HOW TO OPTIMIZE LANDING PAGES

You've captured their interest...
now it's time to convert them

A MARKETING E-BOOK MUST-HAVE

By *Melanie Taljaard*

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Optimizing Landing Pages for

Lead Generation and Conversion

Contents:

Review of Landing Page Basics

Here are some landing page basics

What Is a Landing Page?

A landing page is a Web page designed as a form that your customers and prospects complete online. Providing you with critical top of the funnel information, it's one of the first steps in your lead generation, nurturing, and management efforts.

Well-designed landing pages are targeted at specific audiences, such as visitors who have clicked through from a pay-per-click (PPC) ad for a given campaign or registrants to a webinar promoting a specific product or service.

The real value in a landing page is unlocked when you create unique pages for each offer. That enables you to follow and track the lead from the time they first engage with you until they convert and long after.

Why Are Landing Pages Important?

Simply put, an optimized landing page makes it easier for visitors to your website to take advantage of the offers you're providing them.

Prospects and customers don't have to navigate your website to locate offers relevant to them. That makes getting what they want fast, easy, and simple.

The win for you is the opportunity to achieve a higher conversion rate. Instead of surfing your site and weighing whether or not what you have to offer is worth their while, they get to what they need quickly and efficiently.

Use These Basic Optimization Methods First

These fundamental methods for crafting a landing page optimized for lead conversion have stood the test of time:

1. Give the landing page a title, description, and layout that clearly and quickly explains the value of your offer; include a strong incentive for users to take an action to download or sign up for your offer.

2. Remove any distracting clutter, even navigation links. You want visitors focused on one thing: filling out your form.

3. Social sharing links, while technically a distraction, do serve your cause by allowing users to spread the word about your offer to their social network. Include social sharing links to maximize exposure for your offers.

4. Strike a balance in the structure of the form. Keep it short and nonintrusive from a user's perspective, but capture enough information to make the lead useful to you for follow-up.

5. Keep users engaged. After they've completed the form, direct them to a thank-you page or send an auto-response that suggests other offers they might find interesting or next steps they can take.

6. Track, measure, and analyze your conversion rates regularly; use what you learn to improve your landing pages and thereby improve your conversion rates.

These fundamentals will get you started but we've packed this ebook chock full of tips and techniques to optimize your landing pages like a pro.

Ready? Let's optimize!

Getting Your Landing Pages Shared

It's one of the first lessons we learn: Sharing is good. Of course, back then that probably meant sharing your snack and your toys, but a couple of decades later the principle remains the same. Making it easy for visitors to your website to share your content and offers with their social network is good for them and good for you!

Make it easy for customers and prospects to spread the word about your offers on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and whatever social media tomorrow brings by adding social sharing links to your landing pages.

You have two options for creating social sharing links: Create custom links yourself or use the official icons of the respective social media networks.

Customize Social Sharing Links

The most obvious benefit to setting up your own custom social sharing links is the ability to customize the language around the link for every offer. You could, for example, say "Tweet this ebook," making the action and the payoff very clear if your landing page offered an ebook download.

OPTION 1: Customize Them Manually

To customize your social media sharing links yourself or to hyperlink text or images, use these links:

https://twitter.com/intent/ tweet?text=[Insert tweet here] twItter

http://www.facebook.com/ share.php?u=[Insert URL fere] facebook

http://www.linkedin.com/ shareArticle?mini=true &url=[Insert URL] linkedin

Use the URL for your landing page when you're setting up the Facebook and LinkedIn links. When you do that, the shared links on those social media sites will display the meta description of your page as the default text for your post. With your meta descriptions featured so prominently now, be sure they are optimized for search and sharing.

Twitter requires you provide it the tweet you'd like to display, not the URL of the page you're sharing. The best way to do this is to use HubSpot's "Tweet this" tool. In one click, the tool creates a hyperlink for your Twitter share link.

OPTION 2: Use the Official Icons

Each of the social media sites provides specific code you can embed in your Web pages so that clicking on their official icons brings users to your social media pages.

This option doesn't permit customizing the link text but it is a bit easier, provides a more conventionally recognized social media connection, and best of all, it includes social proof.

You've no doubt seen social proof on many pages, including HubSpot's blogs. Social proof keeps a running tally of the number of times your content has been Liked, Tweeted, Linked, etc.

Think of social proof as a kind of silent testimonial. These numbers reflect the popularity of a given piece of content and can act to psychologically persuade some visitors to your site to do the same.

Social proof works to your advantage when the social sharing numbers are impressive but, since it's a transparent measurement, conversely, unpopular posts which receive little social sharing actions can lie there like you laid an egg no one wants.

Customized social sharing links or official ones with social proof both have their advantages. But, in the end, it's your content that serves as the primary motivator for people to share your message with the people in their social network. Try both, then analyze the results and see which works best for you.

Optimizing Tweets for Sharing Links

There are three things you should include in every 140-character tweet:

1. An @ mention of your company. This helps spread your brand name.

2. The title of the offer. This should describe why people might be interested in reading your tweet and the offer it touts. This is effectively the body of the tweet.

3. A link to your landing page. Tweeting is not an end unto itself, it is a means to an end — getting people to your landing pages. So, always include a link in your tweets. You can let Twitter shorten your link automatically or use bit.ly to shorten it.

Here's a sample tweet you can use as a reference point:

> **Melanie Taljaard** @mtaljaard
> How are you doing with #lead-generation? Free ebook
> moreinstore.ca/download-the-l… download now and get more from
> your #lead-generation.
> Collapse ← Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

How are you doing with #lead-generation? Free ebook http://www.moreinstore.ca/download-the-lead-generation-ebook-here/ download now and get more from your #lead-generation.

Social media sharing links on your landing pages and thank-you pages can help boost the number of social actions your content receives. When you combine that with optimized tweets that clearly state your offer(s) and provide direct access to your landing pages, you maximize the number of leads you ultimately receive and the conversions those leads lead to.

Lead Nurturing Campaigns

Generating leads is just the first step in your comprehensive inbound marketing initiative. Leads are the digital equivalent of people walking into your shop or restaurant. But if they don't order or never buy, where does that leave you? Nowhere.

That's where lead nurturing comes in. It's the inbound marketing version of establishing a relationship with your prospects and customers in person. And, just like in the real world, your lead nurturing, your relationship, depends on two key things: timing and targeting.

About 50 percent of leads are qualified but they're not ready to buy. If you ask for the sale too soon, if you are not nurturing them vis a vis a relationship that establishes trust and provides valuable information and proof that you have what it takes to satisfy their needs, you will simply burn through the money you spent on generating leads without maximizing the return on your investment.

Timing

In life, it's said, timing is everything. So it is with leads. Of the sales that get started via a Web inquiry, about 78 percent were captured by the first company to respond.

The response rates of leads decreases over time. Send an email response to a lead within one day of a visitor converting into a lead for optimal results.

Targeting

If timing is everything, [targeting](#) is everything else. The emails you generate when a site visitor converts to a lead should be specifically targeted to that prospect's needs.

Segment leads and the responses you offer based on the offer they responded to. Use each subsequent email to further hone the relationship between you and the lead by offering content on topics in which they've expressed an interest and use calls-to-action to prompt them to respond again.

As an example, if a visitor converted on your offer for an ebook for "10 Chinese Dinners You Can Cook in 10 Minutes or Less," send them an offer that might be something like, "15 Weeknight Meals That Cook Up in 15 Minutes."

Lead nurturing done properly can reduce sales cycle times and increase lead-to-customer conversion rates. Make sure you routinely update your lead nurturing campaigns to keep them relevant and thus, effective.

A/B Testing Your Landing Pages

What Is A/B Testing?

Think of [A/B testing](#) like a visit to the eye doctor when you need glasses and he keeps swapping lenses and asking you: "Better like this or like this? Number 1 or Number 2?"

In inbound marketing terms, A/B testing is the creation of two or more versions of a landing page which modifies a specific element to see which version of the landing page is more effective and produces a higher response rate from viewers of the page.

By promoting the landing pages to separate, but similarly sized and demographically similar audiences, you gain a more scientific understanding of how to best develop and execute your conversion strategy.

Why A/B Test?

A/B testing produces better results. Period. By understanding which pages and the elements on them resonate with visitors to your pages, you can refine your strategy to improve your inbound marketing results. And, since only about 40 percent of marketers are thought to do A/B testing, odds are you will gain a competitive advantage using this powerful technique.

Sometimes minor adjustments to calls-to-action or a form can result in major improvements in response rates.

A/B Testing at the Incremental and Page Level

Usually, A/B testing measures only one variable at a time, for example, form placement. This ensures that any differences in response rates are attributable only to that one change.

Sometimes, however, you may consider the entire landing page itself as the variable and test different landing pages to see how site visitors respond. It may make it more difficult to isolate exactly what caused the difference in response rates but if one landing page clearly outperforms another one, the reasons, although important, are less relevant since you have found success with at least one page. Then, you can start to fine-tune that page on an incremental level to produce even better results.

14 Landing Page Elements to A/B Test

1. **Headlines**   Which type of headline does your audience prefer, something with punch and pizzazz or something descriptive? Test language and messaging to see.

2. **Form Field Names**   What may seem obvious to you may not be so obvious to the market at large. Test different labels on the form fields to find the most effective ones.

3. **Number of Form Fields**   There is a point at which a user will abandon a form if there are too many fields to complete, kind of the straw that breaks the camel's back. Test to find a balance between not turning off users and getting the information you need to qualify the lead.

4. **Form Button Color**   Color is far more subjective than many people realize. Experiment with different colors to find the one(s) that keep users engaged.

5. **Form Button Size**   Buttons can be too big, too small, or just right. Test button size to determine which works best on your landing pages.

6. **Form Button Copy**   Your button copy must clearly explain what people who click through will get for their troubles. Test to find the most actionable copy.

7. **Page Layout**   How your page is laid out, i.e., where the headline is placed, where images or calls-to-action are placed can affect a page's effectiveness. Find the layout that works best for you.

8. **Images** A picture, they say, is worth a 1,000 words. But whether your picture is conveying the right 1,000 words is subjective. Make sure you use the most relevant images.

9. **Image Captions**   A caption on an image can illuminate or distract. Test to see what a caption does to your form completion rates.

10. **Font Size**   The font size for headlines and body copy is key to getting your copy read. Test to find the optimal size that makes copy legible but not distracting.

11. **Videos** Videos can explain things visually that are not easily expressed in writing. Or, they can be a distraction. See if adding a video to your landing page is advantageous or detrimental.

12. **Social Follow Buttons** Follow buttons will drive more traffic to your social media pages. Test to find out if that's a benefit or a hindrance to getting people to buy from you.

13. **Testimonials**   Testimonials can be a powerful sales tool but they may be more effective for some offers than others. Testing will tell you which offers profit from testimonials and which do not.

14. **Third-Party Approval Seals**   Is yours a product or service for which an endorsement or certificate by a noteworthy third-party helps convert leads? Testing will tell you whether and when to use them.

Analyzing Your A/B Test Results

A/B test results without analysis of those results are of little value.

Analyze the variables you've tested and make sure your results are statistically significant to be sure the variables were truly responsible for the changes in people's behavior.

Comparing the p-value and significance levels of your tests will tell you if your results are statistically significant. That can be somewhat complex manually, but free A/B test calculators can simplify this task considerably.

Applying A/B Test Results

Once you've determined that the A/B test results are statistically significant, apply them to your landing pages to optimize performance.

Remember that nothing lasts forever, so plan to A/B test routinely (maybe every three months or so) to ensure your copy and layout still resonates with site visitors and reflect changes in the marketplace such as those implemented by a competitor or new industry standards.

Doing A/B testing on a regular basis ensures your inbound marketing remains relevant and reflects current trends and best practices.

Thank-You Page

Your thank-you page is just the beginning of what you
hope will be a long and prosperous relationship with your lead. Optimizing your thank-you page follows through on the relationship-building strategy you've just engaged. Four components are especially important to building an effective thank-you page:

1. Access to Your Offer

2. Social Media Sharing Links

3. Secondary Calls-to-Action

4. Auto-response Email

1. Access to Your Offer

Your visitor just jumped through hoops for you by completing your form and downloading your content. Say "Thank You!"

Include the offer title in the thank-you page to reassure readers they have in fact landed in the right spot. Then, prominently provide the means to download or view the content you promised.

If the offer can be fulfilled by a link, do so. If it involves something less specific, such as a free consultation, let readers know what to expect and when, such as, "Thank you. One of our ace consultants will be in touch by phone within 24 hours to schedule your free consultation."

2. Social Media Sharing

Social media sharing links are just as important on thank-you pages as they are on landing pages, maybe more so. After all, these are folks who have already taken an action to download your offer, an offer they might be inclined to share with friends or colleagues.

If your downloaded content opens in a new browser tab or window, you can facilitate sharing while striking a balance between user convenience and how recently your content was viewed. That keeps the content available and makes sharing easy too.

Use customized messaging on your social sharing links to personalize the share action. For example, "Just read Berger's Burgers Grilling Guide. You should too: http:bit.ly/XXXXXXX"

3. Calls-to-Action

A thank-you page by definition implies the site visitor was interested enough in your offer to further develop their relationship with your brand. What a perfect opportunity to return the favor by placing calls-to-action for other relevant offers!

You can prompt users to "Connect With Us on Facebook" or "Try These Money-Saving Tips." The new calls-to-action should be based on the type of content and offer the user responded to so you are constantly providing more, and more relevant, useful content to strengthen their connection to your brand.
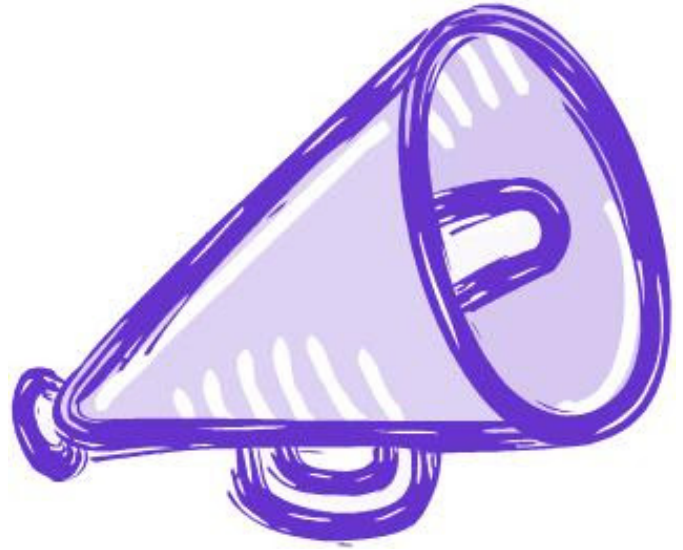
The more downloads to offers, the stronger the relationship between your brand and the lead so include a couple of calls-to-action on your thank-you pages to engage users even more.

4. Auto-response Emails

By setting up an auto-response email you send to visitors who have completed a form and been redirected to your thank-you page, you can employ one more tactic to follow up with leads and increase conversion rates.

Thank-you pages and auto-response emails are not mutually exclusive. They can both be used effectively to stoke the fires of a newly formed relationship.

Conclusion and Additional Resources

Landing pages help solidify a relationship that's still in its infancy and needs nurturing.

Keep these tips and techniques in mind to optimize your landing pages:

- •! Place social media sharing buttons on landing pages to encourage visitors to share your content with those in their social network.

- •! Optimize tweets in social sharing links by clearly stating your offer and easy access to your landing pages.

- •! Well-timed, tightly targeted lead nurturing is critical to converting new leads into eventual customers.

- •! A/B testing will help you discover which variables of your landing page elements are most effective.

- •! Send leads to thank-you pages which include additional call-to-action offers to further engage site visitors.

That's it. Now, go optimize the world as you know it and start leading your leads through the sales funnel straight through to a converted customer!"

Free Inbound Marketing Assessment

Could you benefit from an accurate picture of your marketing presence and practical recommendations for improving marketing programs?

More In Store can show you how to optimize your website and convert more leads to customers

Our **no-obligation marketing assessment** evaluates your business˙ current website and marketing efforts for areas of improvement. Learn how your competitors stack up against you and be able to make better decisions with your marketing dollars.   You'll discover hidden gold and eliminate brand liabilities.

Relying on the pillars of Inbound Marketing (Search Marketing, Social Media, Content Marketing and Public Relations), More In Store helps our clients ensure they are found when customers go searching for their product or service. If you're interested in learning more about how More In Store can help you to achieve your marketing goals, sign up for a **free Inbound Marketing Assessment.**