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A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO LANDING PAGE OPTIMISATION

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WHAT IS A LANDING PAGE?

Though virtually every online brand will have them, there is often confusion as to what a landing page actually is. In short, a landing page is a page consumers arrive at when clicking on links external to your site, from pay-per-click (PPC) ads, search engine results pages (SERPs) or any other external link. As the first page a potential consumer will see, therefore, the landing page serves many different functions depending upon the business needs of your brand, yet – at its most basic – you can consider a landing page to be a kind of gateway, whether that is to the further exploration of your site, to conversion or to the completion of a designated goal.

As such, landing pages can take various forms – even for the same product or service. Although a generic landing page can sometimes be perfectly serviceable for a number of different levels of consumer interest or intent, it makes sense to ensure that the consumer is being well served by the page they see when first arriving at your site. The page consumers wish to see when at the various levels of the conversion funnel will contain different information (for more information on the conversion funnel, see our 'PPC Buyer's Journey eBook').

A consumer at the awareness stage, for example, may be seeking information regarding the product – such as pricing, reviews or functionality, while at the purchase level they may simply need some refresher information to confirm they're in the right place and a buy it now or add to basket button. As such, it is worthwhile considering matching multiple landing pages to your existing buyer's journey.

WHAT IS 'LANDING PAGE OPTIMISATION'?

In this regard, landing page optimisation is the practice of 'optimising' a page to make it as easy as possible for the consumer to complete the action you and they both wish to – whether that is proceeding through various other pages, raising their awareness of your products or services or converting. This can take a number of different forms, from general SEO to PPC and CRO – these will, in turn, optimise the page for SEO, as destination pages for PPC advertisements and for increasing your rate of conversion. Landing pages are also great for use in conjunction with segmentation – allowing you to further personalise the user experience (UX) of your site.

Though we'll approach each of these individually, it should go without saying that each variety should be applied to all applicable pages. Though you may not need to optimise for conversion on an information page, you can still optimise for the buyer's journey – ensuring that chances of a future conversion are optimised even on pages which may appear much higher up the funnel.

SEARCH FOR 'BUY HUBSPOT':
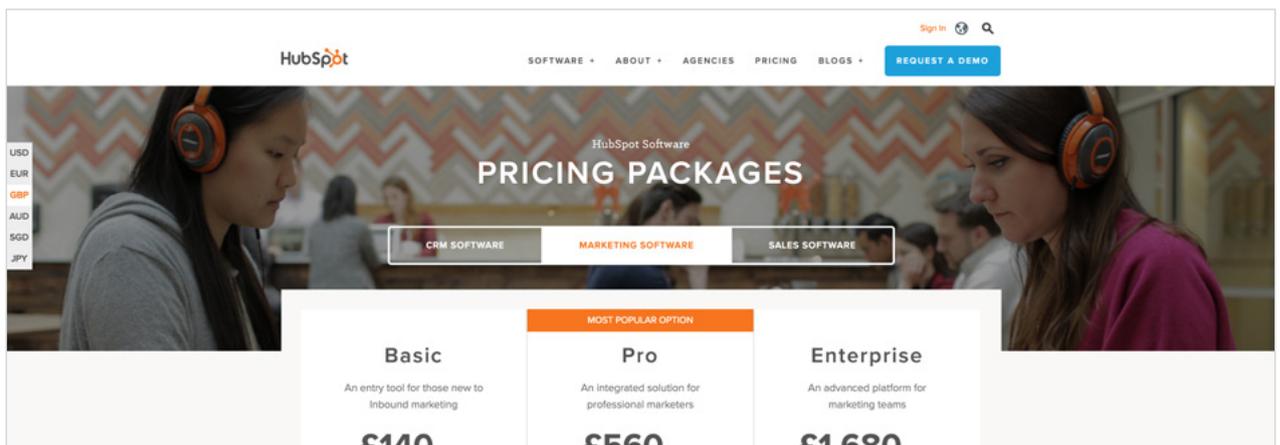
SEARCH FOR 'WHAT IS HUBSPOT?':
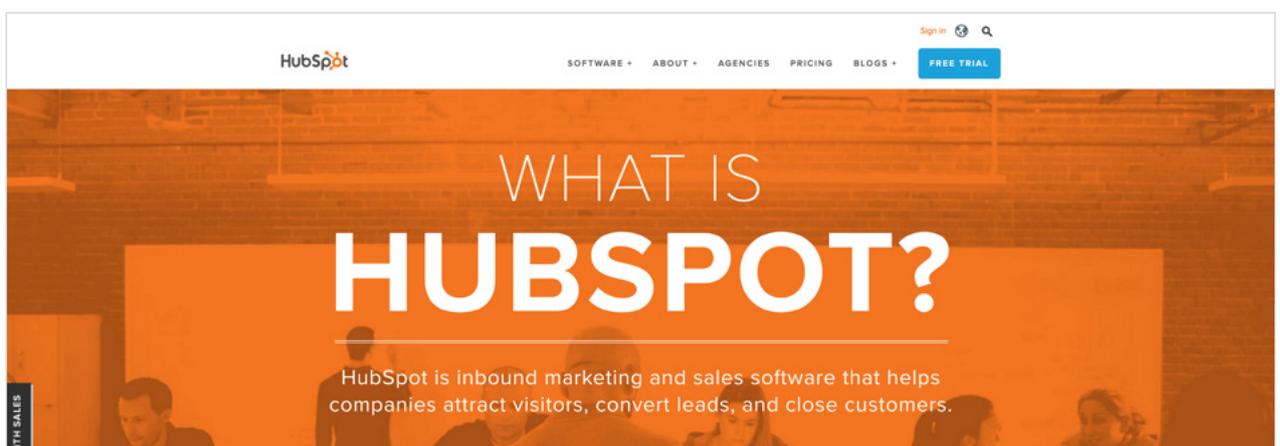
OPTIMISATION FOR SEO

Optimisation of a landing page for SEO is much the same as optimising all other areas of your site. This means using the correct coding snippets, tags and semantic mark-up (the latter being especially important for sites featuring location specific landing pages such as brands with numerous physical stores).

META TITLE TAG

Though ultimately limited by pixel length, your meta title tag should be as accurate, concise and precise a description of your landing page as is possible in 56 characters. It is one of the most important sources of information for Google's algorithm when it comes to deciding relevance (and therefore affects SERPs position) as well as aiding in the ease of browsing for the consumer – it should always contain key terms relating to the landing page's purpose and function.

META DESCRIPTION

The best explanation of the 'meta description' tag is as a short summary of the landing page – a clear and concise 155 character description of the on page's content purpose and function (with a minimum of 90 characters recommended). However, as this is the text visible in SERPs, it should also serve to draw consumers to the page – featuring, wherever possible, some form of enticement or call to action. A good '-meta description-' can drastically improve your click through rate.

<meta name="description" content="This is a concise web-page description">

HEADER TAGS

Headers summarise the landing pages you create for both consumers and search engines – and should be easily read by both. They are also important stylistically.

<H1></H1>

Though there is no definitive limit, best practice dictates that you should attempt to keep your titles unique, between 60 and 80 characters, and featuring keywords near the beginning. Try to accurately describe your landing page.

<H2></H2>

It is still recommended that keywords feature somewhere in the subheading – as each header is important to framing the relevance of page to search queries. <H2> tags can be used to separate various parts of a landing page – description from specifications, for example.

<H3></H3>

This is a tertiary emphasis tag – or 'sub-sub heading'. As above, ensure this header is relevant to the text it precedes or is linked to, using keywords from the text to add relevance to the passage and promote ease of reader and search engine understanding, it can also be used to separate various parts of a landing page's paragraphs.

IMAGE SOURCE TAG

Your 'image source tag' is responsible for providing the source for any inserted image, ensuring that all consumers see the same image.

<img src="yourimagelocation/yourimage.jpg" alt="youraltattribute" width="100" height="100">

ALT ATTRIBUTE

The alt attribute is vital when placing images anywhere on your site. Not only is it the text which will be voiced by screen readers, it is also how Google attributes subject relevance to any image. It is best to approach it with the screen reader in mind, however, as this will ensure the best result for both purposes – as Wikipedia states:

"Keep in mind the purpose and context of an image and what would be useful to someone who cannot see it." - Wikipedia

TEXT LINK

Your Anchor Text

This is the format in which a text link is placed (hypertext). The anchor text (the word or phrase to which a link is attached or 'anchored') and the text around it should provide easily read signals as to the content of the destination page.

If, therefore, someone wanted to place a link to their blog, the code and result would look something like this:

CODE:

```
1  If you would like to know more about this fascinating subject, you should <a
   href="http://www.genericbloggingsite.com/myblog.html">visit my blog</a> where there are several posts on
   or around this subject.
```

RESULT:

If you would like to know more about this fascinating subject, you should visit my blog where there are several posts on or around this subject.

IMAGE LINK

<img src="img/keyword.jpg" alt="Keyword" width="100" height="100">

Is the necessary format if, you would like to use an image rather than a phrase to serve as the portal for an external link. While the picture serves as the clickable link, it is still vital to remember that relevance is still determined by the alt attribute.

A clickable picture link would look something like the following (where the <br /> is code for a line break):

CODE:

```
1  The following image links directly to the Click Consult homepage.
2  <br />
3  <br />
4  <a href="http://www.click.co.uk/"><img
   src="http://marketing.click.co.uk/cdnr/45/acton/attachment/6689/f-00a2/1/-/-/-/-/click-logo_03.jpg"
   alt="Click Consult Logo"></a>
```

RESULT:

The following image links directly to the Click Consult homepage.

IMAGE LINK (WITH NOFOLLOW)

<img src="img/keyword.jpg" alt="Keyword" width="100" height="100" rel="nofollow">

The above is the format for a picture link which would be 'nofollow'ed. This type of link is predominately used when linking to sites which you may not completely trust or have control over – such as forum comment sections etcetera. For example, the following is a 'nofollow' picture link:

CODE:

```
1  The following image links directly to the Click Consult homepage.
2  <br />
3  <br />
4  <a href="http://www.click.co.uk/" rel="nofollow"><img
   src="http://marketing.click.co.uk/cdnr/45/acton/attachment/6689/f-00a2/1/-/-/-/-/click-logo_03.jpg"
   alt="Click Consult Logo"></a>
```

RESULT:

The following image links directly to the Click Consult homepage.

As you can see, there is no visible difference (unless you have a browser plug-in to highlight the nofollow aspect); the 'nofollow' is strictly a back-end addition to a link, used by search engines to determine whether to pass page authority from the linking page to the destination page.

OPTIMISING A LOCAL LANDING PAGE (SEMANTIC MARKUP AND SCHEMA.ORG)

When optimising a location specific landing page it is vital you employ semantic markup, as doing so allows Google to understand the local context of the information shown on the page, thereby allowing your landing page to show for location specific search queries.

Use of Schema.org (as below) allows the page to be understood as specific to a location and therefore enables your landing pages to be tailored to local audiences.

WHY OPTIMISE FOR SEO?

It's likely you'll have taken the previous steps for other areas of your site – but why should you do it for your landing pages? The short answer is that you want your landing pages (pages which are always important for the conversion process) to feature as high in the rankings as possible for all applicable search terms and should therefore abide by SEO best practice. Even simplified landing pages, therefore, should feature useful copy below the fold to ensure that it does not fall foul of various algorithm or manual penalties for thin content.

Landing pages should:

• Be connected to all other areas of the site (easily navigable)
• Be unique
• Be substantial (in order to avoid appearing to contain 'thin' content)
• Be relevant to the search term
• Provide a useful and engaging user experience.

The more able a landing page is to tick these particular boxes, the more likely it is to rank highly in SERPs, enabling your potential consumers to find the page early and therefore easier for them to convert.

OPTIMISATION FOR PPC

Optimisation for PPC is more focused on the user, rather than the search engine, experience of your landing page and consequently requires that you should fully understand your digital audience (see our eBook on **understanding your digital audience**), what they want, the keywords and searches your ad will display alongside, what appeals to them and what they will expect to see when they arrive at your landing page.

Ad landing page reached by search term 'Lego':
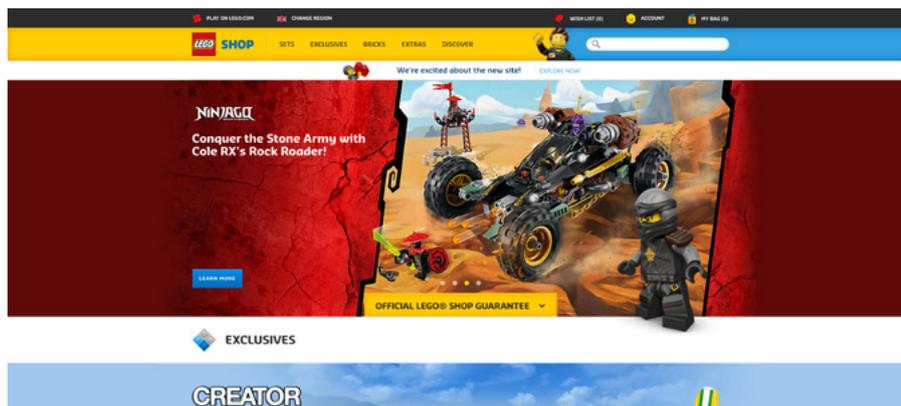
Ad landing page reached by search term 'Buy Lego Ninjago':

Distinct intention level queries necessitate different landing pages – while the first example features information on various types of Lego product, the more specific purchase level query returns a more sales oriented landing page – as well as (slightly below the fold and out of sight in the previous image) a 'shop now' icon allowing you add the item to your basket.

The same is true for a host of various products and services, from household to sporting goods, electronics to building supplies, the best ads are pitched at the level of intent attached to the search term.

Ad landing page reached by search term 'Road Bikes':
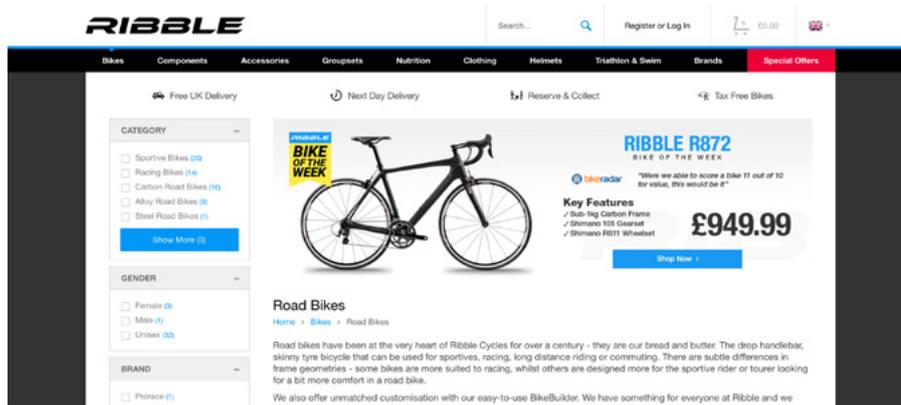
Ad landing page reached by search term 'Buy Specialized Road Bikes':
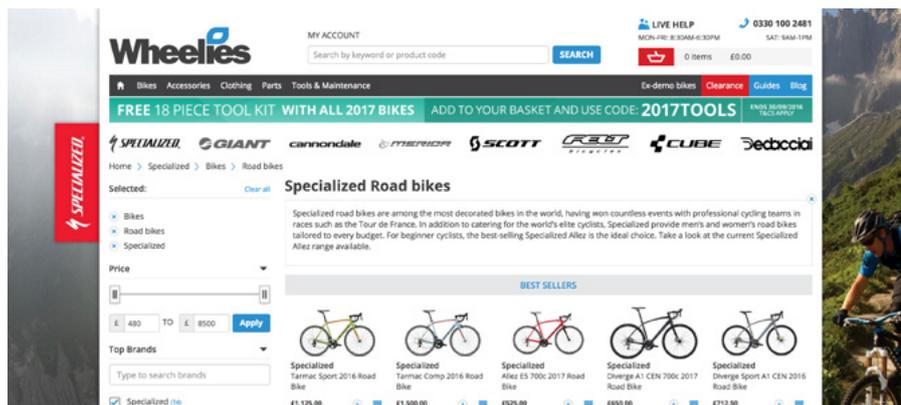
Note how each of these landing pages feature the search term in whole or in part as the landing page title.

CATER TO EXPECTATION

This is one of the most important parts of optimising a landing page when using them in conjunction with PPC (though it is also applicable as a general rule for landing page optimisation). Landing pages should seek to provide what the consumer is expecting to see.

If you are using PPC for an awareness level search term, the landing page should provide possible solutions to that initial 'awareness of need', whether that is product or range specific or a strictly informative page on the type of problem or need the consumer may be experiencing.

Though the main drive behind each and every landing page may be an eventual conversion, giving the consumer what they want should be your priority. A consumer is much more likely to return later down the funnel if they are satisfied by the first landing page they visit on your site than if they arrive to see a hard sell or information irrelevant to their search query.

A lot of the hard work optimising your PPC ad copy, CTAs and the like can be wasted if the consumer does not see what they were expecting on arrival at the landing page.

WHY OPTIMISE FOR PPC?

Not only is optimising your landing pages for PPC a consumer friendly practice, it also acts as a positive first interaction with potential consumers and, with cookie placement, can feed into your knowledge of your buying cycle and into your efforts at conversion rate optimisation (see next section).

In addition, the relevance of the PPC ad landing page is also used in the calculation of ad quality by Google – meaning that a landing page well optimised for PPC can also influence how high your ads appear on SERPs.

The time it takes to create better landing pages for PPC, therefore, can also be said to contribute toward brand awareness, conversion rate and ad quality – meaning that it is time extremely well spent from a business perspective as well as from the point of view of the consumer who receives a better tailored, more useful experience from each landing page interaction with your brand.

CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION (CRO)

Conversion rate optimisation (CRO) is the proccess of optimising your website to encourage visitors to take actions you want them to (a download or any other industry specific conversion type).This is mostly (though not entirely) a consumer focused endeavour which, through various forms of experimentation with features, design, structure, layout and copy you create the ideal landing page to turn visitors into customers.

You need to predict what your consumers want to see, how they want to see it and when they want to see it and, through experimentation and monitoring, giving it to them.

HOW CRO CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS:

• Increase the ROI of all traffic, whatever your budget
• Make permanent improvements to your site
• Create a knowledge bank of best practices to inform future strategies

HOW CRO WORKS

CRO, as stated above, is about testing. Whether this is via A/B testing (sending equal numbers of consumers to two or more variations of a landing page and comparing the variations to the original) or multivariate testing (where several changes are tested on the same page), your changes must be made for the duration you specify at the start of the test. Commit to your hypotheses and test for set durations with the specified changes (don't be tempted to tinker).
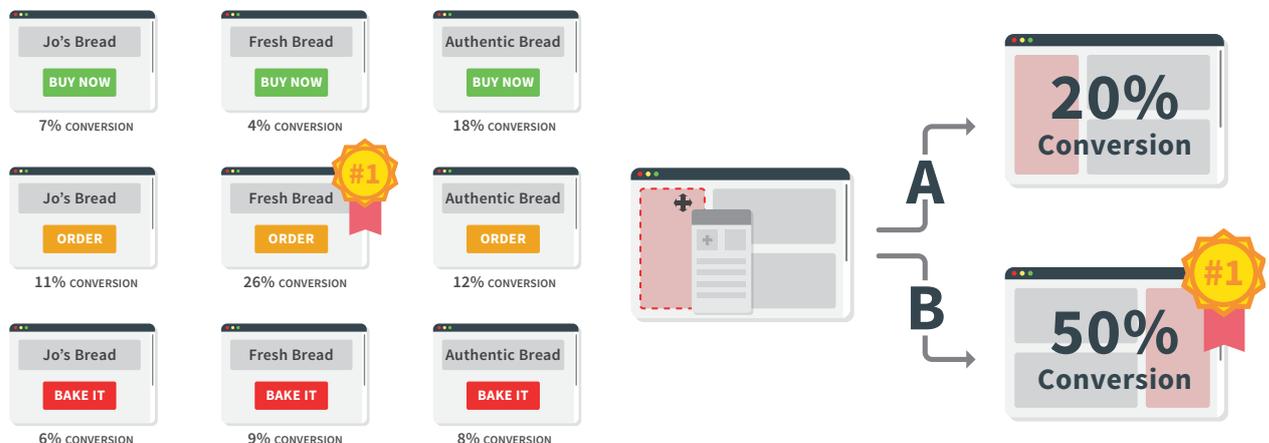
PLAN YOUR TESTS

It is not enough to decide you need to optimise your landing page for conversion; you will need to decide which elements of the page require optimisation or may improve with changes. To this end it pays to have input from all areas – brainstorm ideas and collate opinions about the possible changes and reasons for changes. This doesn't have to be a once in a while occurrence – you can keep a list of potential enhancements over time which can be addressed during regular testing phases.

Though you should always ensure that alterations to pages will not impact on the workings of other departments/teams/associated agencies, you should not baulk at making alterations to high-performing, high-traffic pages – there are always improvements that can be made.

You must also set specific key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the success of various page iterations or changes. Whether it's as simple as an increase in conversion rate or as complicated as an increased lifetime value for the consumer you should allocate definitive targets and enough time for your findings to be statistically significant.

WHAT SHOULD CHANGE FIRST?

Ensure that you're making changes to pages that can have a significant effect on your conversion rate. There's no point wasting time testing a page that gets no traffic, or a change so minor it won't make a difference.

Use the **PIE Analysis** framework to score each potential test and rank to create your test plan.

- **Potential –** What impact do you think the change will have on conversion rate and average order value? Look at previous test data to help estimate improvement.
- **Importance -** How important is the page or feature? What is the size and value of current traffic to the page? Remember to speak to other departments for their plans and priority areas.
- **Ease –** How difficult is it going to be to setup the test and permanently change your site if it is a success?

	Potential	Importance	Ease	Score	Test order
Basket page - highlight checkout text	5	6	9	6.7	3
All pages - Increase phone number size	8	8	10	8.7	1
All pages - Include free delivery	8	9	5	7.3	2

Launch your tests in the morning so that you can keep a close eye on them throughout the first day.

End your tests whenever you have either a clear winner (a variation with 95% 'chance to beat' original), a clear loser (a variation with 5% 'chance to beat' original), or your PIE analysis shows there are better tests to be running.

Go back to your test plan and repeat the procedure. Keep your plan as a working document and keep adding to it as you conclude tests and gain feedback.

Be patient with your tests, waiting at least a week or two before you try to analyse any results. This avoids jumping to costly conclusions. The key to achieving a good ROI from CRO is ensuring you are always testing the right thing. Update your PIE scores on a weekly basis, if the test you are running is unlikely to result in a significant conversion rate increase, reduce the weighting you've given to the Potential for this test.

Make the changes whenever a test shows a clear case for making the change. Apply the changes across all applicable landing pages.

WHY PRACTICE CRO?

The answer to this is more apparent, perhaps, than for the other sections – CRO is capable of making an immediate impact on your company's bottom line, but this isn't the only reason.

While increasing your ROI is a fantastic benefit, increased conversion reflects a good user experience. The overall reason of landing page optimisation may be to maximise the returns for each product, asset or service you make available online, but it serves the secondary purpose of increasing the happiness of consumers and a consumer that is pleased with their interactions with a brand are more likely to return and CRO is uniquely capable of achieving this.

By carrying out regular and thorough testing on your landing pages you can further encourage a positive experience for your consumers and increase the likelihood that they will return to make additional purchases.

OPTIMISATION AND SEGMENTATION

This feeds into and is fed into by each of the other examples because it deals, above all else, with personalisation. In the course of planning your marketing activity across various channels, you will have come across the need for consumer segmentation. Whether it is for inbound marketing, content marketing, PPC or any other marketing activity, you will have (or should have) found it necessary to segment by demographic, intent, device use and on and on. Landing pages are capable of backing up your efforts in all of these areas.

As with the examples for the SEO and PPC optimisation landing pages, optimising for segmentation is about showing the consumer the right page at the right time. Segmentation simply goes again by breaking down the available pages a step further – by any number of designated behaviours, demographics or activities.

Though clearly you would not want to begin allowing a runaway proliferation of landing pages, nevertheless you can infer from analytics reporting the most common sources for inbound traffic for your landing pages; you know what keywords you're bidding on for PPC ads, you can make that information count by tailoring your landing page to various traffic sources and other various metrics.

ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR JOURNEY

Why not set up different landing pages for various traffic sources and use them to talk to the consumer in their own language? Have they clicked through from an email or an ad? Why not say thanks? Hey! Thanks for clicking on our ad!

SHOW THEM WHAT THEY WANT TO SEE

This is, of course, true for each section but segmentation is one of the best ways to achieve increased personalisation for your landing pages. By ensuring that consumers are segmented by levels of intent, traffic source etc, you can make the landing page more relevant to the individual – as our own research and that of others, find that, for many in the digital age personalisation is more important than price.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR DATA

Landing page optimisation is an important part of any data-driven approach to search marketing. The amount of data available to the modern marketer is immense, and you should endeavour to make the most of it by delivering your consumers the best landing page for each situation, making it easier and more enjoyable to convert.

CONCLUSION

In essence, the landing page is a peculiar cross between advert, brochure, product and market stall, and should contain elements of each in order to be truly successful. It needs to lure the consumer through to the desired action, inform them of the benefits, create a desire for the product or service and ultimately allow them to make a purchase, download, lead submission etc.

In this regard it can be a difficult page to do really well, which is why so few landing pages are good, let alone great. Their multi-functional nature and the difficulty in knowing which variety to use where makes them a tricky proposition, but this versatility is also their greatest strength for a brand. The hard work that is initially required to sort products and services into specific types by intention, source etc. in order to allocate them the right variety of landing page need only be done from scratch once, the rest is – more often than not – refinement.

Landing pages are often a consumer's first interaction with your site, but also their last interaction before purchase – for both situations, you want to make a lasting (and positive) impression.

GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY

ABOUT US

We are a multi award-winning search marketing agency working with brands & SMEs that want a tangible, measurable return from their online budget.

Our website features an online resources section, full of useful eBooks. We also write a blog, where you can find an abundance of search marketing tips. If you're feeling social, get in touch on Google+, Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

To discuss how a bespoke strategy could amplify your business' search engine visibility, call us today on

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Or visit our website.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

"Click, from the initial pitch, have delivered on their promise of providing data-driven solutions for particular SEM problems. I have found them both knowledgeable and effective in delivering results."
Fergal Lynch, Chill Insurance

"As business decisions go, this was probably one of our best. It is not often you find such a responsive and intuitive agency who understand what you are trying to achieve. They get it. They take feedback on the chin - we can be very direct sometimes, and they simply run with it and find solutions that work for us. In a market that over promises and under delivers we trust Click Consult to do a brilliant job. I highly recommend Click Consult. "
Eilish Adams, The Law House

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