrics.com/color-psychology/?wide=1>,

³2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Report, Marketing Sherpa

⁴Jakob Nielsen Research (http://www.useit.com/alertbox/reading_pattern.html)

tips

- > Repeat or build upon headline and text cues to further cement the relationship between campaign elements.
- > Include social media share icons to allow your visitors to share your offer.

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The best headlines are brief.

You have between 2-8 seconds (15 words or less) before your visitor decides to read more. Focus headlines on the simplest, broadest application of your offering.

Put both the action and benefit in button copy.

“Buy” or “Click Here” could be more effective. “Click here to download your free whitepaper!” reminds the viewer of what they will receive by filling out the form, and improves your conversion rates.

Keep copy concise and accessible.

Don't attempt to explain every detail of your product to your customer on your landing page.

- Use bulleted text when possible. It makes online content more digestible.
- Use familiar vocabulary. Minimize jargon, acronyms, and tech-speak.
- Provide a limited number (three) of straightforward customer-centric benefits with a promise of helping prospects realize them via the call-to-action.

Focus succinct and benefit-oriented copy where viewers look the most. When people read online, their eyes flick about.

The areas that receive the most attention are:

- 1) The top left corner of the body copy within the first one or two paragraphs
- 2) Copy near a human face
- 3) Copy on or near a call-to-action button

Mention customer-centric benefits to avoid blather.

Superlatives are unconvincing and waste time. Focus on actual benefits. Instead of saying “The best-of-breed, industry standard solution,” mention customer-centric benefits, such as, “Easy to deploy, update, and maintain.”

Copy Resources

Top 10 Overused Words:	10 Overused Jargon & Buzzwords:
1. Leader	1. Interface
2. Leading	2. Learnings
3. Best	3. Solution
4. Top	4. Face time
5. Unique	5. Synergy
6. Great	6. Outside the Box
7. Solution	7. Visioneering
8. Largest	8. Low-hanging Fruit
9. Innovative	9. Paradigm (shift)
10. Innovator	10. Human Capital
http://www.business2community.com/content-marketing/most-overused-words-in-data-driven-marketing-029010	http://responsiblemarketing.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/buzzword-plaque_outsourcemarketing_2007.pdf

R tips

- > Compelling headlines address:
 - Pain points
 - Dramatic differentiators
 - Value-adds
 - Intense curiosities
- > Don't forget SEO. Create:
 - H1 tags
 - Meta tags
 - Key-word loaded content

personalization

Verb: A targeting method in which a web page or email message appears to have been created only for a single recipient. Personalization techniques include adding recipient's name in the subject line or message body, or an offer reflecting purchasing, link clicking, or transaction history. (MarketingSherpa)

To improve conversion rates on your campaigns, make sure to personalize the message. The DMA reports personalization can increase your conversion rates by as much as 300%.

Use dynamic content - address your visitors personally.

Dynamic content is information which is unique to the viewer. Text, images, even form fields could change based on what you know about someone. Images can change based on geography, or your offer could change based on viewer demographics. The goal is to deliver relevant content. Achieve that goal by understanding what your viewer finds interesting.

Pre-population will improve click and conversion rates.

When a viewer comes to your landing page from an e-mail or personalized direct mail campaign, pre-populating the necessary information lets them know, implicitly, that you value them. They may never recognize your efforts to keep them in mind, but they won't be left feeling as if you are only interested in completing the transaction.


Pre-populating the form field information (name, e-mail, company, etc.) that you already have in your database saves time for your visitor. Beware, having too many fields decreases conversion rates and makes people feel uncomfortable.

Research shows that optimal conversion rates happen between 3-5 fields, so choose the information you want to include carefully. You and/or your team will have to decide what "enough" or "too much" is based on your industry and offer. Test to see what works best.

Put your viewer's name in the URL.

A PURL, or personalized URL, is easy to remember; and one more level of personalization to show your viewer that they are at the center of your attention. When it comes to applications, the options are only as limited as your imagination. Used in direct mail, brochures, and any leave behinds, this practice is known as "putting your prospect's name in lights" because it does just that. PURLs can be done in two ways: www.yourdomain/maryjohnson or www.maryjohnson.yourdomain. As an added bonus, they are also one more way to track the success of your campaign, and to know exactly who is interested in your offer. For mailers, be sure to double check your list and make sure that the right name and address is paired with the PURL

Personalization Resources

Type	Examples of Use
PIN (Personal Identification Number) <i>XYZ987</i>	Used for more sensitive information, PINs can be part of a direct mail campaign. Viewers enter their PIN on a generic landing page, and are then taken to a more personalized page.
PURL (Personal URL) <i>www.yourdomain/MaryJohnson</i> - or - <i>www.MaryJohnson.yourdomain</i>	Also used in Direct Mail, PURLs can be featured on postcards to catch the viewer's eye, and allow you to create a landing page which is tailored to their interests.
QR Code (Quick Response Code) 	Used in the same way as PINs and PURLs, QR codes are best when paired with a mobile landing page (QR codes are scanned with mobile devices).

⁵ <http://www.marketingexperiments.com/blog/internet-marketing-strategy/lead-generation-testing-form-field-length-reduces-cost-per-lead-by-10-66.html>; <http://creativethirst.com/blog/2011/01/reduce-your->

tips

- > After 5 fields, each 2 additional fields decrease conversion rates by up to 20%
- > Using a PURL has shown to lift conversions 20-30%

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Test what has the biggest impact on conversion rates.

Noun: "A/B/n testing (or A/B or "split" testing) is a type of testing where your web traffic is split randomly and evenly between your existing web page (the baseline or 'Control') and several completely different variations of the same page."⁶

With landing pages you get to control every element of the page from the design, to the layout, to the copy, to the offer, to the incentive. Understanding what is the best mix of elements by testing will help you improve with each landing page you deploy.

Here are the elements of your page (including some questions to ask yourself and ideas for testing), which will have the biggest effect on conversion rates, in order of importance.

1) Design

What is the best layout, color scheme, design concept, number of columns? **Test it.**

2) Headlines

Headlines can make or break campaign performance. What is going to generate the most clicks? **Test it.** Try testing 2-5 headlines that focus on different benefits, pain points, or differentiators.

3) Call to Action

Color, copy, and size influence clicks and conversion rates. Test text-links versus buttons, button size, text size, color, placement, and CTA copy. What is the best CTA? **Test it.**

4) Offer

Test different offers and incentives to entice action, or even different offers with different segments. Which is more effective, the whitepaper or the webinar? **Test it.** Do the Engineers on your list prefer whitepapers and the Marketers webinars? **Segment and test it.** Does an urgency incentive (i.e. first 30 will receive a/an [insert an incentive you want to offer]) improve the clicks and conversions? **Test it.**

5) Form Fields

The amount of information you can ask to receive has a direct correlation to the value your offer provides. How much information can you ask to receive without affecting performance? **Test it.**

6) Hero Images

A picture is worth a thousand words. Which image results in more conversions: an image of a group working, or a single individual looking into the camera? **Test it.**



tips

- > Test in the order of importance: 1) Page Design; 2) Headlines; 3) Call to Action; 4) Offer; 5) Form Fields; 6) Images.
- > Start out with tests that are drastically different. For example, change multiple elements and entirely different design concepts.
- > Hero images which make the clearest connection between your visitor, product, and benefit are the most effective.

Testing Resources

WhichTestWon?	A/B IdeaFox
A free weekly publication of case studies on web, e-mail, and direct mail tests. More than 150 case studies to date. (http://whichtestwon.com/)	Free case studies from Visual Website Optimizer sorted by industry and problem type. (http://visualwebsiteoptimizer.com/ideafox.php)

⁶ <http://www.widerfunnel.com/solutions/ab-split-testing>

checklist

Design

- Is your initial call to action above the fold for most browsers (i.e. less than 500 pixels, or about 6.5 inches)?
- If your page goes below the fold, have you included another call to action below the fold to avoid up and down scrolling?
- Do you have a hero shot that provides a visual for your primary value proposition?
- Is your landing page two columns or less?
- Are your columns no longer than 40-60 characters?
- Are there trust or credibility icons (i.e. Better Business Bureau, Verisign, Privacy Seals, Logos of Reputable Brands) near your call to action to reduce anxiety?
- Is your typeface at least 12-point with Arial or Verdana?
- Have you included a "Thank you" page that provides additional value to your visitors (i.e. Free resources, other offers, direct access to information)?

tips

- > Print this checklist and keep it close.
- > Never launch without reviewing it first!

REMEMBER: "Ugly" often wins, so your page does not have to have the best design. What is more important is the ROI. You can throw a lot of money at design that does not convert any better than the ugly one. So start ugly, and improve. When you have some results, invest more in a polished design. (Note: Of course you have to mirror the design to the brand. Reputable brands often require more investment in design.)

⁷In 2005, MarketingSherpa conducted a study regarding the number of columns. All they did was change to a one column format and received a 40% increase in sales.

Copy (Words on the Page)

- Is your headline 15 words or less? Remember: You have 8 seconds or less to make the first impression.
- Is your critical copy in the upper 300 pixels range (about 4 inches) of the page?
- Are your paragraphs less than 4-5 lines long? If not, remove excess information or split into multiple paragraphs.
- Does your call-to-action copy match your headline?

Personalization

- Have you limited the number of "we" and "our" in favor of more visitor centric copy like "you" and "your"?
Check using: <http://www.futurenowinc.com/wewe.htm>
- Are you using a vanity URL or custom domain that ties to your value proposition (i.e. www.yourvanityURL.com) for your page?
- Are you addressing each visitor individually by welcoming them to your page?
- Have you reduced conversion friction by pre-populating your form fields with known information?
- Does your landing page offer dynamic content, images, and call to actions specific to each visitor segment?

Testing

- Do you have a conversion goal?
- Are you conducting an A/B or multivariate test to improve your conversion rates?
- Are you starting with a drastic design test to see what is more effective before testing page elements?
- Do you know the optimum number of fields?
- How long will you need to run the test to get statistically significant results?
Check using: Visual Web Optimizer A/B Split Test Duration Calculator (<http://visualwebsiteoptimizer.com/ab-split-test-duration/>)
- Will you have enough traffic for a quantitative test?
Check using: Visual Web Optimizer A/B Split Test Significance Calculator (<http://visualwebsiteoptimizer.com/ab-split-significance-calculator/>)

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