

SPECIAL REPORT

Developing a Strategy for Landing Page Optimization

Build an LPO capability to measure
and improve financial performance

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Developing a Strategy for Landing Page Optimization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Landing Page Optimization (LPO) is a key solution to maximize the ROI of mission-critical online marketing efforts, including the corporate homepage or dedicated product pages. However, we find that even experienced practitioners struggle with understanding what LPO entails, and how to successfully develop and execute LPO strategies. In the *2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Report*, we interviewed more than 2,600 marketers and found that 82 percent aren't even sure how to demonstrate the ROI of LPO.

Every company conducting business online spends thousands (and often tens of thousands) of dollars each year designing landing pages to attract new clients or sell goods and services. Failing to optimize these websites means organizations are missing the maximum revenue their landing pages could produce and potentially driving away prospects with confusing or cumbersome pages.

This Special Report examines how senior marketing executives overcome challenges to implementing LPO within their organizations. It explores the key components marketers must include in LPO strategy, how to design landing pages that target the right audience segments, and how to employ analytics to track LPO projects. The report also explains how to develop a culture of optimization and testing, to effectively determine the ROI of a successful LPO campaign.

Special Reports

MarketingSherpa Special Reports provide marketing executives with concise research, insights and actionable advice, derived from unique market segments for guiding strategic and tactical decision making.

WEBSITE OBJECTIVE DETERMINES LPO STRATEGY

Designing a robust LPO campaign requires a clear determination of your website or landing page's ultimate purpose. You cannot regulate return on your LPO investment without knowing what your page is designed to achieve. Do you want to increase your overall revenue or drive new leads? How will you measure success?

In this Special Report, you will learn how your business model informs your landing page strategy. For example, a B2B lead generation site, designed to generate email addresses, speaks to a different audience, and will require different functionality, than an e-commerce site funneling purchases through a three-step shopping cart. Similarly, the number of audience segments addressed by your landing page informs your LPO strategy. A single website aimed at engaging both new prospects, returning users and job seekers has very different design constraints than a deep-linked product profile page that provides design specs and a demo video.

DATA ANALYSIS IS CRITICAL TO SUCCESSFULLY DESIGN AND DEPLOY LPO CAMPAIGNS

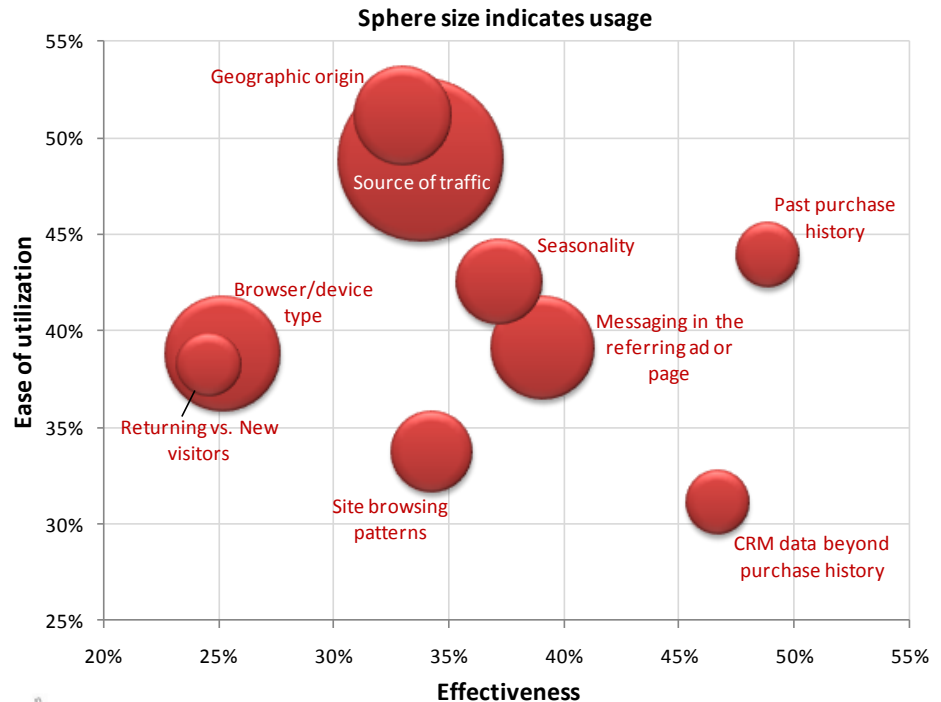
A key benefit to online marketing is the magnitude of data available to informing marketers' optimization strategies. Robust analytic tools track every click, every browser and every cookie that interacts with a website. A successful LPO strategy demands real numbers that inform your design, based upon who is

visiting your website and how they interact with specific pages. This report explores how transactional data and client segmentation profiles are invaluable to effectively design and implement LPO.

CHART: TRANSACTIONAL DATA IS GOLD FOR SEGMENTATION AND RELEVANCE

In our 2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Study, we asked marketers about their success in using audience segmentation versus the ease of tracking this data.

We found that marketers believe delivering a custom experience to a user, based upon past purchase, is relatively straightforward and extremely effective. Beyond that, marketers are experiencing varying degrees of success with the diverse and often complicated analytics that inform messaging and customer tracking.



marketingsherpa Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
powered by MECLABS Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

OPTIMIZATION REQUIRES A CULTURAL SHIFT IN TESTING

Finally, this Special Report will explore the link between successful LPO campaigns and a rigorous testing process. Determining ROI is impossible without measuring which of your landing pages will best address your client’s needs, and how your existing pages convert your ideal prospects.

To get the most possible revenue from your landing pages, you must challenge your current business results. A genuine LPO program is not a one-time project, but rather a consistent, ongoing cycle of testing that measures the performance of your most critical pages.

A culture of optimization provides real metrics on LPO that will improve your conversion rates over time, and ultimately prove the business case for LPO to your C-suite.

WEBSITE OBJECTIVES DETERMINE LPO STRATEGY

The first chapter of this Special Report examines the importance of tying your ultimate business goals to website design, when calculating the ROI of your LPO projects. We'll review four steps that link website objectives to LPO strategy, and analyze top challenges marketers face when trying to meet these goals. We will also provide insights on how to combat each top challenge by focusing on segmenting customers.

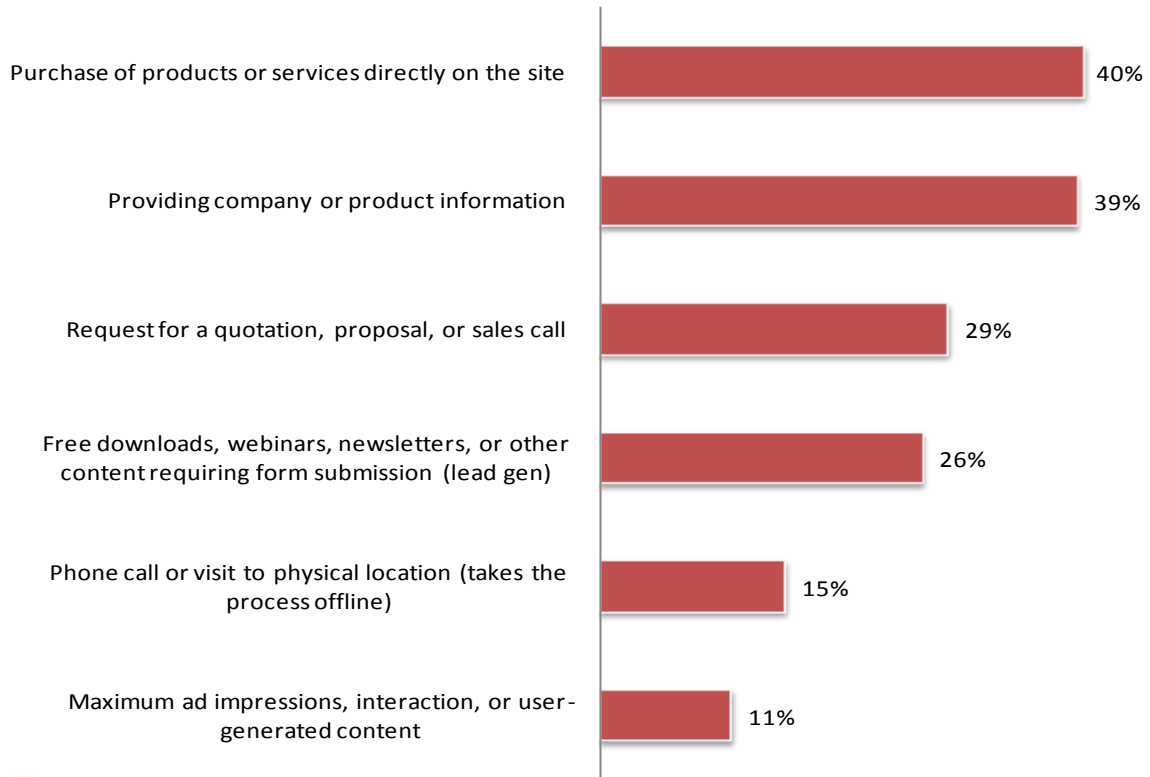
STEP 1: DETERMINE YOUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The first step to optimizing a webpage is defining the primary objective of your website. This objective, in turn, informs which optimization priorities and tactics your campaign should deploy. Without this construct, you risk designing a landing page that uses tactics which fail to accomplish your primary conversion goal.

For example, an e-commerce site aimed at selling running shoes should not waste valuable online real estate showing Flash video of track meets. While potentially interesting, the video does little to directly advance the ultimate conversion goal of selling footwear.

CHART: WEBSITE OBJECTIVES AS DETERMINED BY IN-HOUSE MARKETERS IN 2010

Q. 24.0 - Which of the following processes/transactions is the primary objective of your organization's website?



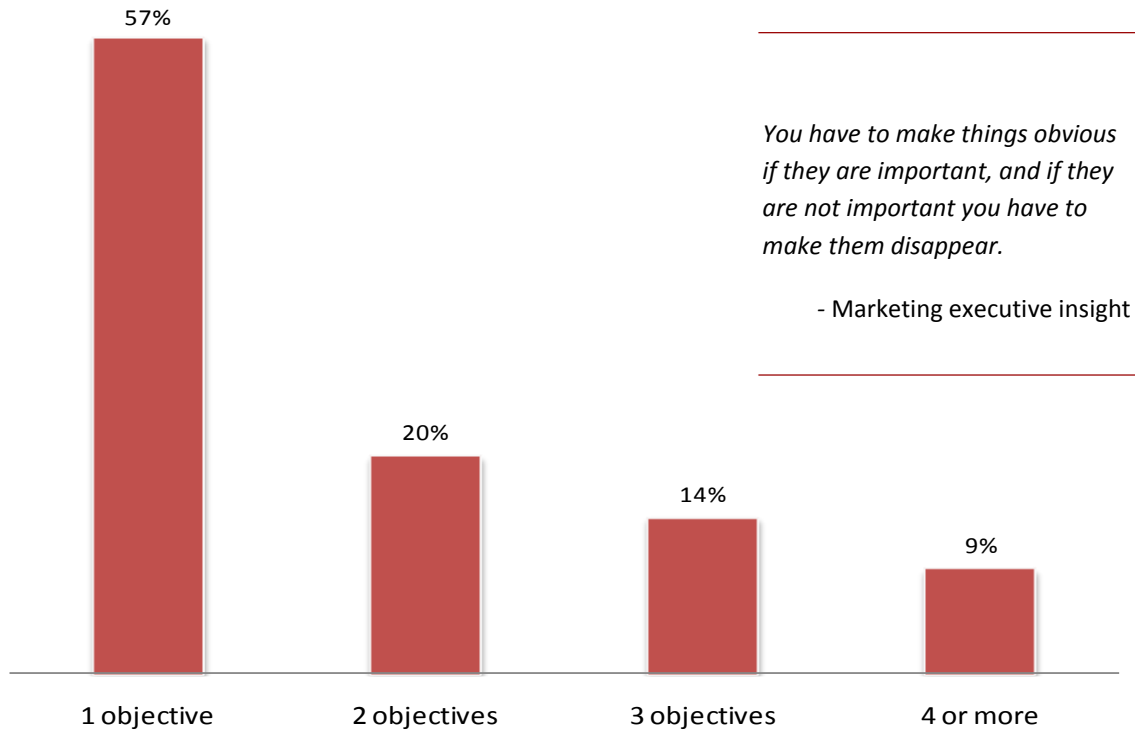
Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

STEP 2: MINIMIZE THE NUMBER OF OBJECTIVES PER PAGE

Another major challenge reported by marketers who took the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey is the competition for website real estate. Especially on a corporate homepage, a number of considerations – including business unit clout, branding and coding constraints – affect what ultimately appears on a user’s screen.

However, the fundamental purpose of a website is not to make your various business units happy; it’s to address the immediate concerns of your ideal customer. A technology manager looking for a whitepaper on your SaaS capabilities does not care about the press release on last month’s new product launch that your design team placed above the fold.

CHART: MULTIPLE WEBSITE OBJECTIVES CONTINUE TO BE A CHALLENGE TO LPO IN 2010



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

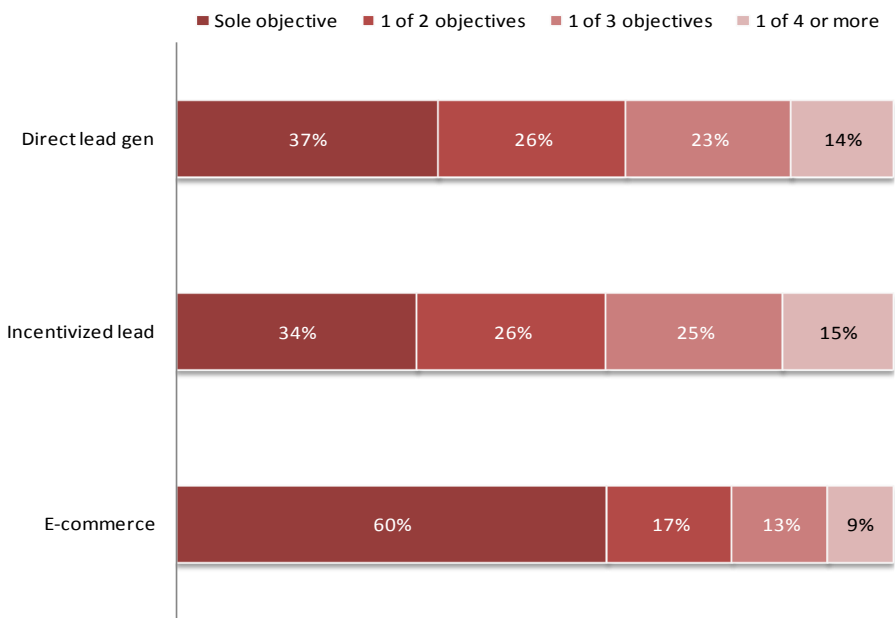
More than one objective per landing page creates another major dilemma for the marketer trying to determine the ROI of their programs: “Which objective am I paying to optimize?” Competing calls-to-action – a result of not clearly defining website goals – decrease conversion rates and increase page abandonment.

Multiple objectives not only create confusion for LPO marketers, they confuse your visitors. The more effort demanded of consumers on your site, the more likely they are to become frustrated and leave the page.

Users want clear, compelling landing pages that address their immediate needs. Omit any aspects of your landing pages that compete for attention with your desired conversion action. Otherwise, your site design will alienate visitors and ultimately affect the bottom line.

For e-commerce marketers, a relatively simple LPO strategy is to design multiple dedicated landing pages, each selling a single product. However, other business considerations often come into play, especially with B2B sites and homepages. Having landing pages with multiple objectives makes LPO strategy inherently more complex. These pages need to be carefully planned and tested to avoid page abandonment issues.


CHART: THE COMPETITION OF PRIMARY WEBSITE OBJECTIVES WITH OTHER OBJECTIVES



In fact, outside of e-commerce product pages, very few websites have a single objective.

This chart shows that, especially in lead gen, marketers need to closely examine what they offer to visitors, and structure the visitor’s website experience in a way that minimizes confusion.

The key to navigating this minefield is to adopt a customer-centric approach to online marketing.

 Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

STEP 3: DEVELOP DEDICATED LANDING PAGES TO ADDRESS SPECIFIC GOALS

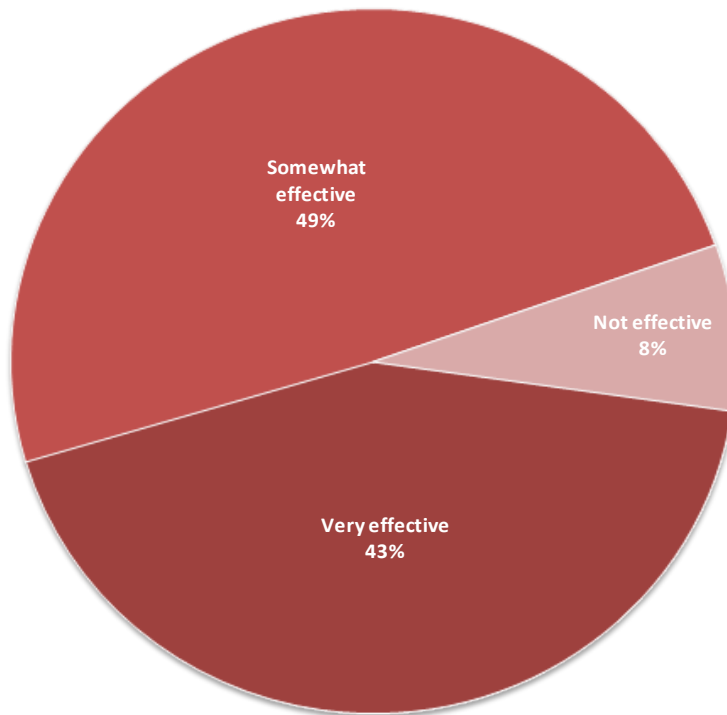
Instead of designing a “one-size-fits-all” website, experienced marketers turn to multiple dedicated landing pages to address their primary and secondary objectives. Dedicated landing pages (DLPs) provide the most straightforward way to serve select traffic segments with targeted, relevant messaging and experiences.

Dedicated landing pages also effectively address how users find information online. Very few of your site visitors will actually type in your complete URL address. The widespread adoption of SEM and PPC advertising came about because users more often look for websites from Google or another browser.

Online, capturing and maintaining your prospects’ attention is an uphill battle. Particularly for e-commerce, the most effective dedicated landing pages bring users as close as possible to their targeted search objective. Consequently, the best conversion rates come when marketers put the most specific DLPs in front of a motivated audience. Marketers need to immediately give users the chance to buy, before they hit the back button, get distracted by Facebook, or their kids come home from school.

CHART: EFFECTIVENESS OF USING DEDICATED LANDING PAGES

Q. 45.0 - Compared to sending traffic to the default site, how would you rate using dedicated landing pages?



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

In the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey, 92 percent of marketers reported using DLPs at least somewhat effectively in their campaigns.

This is good news, as the landing page is where Marketing communicates directly with customers – either making the case for a sale, or offering value in exchange for contact information on a lead generation form. Designing a variety of pages to specifically target messaging to your vital client segments is the best way to maximize the output in these sites.

However, marketers have not yet perfected LPO tools. It is important to note that 57 percent of marketers in the LPO benchmark survey still have room for improvement.

A carefully optimized landing page is also a crucial tool for email marketing campaigns, and is a frequent subject for optimization testing. Continually pushing your marketing team to test and optimize your DLPs will move the needle on conversions, and give you the tools you need to effectively drive the ROI of your online marketing efforts.

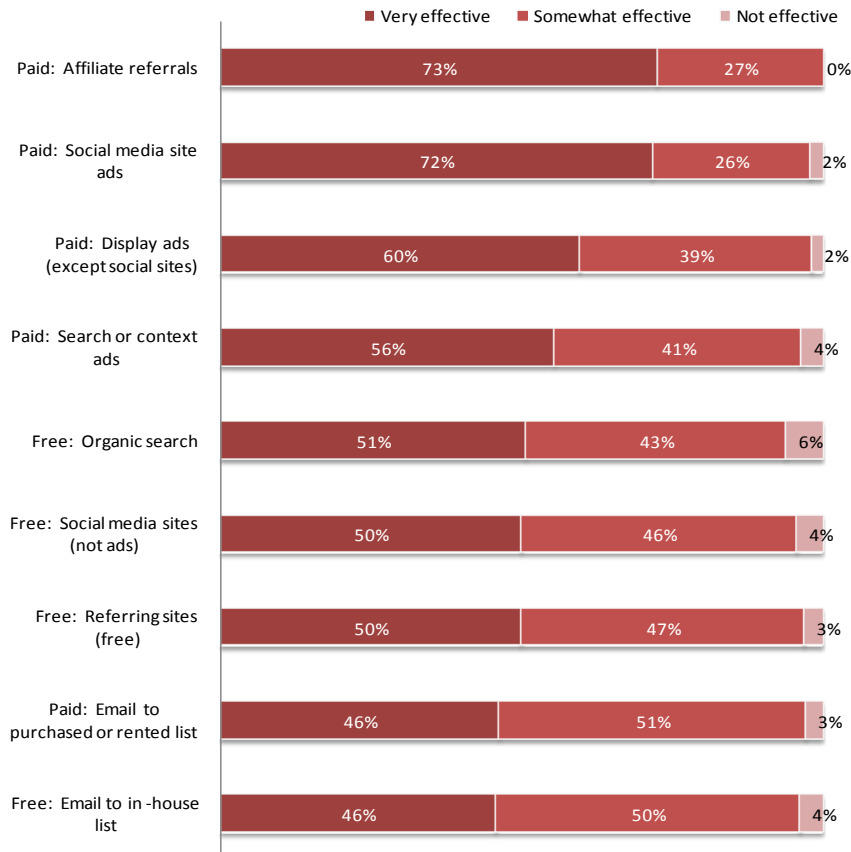
STEP 4: SEGMENT YOUR AUDIENCE

Targeted, deep-linked DLPs also provide instant audience segmentation, which we will explore in Section 2 of this Special Report. Designing specific messaging based upon how traffic arrives at a website is one of the easiest methods of site customization. Based upon the referring site or ad, marketers can make strong

inferences about visitor preferences, create specific content and messaging for each referring segment, and establish triggers to deliver different DLPs to each visit, based upon the traffic source.

In the *2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Report*, we asked marketers how effective they perceived dedicated landing pages as a tool in their online marketing arsenal.

CHART: EFFECTIVENESS OF USING DEDICATED LANDING PAGES, BY SOURCE OF TRAFFIC



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

Marketers reported that segmentation tactics are very effective, when using DLPs for affiliate referrals and social media traffic. Both affiliate and social media sites include a wealth of information about users, taking the guesswork out of designing content, and designing personas. Social media and affiliate segments are generally more self-evident, and marketers find them more effective than when they try to craft customized experiences based upon a referring browser for organic search.

Another interesting takeaway from the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey is the dramatic room for improvement that remains in PPC ads. Landing pages for PPC ads should be highly effective, as a user has already clicked “yes” to a short, specific ad with distinct content.

In PPC, conversion often drops off on landing pages, as a result of messaging confusion, or a lack of congruence between the ad and the subsequent DLP. If a customer clicks an ad for a “Free Software Demo,”

this exact phrasing must be evident on the corresponding landing page. Otherwise, you risk losing users' trust – and most likely a sale. For PPC advertising, repetition breeds comfort and sales, not boredom.

CASE STUDY BRIEFING: DESIGN CUSTOM LANDING PAGES TO INCREASE LEADS BY 88%

Abridged Case study ID: CS31348

Location: MarketingSherpa Member Library

Summary: How UMass Online improved lead volume and cut costs by creating a template to quickly generate custom landing pages for their PPC ads.

CHALLENGE

UMass Online is responsible for recruiting students for the University of Massachusetts' 90 online degree and certificate programs. However, the team's PPC program had hundreds of ads driving leads to a single generic landing page. This single landing page was not relevant enough to optimize PPC traffic; therefore the university needed a scalable solution to create unique pages for each certificate program.

CAMPAIGN

Rather than having one page serve many degrees, UMass Online opted to build several pages that each served a single purpose. Here is how you can apply their lessons from multivariate testing, to create a template that quickly generated custom landing pages for PPC ads:

1. *Review design best practices.* Make sure your new landing pages include features such as a clear headline, compelling copy, minimal navigation and minimal fields on forms. Feature an urgent call-to-action, use images that serve a purpose, and pay attention to your search keywords.
2. *Build a template/page generator.* UMass Online designed a template to generate individual landing pages. This customized certain fields, e.g. the headline and body copy, for each program tied to a PPC campaign. They built and tested these templates in batches, though the website retained a more generalized landing page for more basic "UMass" search queries.
3. *Begin by optimizing a single page.* Once your template has generated a library of separate landing pages, boost performance by refining them individually. A/B split and multivariate tests will evaluate the success of your original messaging and ultimately increase conversions.
4. *Apply optimization lessons across all your landing pages.* Implement the lessons you learn from A/B testing a single page for all your newly designed landing pages. Be sure to watch your metrics and continually evaluate which changes have the most direct impact on your bottom line.



RESULTS

UMass Online continues to test and improve their pages, but so far, they have enjoyed a great deal of success. Prior to implementing the template, there were instances when a single lead could cost more than \$300. Now, custom landing pages generate leads that cost about \$22.75, and average cost-per-lead is \$26. Additionally, after UMass successfully completed the first round of landing page design and testing, their

lead volume per month increased 88.4 percent and the team's tests on a single landing page increased conversions 107 percent.

TRACK ANALYTICS TO INFORM LPO STRATEGY

In this section, we'll review LPO data analysis and audience segmentation tactics. We will also identify the metrics marketers use to evaluate the ROI of their optimization projects, where marketers struggle with analytics, and which client segmentation techniques produce the most relevant targeted landing pages.

ANALYTICS PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR WEBSITE STRATEGY

The revelation of online marketing is the sheer magnitude of data available. Online analytic tools, such as Google Web Optimizer, Omniture and Test and Target, track and report on nearly every metric relevant to ROI, including clickthrough rates, conversions, time on page, and abandonment rates. Used correctly, this information can dramatically improve the design of your LPO pages.

For most optimization strategies, marketers rely on a combination of primary and secondary metrics that work in conjunction to direct LPO. These include:

- Conversion rate
- Clickthrough rate
- Time on page
- Bounce rate
- Overall sales
- Cost-per-click (for PPC campaigns)
- Downloads
- Exit rates

Additionally, advanced marketers also consider the following metrics:

- Total page views
- Funnel analysis
- Which aspects of the page compete with the primary site objective (by getting more clicks)
- Basic metrics cut, according to channel

Just as site design is intrinsically linked to the goals of your landing page, the analytics that matter to your specific website will depend on your company's specific business goals. For example, most marketers spend sizeable bandwidth tracking and comparing LPO conversion rates. Yet, depending on your business model, overall revenue per visitor may be a much more critical metric to track, especially if you have products that are expensive to produce. A new LPO design may increase conversions on your website, but actually decrease your overall corporate revenue.

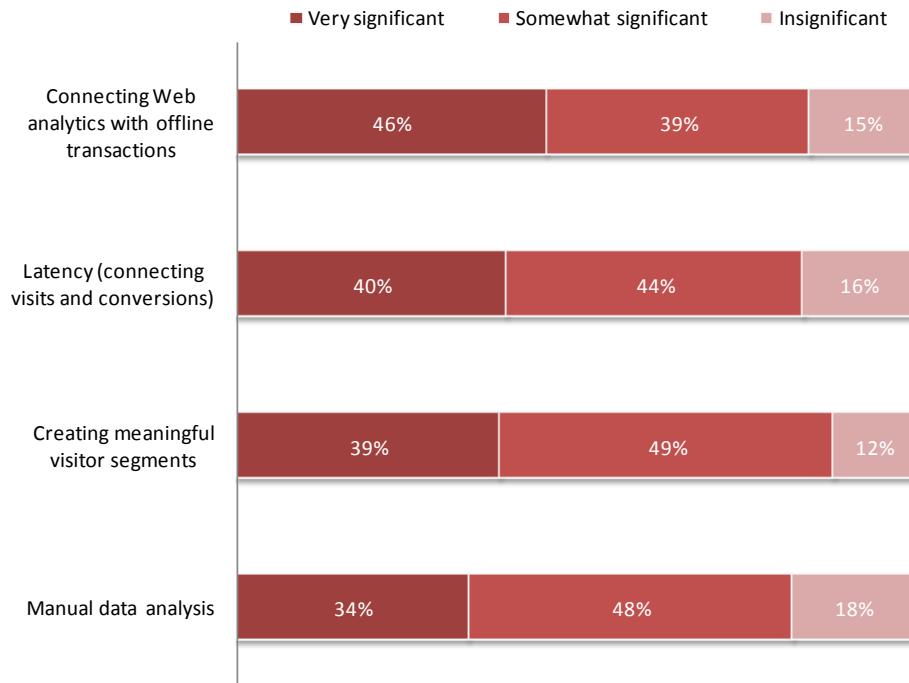
This concept seems simple enough – use real numbers to evaluate the success of your landing pages. Unfortunately, even marketers with an expansive statistical background run the risk of burying themselves in the sheer volume of reports these analytic tools can generate.

“Don’t make assumptions! We were astounded to see in Web analytics that only a small portion of our traffic was ever reaching our primary product/service pages” – CMO Insight

There is significant variance across websites (and even among individuals within a single organization) regarding different sources of traffic and where on the website this traffic lands, seasonality, balance of new vs. returning visitors, concurrent marketing campaigns, and the definition of a “conversion” itself. When you add in analytics that measure user experiences in light of different industries and product categories, different price points and payment options, and different methods for incorporating offline transactional data (e.g., phone or physical store sales that originated from a website), there are literally dozens of dimensions marketers can use to classify a conversion rate average.

LPO data analysis requires the ability to tie Web analytics to key business performance indicators. Depending on your tools, this may be as simple as counting the number of transactions, or as complex as making corresponding costs, and the timing of *subsequent* transactions, part of the model.

CHART: TOP DATA ANALYSIS CHALLENGES FOR LPO IN 2010



The most complicated data analysis strategies include expanding insights from your Web analytics to offline transactions, as well as online transactions that happen on future visits.

The ability to track this data can often require not only additional technology investments, but also careful data modeling before marketers know what to do with these reports, and how to apply this information to increase ROI.



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

DATA ANALYSIS ALLOWS MARKETERS TO TARGET SPECIFIC VISITOR SEGMENTS

Your landing page is more than an attractive, well-ordered combination of copy, bullets and brightly colored pixels. The essence of your landing page lies in its ability to communicate directly with your ideal client. Ultimately, the ROI for landing page optimization, or any other major Web design strategy, relies on the site’s success – or failure – to speak to the right audience.

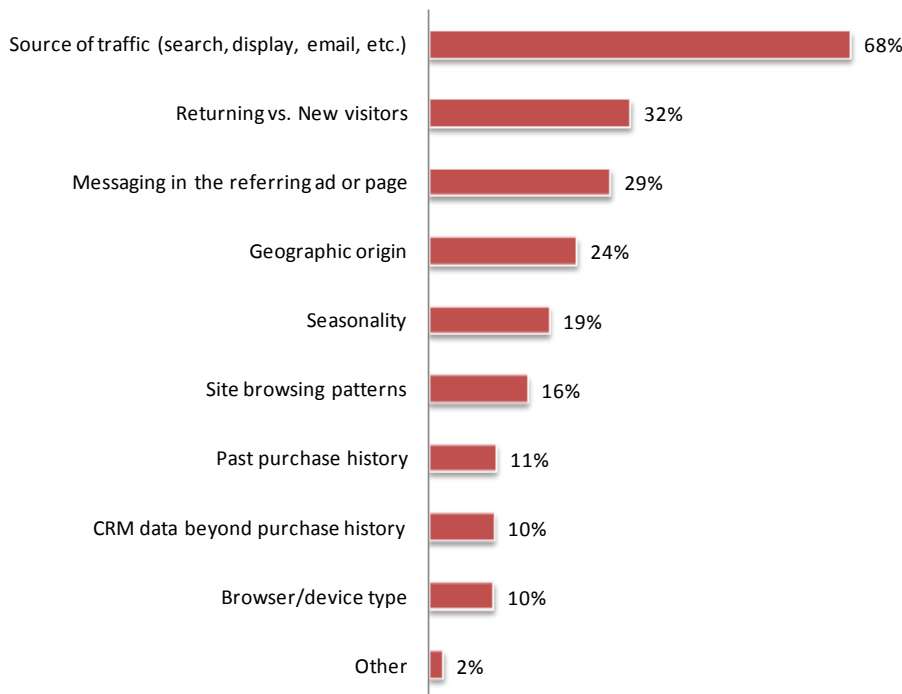
In the first section of this Special Report, we discussed how LPO strategy must include audience segmentation. Marketers maximize conversions by matching visitor preferences and motivations with the right landing page, clearly communicating the company's value proposition, and then funneling the visitor through an intuitive conversion sequence.

Doing this requires insights into the visitor's preferences, which marketers obtain by tracking and analyzing both personal information the prospect submits, and by adding cookies and data mining systems that aggregate the user's behavior while on your landing page.

The chart below details the visitor information that marketers routinely collect, according to the *2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Report*. For marketers with limited resources, tracking this visitor data is a good starting point for segmenting data and optimizing visitor experiences.

CHART: LPO PRACTITIONERS USE VISITOR DATA USED TO INCREASE RELEVANCE

Q. 53.0 - What visitor data do you utilize to increase relevance?



Traffic source is also one of the most basic Web analytics reports available, making it an easy choice for digital marketers.

This information will show how traffic from different sources behaves differently, potentially highlighting which visitors, from which sources, respond to different messaging.



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

For more advanced marketers, there is clear opportunity to create competitive advantage by using past purchase history, alongside CRM data, to power dynamically created, segment-specific experiences – a highly effective, yet highly underutilized tactic.

Unfortunately, using all available analytic data to segment your users isn't always practical. Segments may become too small to be useful, or too broad to be meaningful. Furthermore, some segments may be impossible to clearly separate before a customer arrives at a website. For instance, some people respond

better to short copy than long copy – but we can only distinguish these groups *after* they have interacted with a page.

VISITOR SEGMENTS ALLOW MARKETERS TO DESIGN RELEVANT LPO EXPERIENCES

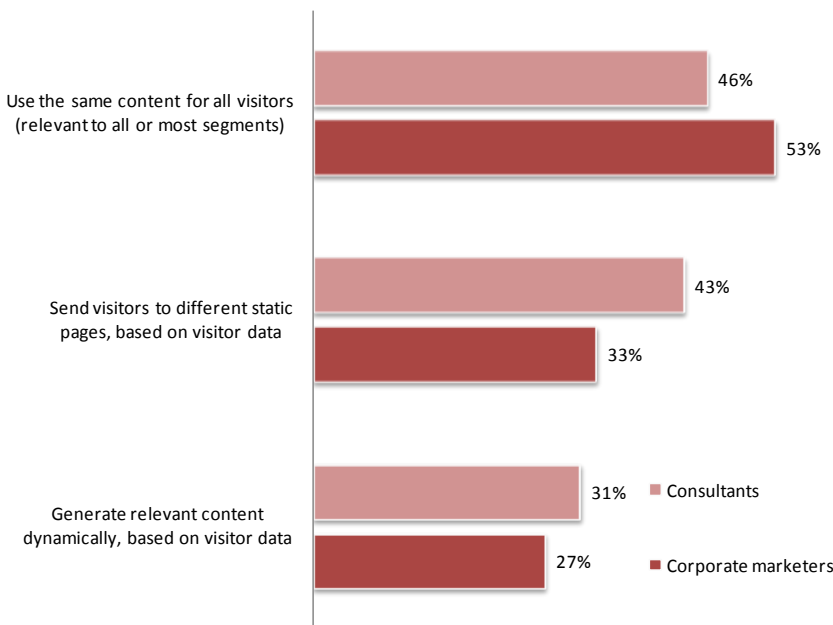
For landing page optimization (and for marketing in general), creating relevant user experiences continues to be both invaluable and elusive. Currently, online visitor experiences range from a single static website aimed at all visitors, to complex, CRM-driven sites that deliver dynamic custom content based on a user’s most recent clicks.

The benefit of online marketing is that with the data reporting available, marketers not only understand the varied traffic to their sites, but also have some directional information on these segments.

Different visitors have different motivations, want different things, and have different communication styles, all of which can be identified with LPO strategies. Once marketers have compiled visitor segmentation, they can then analyze this data to define the most useful customer segments. From there, effective LPO campaigns use this data to build relevant experiences for each visitor, often in real time.

Teasing preference segments from visitor behavior is difficult, but highly rewarding. Combined with testing, segmentation allows fine-tuning of relevance – not only in terms of content, but also in how marketers present that content.

CHART: APPLYING VISITOR DATA TO CREATE SEGMENT-SPECIFIC EXPERIENCES



According to the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey, only 50 percent of marketers currently use customer segmentation data to create unique experiences for different segments.

This means more than half of digital marketing practitioners don’t create relevant experiences for customers based on actual preferences and motivations.



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

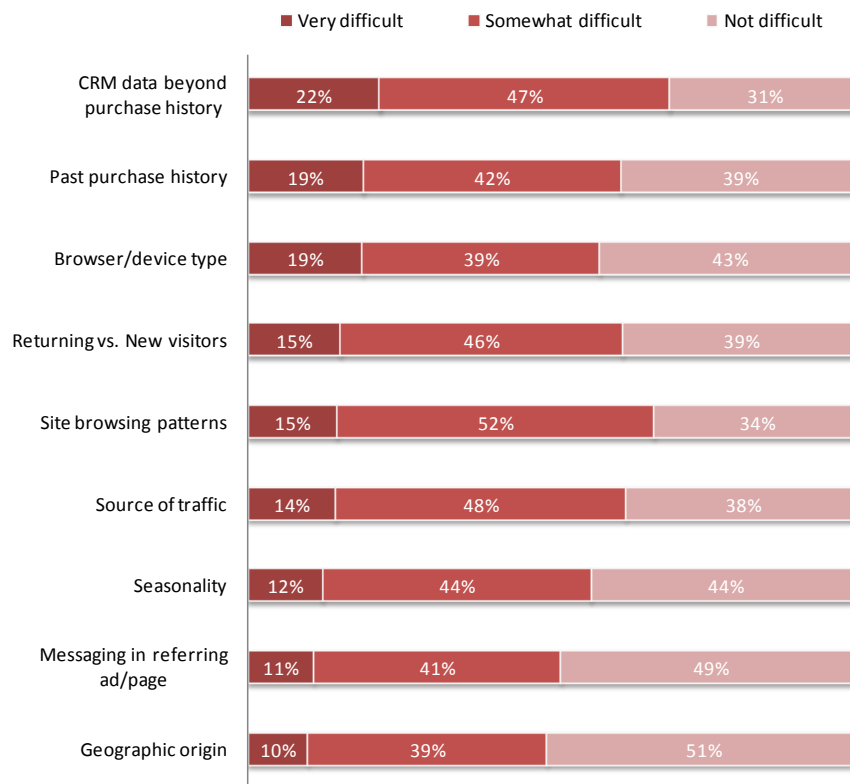
Instead, many landing pages are designed to speak to multiple audience groups, in multiple voices, forcing customers to sift through content that is largely irrelevant to their search parameters, or decide between competing calls-to-action. As we discussed in Section One of this Special Report, confusing and competing


landing pages distract from the intended purpose of the website, and negatively impact the site’s conversion rate.

A slightly less resource-intensive solution to the logistical burden of dynamic content generation is the use of segmentation data to create static pages for each of your key target groups. Even minimal segment-specific customization has shown significant conversion improvements. Surprisingly, almost as many marketers in our *2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Report* used dynamic pages as segmented static pages.

The minimal adoption of segmentation is due to a number of factors, most significantly the limited number of resources exclusively dedicated to LPO efforts. The 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey data supports this theory, as consultants, who have more dedicated analysts and LPO resources, are significantly ahead of in-house practitioners in terms of deploying segmentation data in more advanced ways.

CHART: INCORPORATING SEGMENTATION TACTICS IN LPO REMAINS DIFFICULT



 Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

As we discussed in Section One, incorporating a relevant, consistent message in both the referring PPC ad and the landing page is critical. It is also among the easiest tactics to implement from a resource perspective. Marketers already draft both page and PPC messaging, and don’t need to run a complicated statistical model to determine if messages are congruent, just a good copy editor.

However, the more resource intensive segmentation tactics are also often the most effective. For instance, past purchase history or concrete CRM data are significantly more predictive in terms of signaling your audience's actual preferences and motivation levels.

TESTING IS THE FOUNDATION FOR LPO STRATEGY

In this chapter, we'll cover the importance of incorporating testing into your LPO strategy. We will explore why testing serves as the foundation for LPO, which aspects of site design marketers routinely test, and the challenges marketers face when implementing a culture of testing inside their organizations.

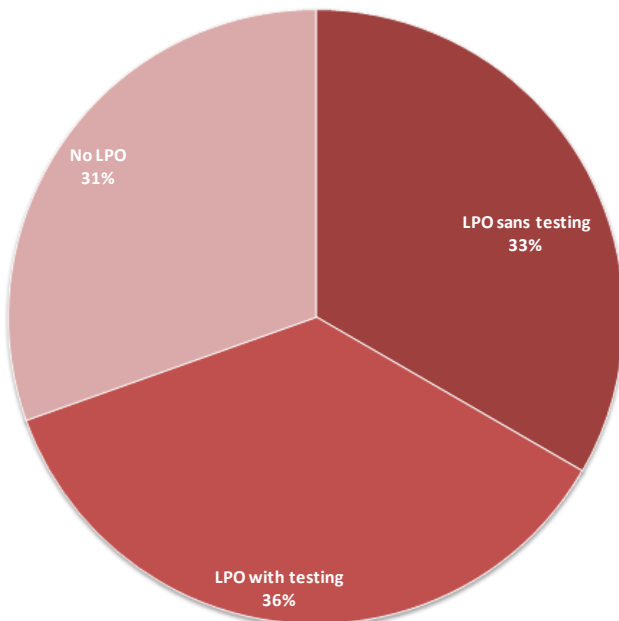
TESTING IS VITAL TO CREATING AN OPTIMIZATION CULTURE

In the Executive Summary, we reported that marketers struggle to express the ROI of their LPO efforts. The solution to this communication gap lies in testing.

Testing is, in fact, the paradigm through which every optimization strategy should be formed. In order to evaluate the success of a LPO strategy, you need concrete, accurate data. Without numbers, building different landing pages, or deciding on next year's online marketing program, amounts to educated guesswork.

There is abundant evidence pointing to the lack of testing among many marketing firms. In our 2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey, 23 percent of respondents rely on the head of their business unit head to dictate the best version of their webpage. Another 36 percent indicated that the marketing team collaboratively decides their digital strategy.

CHART: LPO AND TESTING PRACTICES IN 2010



The 2011 benchmark survey also polled marketers regarding their LPO efforts. Almost half of marketers engaged in LPO last year.

Rather than resort to magic 8-balls, savvy marketers rely on a wealth of testing tools available to ground their LPO strategy in real numbers. Testing is the only way to get true evidence of what customers think about your landing pages, based on how they react to different treatments. Through optimization and testing, marketers learn to better communicate with customers, by measuring what products, paid search campaigns and calls-to-actions their prospects value most.



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

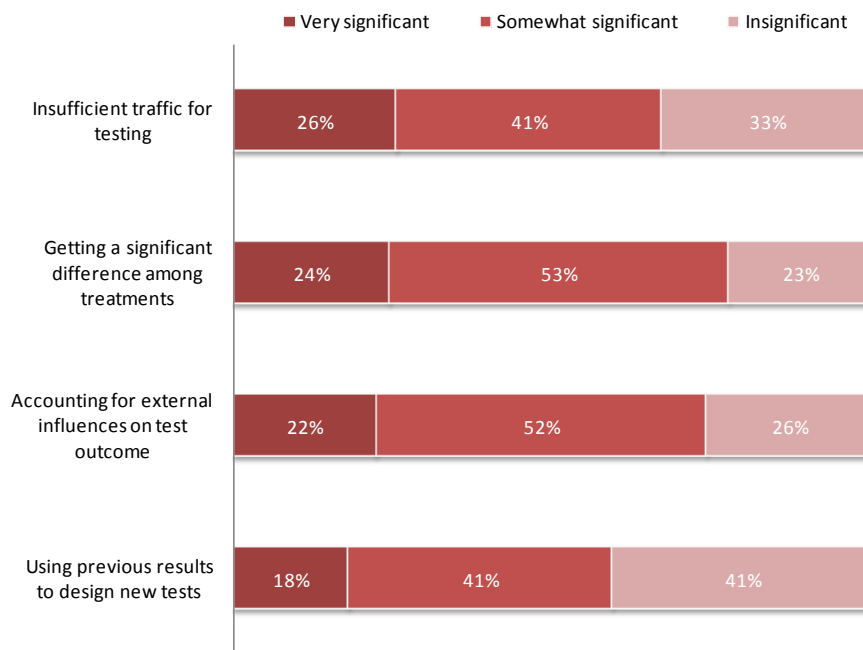
A meeting with the C-suite is much more productive when you can explain, “We developed two new landing page treatments for our top selling lipstick. When we tested these pages, we found that Treatment 1 experienced an overall revenue increase of 86 percent over our original page.”

TESTING REMAINS A CHALLENGE FOR DIGITAL MARKETERS

Armed with the success of testing, it is perhaps surprising that according to the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey, 48 percent of marketers currently engaged in LPO efforts did not test.

For many marketing departments, developing a culture of testing will amount to a tectonic shift in their business processes.

CHART: TOP CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING TESTING



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

Testing different treatments means you will fail as much as you succeed – and sometimes more often. Many corporate cultures will not tolerate spending limited budget resources to design failed “solutions.”

In addition to cultural considerations, testing also requires dedicated bandwidth, someone in the company with test planning, statistical and data analysis experience, and often new technology, all of which may be problematic for marketers.

In the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey, we asked marketers to rate how significantly certain testing challenges impacted their capacity to implement testing inside their organization.

In addition to mitigating external influence over testing outcomes, driving enough traffic to produce a valid test was a significant challenge for marketers in 2010. Driving traffic to a website is an ongoing struggle for

all digital media, and makes it frustrating to implement a culture of optimization, as the amount of traffic is often outside of the LPO practitioner’s immediate control.

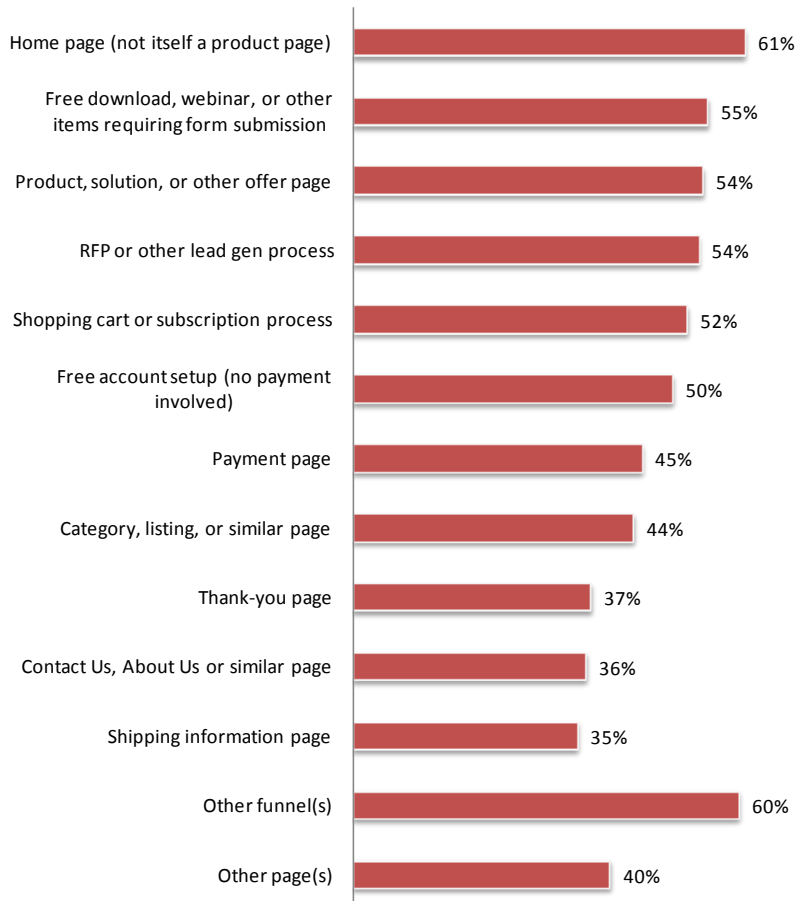
It is also surprising that the complicated process of designing a testing methodology was only rated a “somewhat significant” challenge by surveyed marketers. Without reading the minds of our respondents, we can extrapolate that organizational and traffic challenges were much more immediate for the marketers responding to the survey, and were therefore rated higher.


In the end, *all* the above challenges can be damaging when building a culture of testing in your marketing organization. Insufficient traffic also requires more sophisticated statistics and potentially a lower level of confidence to validate test results. Otherwise, tests may require too much time to be practical, which may not be feasible or palatable to some marketers.

OPTIMIZATION INCLUDES TESTING SPECIFIC TACTICS

In addition to implementing an overall culture of optimization, testing allows marketers to specifically evaluate distinct sections of their websites. In the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey, we asked marketers which landing pages or funnels they routinely tested.

CHART: 11 KEY PAGES AND FUNNELS TESTED IN 2010



 Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

As we can see, when asked about specific features of their websites, most marketers report they are testing at least *something*.

The largest testing contingency appears to be e-commerce sites, which allocate significant test resources focused on the sales experience.

More than half of survey respondents tested their product, shopping cart, and account set up pages.

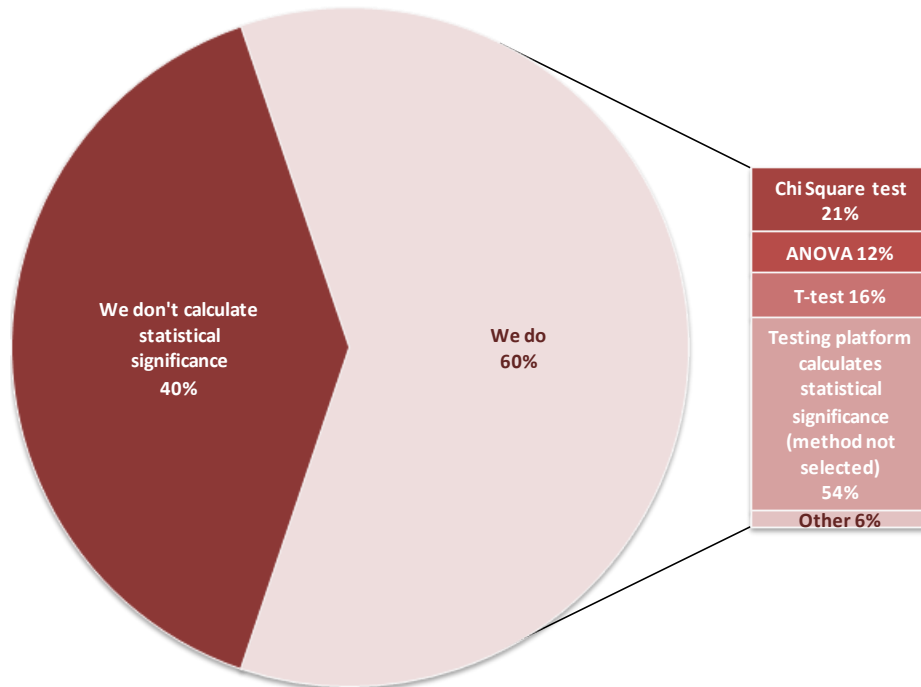
Lead generation sites are also well-represented among testing proponents, with 55 percent of marketers evaluating their form submission processes and 54 percent evaluating their RFP processes.

ACTIONABLE TESTS REQUIRE STATISTICALLY VALID RESULTS

One of the most fascinating results of the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey is that online marketers don't validate their test results. We asked marketers, who had previously indicated they were involved in the formal design of experiments, how they arrived at statistical validity for their test results.

Of those marketers experienced in test design, one-third and one-half did not calculate statistical significance at all. This is a major discovery, because it means that the sizable time, effort and resources that marketers *do* dedicate to testing efforts, are producing statistically insignificant results 40 percent of the time.

CHART: MARKETERS' AWARENESS AND USE OF TEST VALIDATION METHODS



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

The lesson in this data is not that every marketer needs to earn a degree in statistics. In fact, sophisticated testing platforms generally calculate test validity, a tool utilized by 54 percent of marketers that do validate their test results.

However, it is important to recognize that testing without calculating data's statistical significance is not much different than not testing at all. It is akin to running a 100-meter-dash, stopping at 60 yards, and saying you will win the race.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE LPO STRATEGY

Successful, profitable LPO campaigns need a coherent foundation. Your online media strategy is an integrated, multi-layer campaign, and landing pages do not exist in a vacuum. Optimization must have an objective.

Every optimization strategy is unique, just as every company has its own specific value proposition, client segments, and product offerings.

A well planned LPO strategy requires a framework:

- Identify your online business objectives: Define your company's unique value proposition and the role your website plays in your overall business strategy.
- Identify your website objectives: Define the targeted business outcome you want to accomplish using your landing page. For example, generating a lead, closing a sale, etc.
- Develop a formal LPO plan: Evaluate what aspects of your website you will design to address your primary and secondary website objectives, and determine which operational, strategic and tactical resources will execute your strategy.
- Consider your audience: Identify which client segments your dedicated landing pages will address, and confirm that messaging and site design complement this Web strategy.

Thoughts on LPO Strategies

"Not every winning design will work automatically on a similar site."

"Every page needs to be treated differently – most industry standards do not apply to our audience."

"Never promise wrong. Live up to your promises with your landing pages"

CULTIVATE A DATA-DRIVEN CULTURE

Data is the major dividing factor in online marketing. Fortunately, for the future of LPO, marketers have access to a myriad of analytics tools that will deliver this information.

Most marketers already have data analytics tied to their online campaigns. The challenge lies in identifying which metrics are most vital to the organization, and then structuring tools and reporting processes to consistently measure these numbers.

Furthermore, explore analytics you may not have previously reviewed. Developing a data-driven culture offers a new perspective on your digital marketing efforts. Analysis might identify major bounce rates that continuously cost clients or offer in new sources of revenue by identifying surprising segments.

"Everyone has a great idea and you can spend a lot of time spinning your wheels. This year we will get more focused, drive more consistent content and tracking and get results." – CMO Insight

RIGOROUSLY TEST YOUR LPO EFFORTS TO DETERMINE ROI

Successful online strategies revolve around a culture of optimization that intrinsically links testing with the design and communication of website strategy. Communicating the ROI of website optimization efforts, then becomes a function of reporting the successes, or lessons, of your testing campaigns.

Draft a formal test plan that includes the following components:

- The specific landing pages you will evaluate
- The business metric you are trying to lift (e.g., conversions, revenue, clickthrough rate)
- The testing methodology you will deploy (A/B split testing or multi-variant)
- The personnel, resources and technology involved in your test
- The amount of time your test will be in the field
- The level of confidence (e.g. 95%) your test must achieve

Finally, implementing a culture of optimization also requires effectively communicating that testing is an iterative cycle. There is a danger to having a short term outlook, or a singular purpose for LPO testing. If you're testing correctly, you are also trying things that will lose.

You will not always get a win – and identifying losses may actually save you more money in the long run. Communicating the cumulative nature of conversion improvements to the decision makers and members of your LPO team is vital to the success of your LPO campaign.

“Optimization is a continual process.” – CMO



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