



# The Most Overlooked Part of your Conversions in Online Marketing: Managing Landing Pages

| The Top Ten Best Practices of Landing Page Management |

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Landing pages in online marketing.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Creating and maintaining effective landing pages.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Managing unique landing pages for complex environments.....	5
Necessity of consistent testing.....	5
Meeting the criteria of search engines.....	6
The search optimization perspective.....	6
The other side of email marketing.....	6
Integrating data with other enterprise applications.....	7
<b>How a CMS solution contributes to landing page success.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Easy to use and fast to deploy.....	7
Consistent globally, relevant locally.....	7
Easy testing and intuitive deployment.....	8
Full integration.....	8
Search-friendly optimization.....	8
<b>The CrownPeak option.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>10</b>

## Executive Summary

This white paper is an extension of the video from our web site The Top Ten Best Practices of Landing Page Management. The video on our web site illustrates how using CrownPeak's CMS you can manage landing pages much more effectively.

The top ten best practices that we will cover in this white paper (although in no particular order) are as follows:

1. Pay off Search Query
2. Remove The Navigation
3. Ask for Info you really really want
4. Have a call to action
5. Matches The design of your site
6. Minimize the text
7. Get what they don't tell you
8. Reason to provide valid info
9. Say Thank you
10. Test... but don't chase your tail

The possibility of direct access anytime on the Internet has radically rearranged the relationship between providers and customers. But for all its advantages, the sheer quantum of information out on the Internet also makes it an incredibly challenging environment to market in. Gaining direct access to the customer is only half the battle won. Getting the customer to make the next step (whether that is to complete a transaction or apprehend some information) is no simple task. The need for accurate targeting and efficient communication is vital to converting presence into desired action.

Landing pages have grown in stature as a critical tool in the age of impressions, click-throughs and conversions in online marketing. But they still need accurate testing and careful management to yield the best results. We all recognize the crucial role they play in converting visitors to customers, getting them to hit that submit button; but for some reason landing pages just don't get the same kind of attention that keywords, ad creatives or emails get. Maybe it's because of the perceived cost of an easy mechanism for creating and publishing landing pages. This is precisely where a Content Management System (CMS) can ensure consistent results and deliver real value. So to that extent we'll explore:

- ▶ The value of landing pages in online marketing
- ▶ The challenges of creating and maintaining effective landing pages
- ▶ The advantages of managing landing pages with a good CMS solution

## Introduction

The Internet is now the stage for a very significant part of human transactions. And wherever there are products and services to be bought or sold, marketing isn't very far away. And marketers in this medium enjoy some quintessential benefits like low costs of distributing information to a global audience and the ability to leverage the Internet's interactive nature to elicit responses - in many cases, instantly.

Traditional 'offline' marketing practices like the one-to-many approach are supplemented and replaced by one-to-one, many-to-many as well as the one-to-many approaches. The nature of the Web allows marketers to approach consumers precisely when they are looking for the kind of product or service the marketer is selling. And perhaps the key benefit to the medium is the fact that it allows almost every aspect of the marketing campaign to be tested, tracked, measured and revised.

## Landing pages in online marketing

The landing page has emerged as a key tool to make this possible. Quite simply, it is a Web page that appears when a potential customer clicks on an advertisement, a search-engine result link, or basically from anywhere a marketer would like to direct an action online, even including print and TV. The landing page focuses information targeted towards a particular user and is often optimized to specifically achieve certain results. Seth Godin lists five of them:

1. Get a visitor to click (to go to another page)
2. Get a visitor to buy
3. Get a visitor to give permission for marketers to follow up (by email, phone, etc.). This includes registration.
4. Get a visitor to tell a friend
5. Get a visitor to learn something, which could even include posting a comment or giving some sort of feedback

Theoretically, every page of a site that is indexed by search engines is a potential landing page. But landing pages must aim to make these 'landings' as specific, intentional and controlled as possible. In the case of Search Engine Marketing, a landing page is the portalization of a keyword category that provides an immediate call to action for the general keywords being targeted - but provides additional routes to related niche pages with their own calls to action. By combining good content with good links, landing pages can be leveraged to rank primary targeted keywords and also target long-tail searches based around these keywords.

Today, landing pages are an essential part of modern marketing campaigns – especially email and Pay-per-click (PPC) marketing management. Automated solutions now allow landing pages to optimize themselves for user action, track and analyze visitor actions and carry out necessary modification based on this information.

Landing pages are now a recognized, metrics-driven way to generate leads. Advanced tools make it possible for accurate tracking and analysis of visitor action and conversion rates, where a transaction is a desired result. The possibility for companies of any size to gain such actionable data and results even in the complex business environments prevailing today, cements favor for the landing page as an in-disposable tool for online marketing.

## Creating and maintaining effective landing pages

Though landing pages offer Web marketers an excellent means of lead generation, the task of creating, managing and maintaining them for success can be overwhelming without a system in place to manage this process. To that point let's look at the various applications of employing landing pages and the practical challenges they present:

### MANAGING UNIQUE LANDING PAGES FOR COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS

For a start, companies looking to market multiple products or services and variations of either or both will need to create and maintain multiple, highly specific landing pages. Merely diverting a visitor to a home page (which is alarmingly common) often fails to achieve any real gains because a single home page cannot be optimized for a particular topic and still be relevant to all. Thus larger companies and Web sites are under constant pressure to multiply pages and maintain them separately for effectiveness - clearly a significant logistics challenge.

### NECESSITY OF CONSISTENT TESTING

Landing pages cannot be created and forgotten. As they are linked to specific business intentions and often connected to time sensitive campaigns, they can require consistent attention to make sure they are being effective to envisioned goals. The efficiency or quality of the landing page is determined by its conversion rate (the percentage of visitors who complete the desired action). And since the economics of many online marketing programs are quantified by conversion rates, marketers need to constantly test their landing pages to see if they are working and explore alternatives or make improvements as may be necessary.

Marketers frequently use testing methods like A/B testing and multivariate testing to determine what drives successful landing pages for their products or services. They then push these successful models while attempting to reconfigure less successful ones along the characteristics of the ones that work. These levels of monitoring and proactive testing are challenging considering the sheer scale that many companies operate on.



#### Five essentials of effective landing pages

1. They are created over careful research
2. They convey a sense of urgency
3. They avoid redundancy and strive for relevance
4. They always call for some action
5. They try to be as personal as possible

## MEETING THE CRITERIA OF SEARCH ENGINES

Like it or not, the search market is now synonymous with Google, and its Adwords offering is a potent online advertising program to help landing pages connect with the targeted consumer. Getting tagged and tracked by Google is no arbitrary or chance happening. Google prescribes three important criteria (in addition to other editorial guidelines) that landing pages must exhibit in order to increase the Google quality index and enjoy any success with the Adwords offering:

1. **Having relevant and original content:** Google expects landing pages to provide substantial useful information about the product or service in the ad and expects that it is distinctive and unique from what is available elsewhere.
2. **Exhibiting transparency:** The Adwords program expects landing pages to build trust with users by explicitly indicating: the nature of the business; how the site interacts with a visitor's computer; and how any personal information requested from a visitor will be used.
3. **Facilitating easy navigability:** The key to turning visitors into customers is making it easy for users to find what they're looking for.

Having landing pages as the destination URL for your SEM campaigns is absolutely necessary from a measurement as well as a quality indexing standpoint. A purchase, download or a form fill, is what you should be far more concerned with and the more you associate your ad groups to specific landing pages the higher your conversion rates, quality index on Google, and awareness of which campaigns are working and which are not.

## THE SEARCH OPTIMIZATION PERSPECTIVE

Think of a landing page as just another page on your website, it just not typically accessible from the global navigation, but rather a direct action like a banner ad, email or search campaign. Feed the Google monster, the more original content you have on you site the better and as we said above have relevant and original content boosts your footprint on Google as well as your quality index and page rankings. The same SEO best practices you apply to your website you can apply to your landing pages: assigning metadata, linking keywords, search friendly URLs, alt tags, keyword densities in text, all give you more food for Google.

## THE OTHER SIDE OF EMAIL MARKETING

The same principle we applied to search engines can be applied to email marketing as well. Multiple campaigns for multiple audience segments, product offerings or time sensitive offer programs can be difficult to manage just from the email management side, many times we don't even consider what happens after they clickthrough. Once again, we're concerned about conversions just as much, or more, as we are with open, bounce and clickthrough rates. Being able to create landing pages with relevant information based on the content of the email or campaign is just as important as the email itself.

## INTEGRATING DATA WITH OTHER ENTERPRISE APPLICATIONS

Marketing intelligence is valuable only to the extent that gathered data finds integration with the organization's other key enterprise solutions like CRM, Salesforce and Web Analytics systems. The specific numbers and patterns that emerge from a successful landing page need to be analyzed and pursued to map larger enterprise wide progress. Thus, seamless, real-time flows of information between these nerve centers of business are critical to business agility and ROI.

## How a CMS solution contributes to landing page success

Often as overlooked as the importance of landing pages is the mechanism that actually makes them work the way they are supposed to - a good CMS. As we said earlier, a landing page is essentially just a destination site that is specific to an action you want the customer or prospect to take. So it makes perfect sense to ensure that the CMS that manages all the pages on your Web site is responsible for managing these as well. They go through the same lifecycle as any page on your Web site – create, edit, manage and retire – except the process is normally accelerated depending on its purpose.

Specifically you should expect the following out of your CMS in the context of your landing pages:

### EASY TO USE AND FAST TO DEPLOY

An effective CMS allows marketers to easily create, edit and publish landing pages without technical help. This should be a simple, repeatable and scalable online process informed by the best practices of Web content management. It should also permit landing pages, and their slightly larger sibling microsites, to have unrestricted custom creatives added in a fast, cost-effective and consistent manner. Most CMS offerings provide professionally designed templates that can be customized with logos and messaging without presupposing any other technical skill sets. Editing multiple one-page Web sites can be accomplished within a single interface thus greatly streamlining the marketing effort.

### CONSISTENT GLOBALLY, RELEVANT LOCALLY

The Web has inverted the paradigms of locality and universality. Today's business environment makes it possible for companies to have global distribution while they maintain local presences in specific geographies. A good CMS solution will facilitate storage of images, links, Flash files, Word documents, PDFs, PowerPoint presentations and more in a central repository. This democratizes the in-house ability to create landing pages and email campaigns with unified, consistent branding. Thus design and presentation remains consistent with brand guidelines while allowing region specific modifications to be made without any impediments.

## EASY TESTING AND INTUITIVE DEPLOYMENT

A/B testing of landing pages can be an uncomplicated process with the right CMS. Companies should be able to develop the best landing page solution, and reuse a landing page template repeatedly; thereby reducing existing cost models and setting up archives of reusable templates or pages for future projects. The CMS can also identify the most successful models along preset metrics and guidelines, and intuitively promote those landing pages versus those that aren't performing as well.

## FULL INTEGRATION

A mission critical benefit afforded by an effective CMS solution is the ability to seamlessly integrate marketing data (and in this context, the hard, actionable information made possible through tracking landing pages) with other enterprise-wide solutions like the organization's CRM, email, and Web Analytics systems, among others. The CMS should also be able to perform functions based on information provided by these systems, like easily passing form information into your CRM, promoting pages based on the number of page views, or sending an email based on a certain action or information.

In addition, leading CMS options offer revenue-driving features to improve e-commerce sites, like guided navigation, results management, and keyword integration. Also by ensuring that landing pages, email campaigns and Web sites are working together, a CMS allows for 24/7 data collection, instant sharing and prompt analysis. This makes it extremely simple for companies to segment customers more effectively and dynamically update lead status.

## SEARCH-FRIENDLY OPTIMIZATION

As is best practice with all of your Web properties, landing pages are no good if they are not found. This is important from an SEM perspective as well because the greater your quality index on Google the lower your cost-per-click is. It is vital that they are optimized for maximum visibility and sharp focus on the targeted consumer. A strong CMS solution will come equipped with built-in tools to create search-engine friendliness along established SEO best practices. It can allow marketers complete control over links, pages, keywords, page names and page locations and generate targeted traffic by virtue of high rankings on search engines for very specific terms.

## The CrownPeak option

The CrownPeak (SaaS) model of content management provides a well-rounded, convenient and persuasive alternative to the typical installed CMS solution. It provides on-demand applications that incorporate best-of-breed solutions into a unified software and services platform. With obvious benefits in the areas of maintenance, support, scalability and sustained costs, the hosted solution is a strong model for the future. CrownPeak helps companies manage multiple digital assets from a centralized interface, and gives clients excellent control over customization with minimal inconvenience and risk.

▶ The Top Ten Best Practices of Landing Page Management

It also squarely places responsibility on us to upgrade and match technology to meet the latest challenges of implementing a client's online marketing strategy effectively.



Key benefits to landing page management with a CrownPeak solution

- ▶ Make timely updates to your landing pages without depending on IT
- ▶ Easily scale your tools up or down depending on online marketing needs
- ▶ Get a true picture of marketing ROI with reliable and accurate reporting interfaces
- ▶ Increase landing page visibility by effortlessly tailoring for SEO success
- ▶ Manage leads into your Web site
- ▶ Examine Web traffic patterns
- ▶ Integrate with sophisticated email campaign management, CRM system and online communities

## Conclusion

The online selling space is a unique playing field with its quintessential benefits and challenges. The landing page is now an integral tool in the online marketer's kit. It capitalizes on the fact of direct access to consumers by providing a highly customized pitch while also enabling marketers to achieve hard, actionable feedback on their strategies.

But it also requires close monitoring, testing, tweaking and maintenance to achieve the efficacy it promises. These challenges are made more daunting by the fact that companies employing landing pages across a complex and diverse range of products and services still need to deal with them individually. That means uniquely optimizing them for search engines and integrating their leads, conversions and gathered data into the organizations other enterprise wide applications.

A good CMS solution neutralizes these challenges by offering automated, highly intuitive capabilities that make the creation, testing and maintenance of effective landing pages quick and easy. It also offers excellent integration with other enterprise applications like CRM and Web analytics and employs built-in SEO best practices to effortlessly ensure search engine success.

In fact, strong online marketing teeth is only one facet of what an effective CMS solution can offer companies operating in the dynamic and exciting medium of the Internet.

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