



# Best Practices for Building a Successful Pay-Per-Click Landing Page



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## Introduction: The Goal is to Sell!

David Ogilvy, the iconic ad man and creator of some of the world's most powerful brands, said it best when describing the function of advertising: "We sell or else."

This holds true for print, television, billboards, radio and yes, even the Internet – especially when a company pays a fee each time a potential customer clicks a link to land on their website. It makes sense then to organize a Pay-Per-Click (PPC) campaign to engage the user immediately upon arrival at the linked destination, known as a landing page.

Once the user is on the landing page, there are just a few precious moments to make a positive impression and command their attention. The page content must then present a compelling sales pitch to convert the window shopper into a customer.

That brings us back to Mr. Ogilvy, who called direct-mail marketing his secret weapon and first love. In essence, direct marketing calls for testing, trials and more testing until the most profitable model presents itself. Because the Internet allows instant publishing to change graphics, tweak headers and alter offers without cost, it is the ultimate direct-marketing tool.

In addition to summarizing best practices for building landing pages, this paper identifies high-impact landing page elements that should be tested and describes a few straightforward techniques to do so. With some fine-tuning, your web enterprise's PPC activities will be on the path to achieve optimal Return on Investment (ROI).

## Knowledge Results from Comparison

*"I notice increasing reluctance on the part of marketing executives to use judgment; they are coming to rely too much on research, and they use it as a drunkard uses a lamp post for support, rather than for illumination." ~ David Ogilvy*

Anyone who has ever put a pen to paper knows there must be a starting point to reach the end. If you plan to test your site, there must first be a baseline - something to compare against to gain knowledge - so that going forward, progress or regression can be recognized.

For the first go-round, website owners should follow their instincts and create a landing page with these questions in mind: What am I demonstrating? Who is the audience? What do I want to accomplish? How do I get the audience to take the actions I want?

By keeping the audience and end-goal in mind, website owners are on the right track to steer users down the conversion path. Below are suggestions on how to get started on a landing page that will produce good results right away.

### Command Attention with Headlines

*"On the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. When you have written your headline, you have spent eighty cents out of your dollar." ~ David Ogilvy*

The job of the headline is to gain attention and make the reader want to learn more about the subject. Unlike testing methods, there is no formula to share, but headlines can be characterized as direct or indirect. A direct headline often gives a command, states a fact, provides a reason to take action, tells how to accomplish something, features testimonials or makes a comparison/prediction. Indirect headlines use techniques such as asking a question, appealing to emotion, stating a slogan or enticing the reader with a teaser.

## Graphics Anchor the Page

*“Most readers look at the photograph first. If you put it in the middle of the page, the reader will start by looking in the middle. Then her eye must go up to read the headline; this doesn’t work, because people have a habit of scanning downwards. However, suppose a few readers do read the headline after seeing the photograph below it. After that, you require them to jump down past the photograph which they have already seen. Not bloody likely.” ~ David Ogilvy*

Classic Ogilvy advertisements facilitate top-down readability with a large, captioned image bleeding across the top and sides of the page, a headline spanning the photo’s bottom edge and a columned copy block filling most of the remaining space. Ogilvy then placed his client’s signature/logo and call-to-action in the bottom right-hand side. This formula works well for landing pages too – just keep the call-to-action above the scroll.

## Write Compelling Sales Copy

*“The more informative your advertising, the more persuasive it will be.” ~ David Ogilvy*

Known for long copy, Ogilvy once crammed 1,400 words into a single advertisement. He believed that every advertisement – in this case, a landing page – should be a complete sales pitch for a product or service. That’s why copywriters should never assume the audience will return. This visit is the one chance to close the sale.

## Include a Strong Call-to-Action

*“If it doesn’t sell, it isn’t creative.” ~ David Ogilvy*

An explicit call-to-action is another trait of Ogilvy ads for good reason because the purpose of advertising isn’t to get people to see your point-of-view, but to compel the reader to take action. Without a call-to-action telling the reader exactly what they should do, a landing page will not reach its full potential for conversions.

## Understand the Audience & Define Conversions

The Internet is a marketplace for almost every type of product or service, from stock-trading accounts and refurbished car parts to tree-trimming services and single-location pizzerias.

A single individual very well may be the intended audience for each product or service noted above. However, a template landing page will not produce the same level of conversions, “measurable actions taken by the user” as each of those websites has dissimilar conversion goals that cannot all be accomplished with a cookie-cutter landing page.

Depending on a company’s business objectives, a website owner must determine what action(s) they want users to take when arriving at their landing page. Revisiting the example websites, each will likely strive toward different types of conversions, which could range from establishing a stock-trading account, purchasing refurbished car parts, requesting an onsite quote, ordering a meal, booking a catered event, downloading material or requesting an opt-in e-newsletter. Plus, as users peruse a landing page, they might take multiple actions that qualify as a conversion.

## What’s it Worth to You?

In its simplest form, PPC means paying for an unknown website owner to direct a user to your website. The higher a bid price to receive that traffic compared to competitors’ bids for the same keyword, the better a site’s placement will be on the referring web page. (To see how traffic is generated, [click here](#).)

As such, a PPC campaign should start with research on keywords that best describe a company's product, service and/or brand. The next steps are to determine a reasonable price point for the selected keywords and then submit bids to PPC networks to deliver traffic.

But before the traffic arrives, it is important that web entrepreneurs understand that cost-per-click is not the only factor to consider. In fact, the most important metric for a PPC campaign is ROI. Using the method of assigning a value to a successful conversion and tracking the cost for each click that comes from a PPC network, website owners can determine the average cost for each click, as well as how much income, on average, each click generates from a specific network and/or keyword.

The tricky part of that equation is determining the conversion value, which could be based on a single transaction or a long-term business relationship.

## Conversion Codes Provide Clues

As the saying goes, if you can track it, you can control it.

To measure successful visits from users, some PPC networks like 7Search.com provide free codes that website owners can put on their landing pages to determine when actions were taken to account for a true conversion. By knowing the network a user came from, which keyword they clicked and the landing page that closed the sale, website owners can analyze the data and glean valuable insight as to which combination of uncontrolled variables produces the best ROI.

As the data sample grows to reflect true trends instead of statistical anomalies, web entrepreneurs will be able to see which PPC advertising networks and landing-page elements lead to the most success.

## PPC Testing Methods

*"Advertising people who ignore research are as dangerous as generals who ignore decodes of enemy signals." ~ David Ogilvy*

Before committing big bucks toward a campaign, it's best to test various PPC advertising networks and landing page(s) variables to find the most profitable combinations.

Regarding PPC networks, there is no question the volume of traffic generated from smaller networks is much lower than the amount Google or Yahoo! produce, but at the same time, the going bid rates for keywords on the major networks are correspondingly higher. However, it's quite common for some smaller PPC search engines to provide a much higher ROI than the industry giants.

That said, to consistently receive a flow of high-quality traffic that won't break the bank, many web entrepreneurs run simultaneous PPC campaigns on networks big and small. Over time, this method of dollar-cost averaging will maximize the overall ROI for PPC activities.

An easy way to determine the ROI of a PPC campaign is to subtract Campaign Cost from Revenue Generated to determine Profit. Then divide Profit by the Campaign Cost to establish the ROI. (An ROI of 100% means that for every \$1 cost, there was \$2 in income.)

Below is a simplified equation:

$$\text{ROI (\%)} = \frac{(\text{Revenue Generated} - \text{Campaign Cost}) = \text{Profit}}{\text{Campaign Cost}} \times 100$$

If a website receives traffic but conversions are low, it is possible the landing page is not conducive to closing the sale. For example, users may land on a page that does not relate to the PPC advertising copy or headline. If a person lands on a page that does not match the copy or if the offer does not match the PPC ad, users will not navigate the site to find what was promised. Instead, they will back-click and move on. Other barriers to closing sales are unclear calls-to-action, visual distractions or poor copy, to name just a few.

To test the effectiveness of a landing page, there are a few simple options. The most basic is comparing “Before and After” variations to determine if changes on a landing page impact conversion rates, and ultimately, ROI. One drawback of this testing method is that any number of factors, including changing traffic patterns, can alter the performance positively or negatively. Nevertheless, performing this uncontrolled experiment provides more information than doing nothing.

A second approach – A/B testing – simultaneously tests two or more landing pages with the same conversion goals by evenly splitting traffic from the same source for an apples-to-apples comparison in a controlled environment. This method is helpful when drastic changes have been made to a landing page or comparing one variation at a time.

For high-traffic landing pages, multivariate testing simultaneously compares the effectiveness of limitless combinations of different page elements. To perform a multivariate test, website owners must identify elements on a landing page to be altered. These could include the headline, graphics, copy, call-to-action or the offer, which is the enticement used to encourage users to take actions deemed to be a conversion.

One drawback of multivariate testing is that it takes longer to accumulate a statistically valid sample of visitors. Using five variables and creating three variations for each, there are 243 possible composite pages built from these elements. Plus, as a rule of thumb, a site should generate at least 10 conversions for each composite page in a multivariate test before the data sample is statistically sound.

## Continue to Test Landing Pages

Cost-conscious web entrepreneurs should not only be concerned with the price paid to bring users to their sites, but also the cost to close the sale compared to gains. This requires continuous testing and review of analytics so if there is a traffic jam or a downturn in conversions, red flags will be raised and the situation can be addressed immediately.

Armed with insightful data from constantly measuring a PPC campaign’s performance, it becomes possible to identify the most successful combination of landing page elements that will lead to the best-possible ROI.

### About 7Search.com, Inc.:

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