

The Ultimate Guide to A/B Testing

What's in the ebook?

This guide will teach you everything you need to know about A/B testing, including the all important "What to Test".

- **Introduction to A/B Testing**
Find out why you should be testing.
- **Getting Started with A/B Testing**
5 things all pages should have & a case study.
- **What to Test**
Learn what and how to test page elements..
- **Workflow**
Learn now to manage your testing workflow.
- **Dealing with Data**
When to stop, and how to use your data.

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What is Unbounce?

Unbounce is the DIY Landing Page platform for Marketers. Build high converting landing pages for your PPC, email, banner and social media campaigns.

- **Build & Publish Landing Pages In Minutes**
Use our powerful editor to re-create your design from scratch, or use one of our templates for a head start.
- **1-Click A/B Testing For Optimization**
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- **Simple Analytics To Track Campaigns**
Our stats are powerful yet simple. It's all about clicks, conversions and how well your campaign is performing.

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Table of Contents

1. Intro

- a. An introduction to A/B Testing
- b. What about Multivariate Testing?
- c. What is the Multi-Armed Bandit?

2. Getting Started with A/B Testing

- a. Building a control page
- b. Creating variants
- c. What makes a champion
- d. A case study

3. What to Test

- a. Developing a hypothesis of what to test
- b. Page elements to test
 - I. Headline
 - II. Call to Action
 - III. Images
 - IV. Video
 - V. Copy
 - VI. Colors
 - VII. Forms
 - VIII. Social proof
 - IX. Confirmation pages

4. An A/B Testing Workflow

- 1. Brainstorming
- 2. Creating page variants
- 3. Running your test
- 4. Promoting your winner
- 5. Start a new test

5. Dealing with the Data

- a. How to deal with a failed test
- b. When to stop testing
- c. What's next?

6. A&B Testing Glossary: Terminology & Tips

The Language of A/B Testing & Optimization

To make sure that we're all on the same page, let's set some basic vocabulary:

- **Element** - a discrete unit on the page: a block of text, a form, a button, an image, etc.
- **Page** - a web page or landing page that is considered the control page for your test.
- **Variation** - a version of a page that has some changes made to page elements. Also referred to as a variant.
- **Test** - a hypothesis that one version of an element will change the conversion rate in a significant, hopefully, beneficial way.
- **Conversion** - when a visitor takes a desired action on the page.

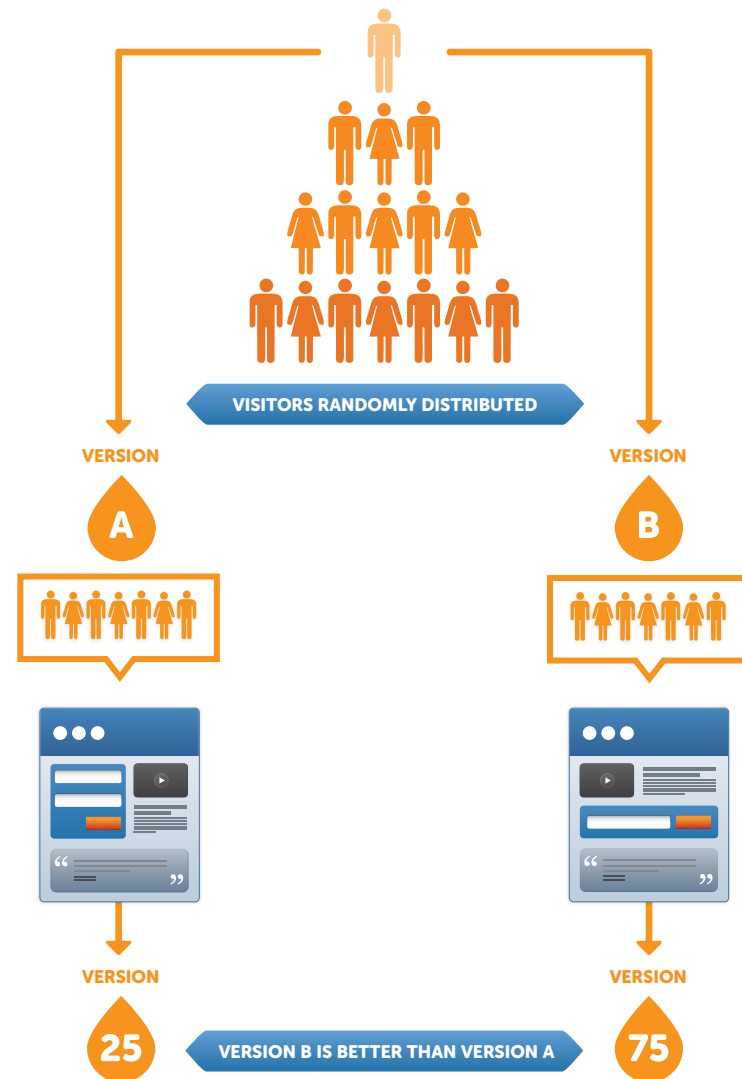
The most common means of testing to improve conversions online are **A/B Testing** (aka Split-testing) and **Multivariate Testing** (aka MVT), which we'll talk about in more detail below.

What is an A/B test?

When you run an A/B test, you compare one page against one or more variations that contain **one major difference in an element** of the control page. After a set amount of time, or visits, you compare the results to how the change affected your results.

A/B testing is actually a nickname for a variety of testing that involves single element changes across multiple variations, so it might actually be A/B/C/D testing, but it is still called A/B testing and if you see A/B/n or Split Test that is just a more accurate expression of one control with many variations.

Every visitor will see one version of the page or another, and you'll measure conversions from each set of visitors. A/B tests allow you to test one version of copy, images, forms etc. against another. Layout choices such as where you place the elements can also be tested, or functionality choices like when and how you show error messages.



How Much Traffic do You Need for a Valid Test?

A common question is how much traffic you need when running a test. This will depend on a few factors. If you can run 100-200 visitors to your pages, you can sometimes make gut decisions about pages that are obviously underperforming and initiate a new test. But **generally you'll want to wait for about 1,000 total visitors and make sure you run the test for a week to cover daily variances.**

Use A/B Test Results for Major Site-Wide Decisions

Split tests can also be used to temper drastic changes like redesigning a homepage by only serving it to a portion of your visitors. Companies like Twitter and Facebook use this strategy to test major interface changes by only rolling out the new version to a segment of their visitors and measuring how that group reacts.

A/B test results are influential in making good decisions in site redesign because **they help you see what elements are important for your audience**

and customers in a controlled environment. Once you have seen the results of a test you can take the new knowledge to your site wide design.

One of the best things about A/B testing is that it can be very fast and dramatic. It is also less complicated to set-up and reach significant results in order to make informed decisions.

Advantages of A/B Testing

- They are fast
- Advanced analytics can be installed and evaluated for each variation (e.g. click tracking, heatmaps, etc.)
- Can achieve more dramatic conversion rate lift results
- Requires less traffic

Disadvantages of A/B Testing

- More dramatic failures
- Less specific understanding of element effects

What is a Multivariate test?

When you run a multivariate test you use one page and dynamically supply multiple versions of multiple elements. For instance, testing 3 versions of your headline, 2 versions of your call to action, and 3 button colors simultaneously. That would give you 18 versions (3-headlines x 2-CTA x 3-button-color) of the page that you are testing.

As you can see, with each successive element and variation on an element you multiply the number of versions that you are testing. **This means that the amount of traffic required to reach confidence increases.** If you are testing 2 versions of 3 elements you have 8 variations (2 x 2 x 2) and if you have 3 versions of 3 elements you have 27 variations (3 x 3 x 3), adding extra tests adds up very fast.

The purpose of multivariate testing is to refine pages that already perform well by looking for compounding effects between elements.

Multivariate testing is something that you should only be looking at if you have large amounts of traffic.

Advantages of MVT

- Better measurement of element interaction
- Failures are less dramatic
- More comprehensive testing

Disadvantages of MVT

- Can require many more variable combinations to be run than A/B
- Requires vastly more traffic to reach statistical significance than A/B
- Major layout changes are not feasible
- Less layout change is possible
- The restrictions of the test setup constrain marketing creativity
- Dynamic elements decrease the effectiveness of 3rd-party tracking tools
- Less layout change is possible
- The restrictions of the test setup constrain marketing creativity
- Dynamic elements decrease the effectiveness of 3rd-party tracking tools

What is Multi-Armed Bandit Testing?

Recently a new type of testing has appeared on the scene. It's called the multi-armed bandit. This type of testing is essentially the same as an A/B split test and works very much the way that Google Adwords ad delivery works. **It starts with an experimental phase where it gives an even split of traffic across all versions of the page and then it goes into an exploitation phase where it give more traffic to the version that is currently performing the best.**

Over time if the winner starts to decline in conversion the system automatically gives traffic to another version. **The drawback to automated systems like this is that they can make counterproductive decisions,** especially if they have a short experimental phase or choose a conversion event that is not on target for your bottom line needs.

There are varying opinions on whether this type of testing is actually successful. Some people like Visual Website Optimizer say that in the long run [multi-armed bandit](#) requires a large conversion difference to be successful.

Why A/B testing is the right answer most of the time

Part of why we use A/B testing is because it is less complicated for marketers that use it and is generally more fruitful as a testing method. Chris Goward at [Wider Funnel](#) says that they do 8-10 A/B tests for ever 1 multivariate test that they do for clients, and they only do MVT on pages that get a very large number of unique visitors. **Most of the time A/B split-testing is the best answer for improving conversions and testing hypotheses, so we want focus on that.**

Getting started with A/B Testing

This is one of those things that is hard for a lot of people. How do you start? The simple answer is to make one page detailing the simple facts about your product or service. These simple facts are the features of your product. These features have consequences. Those consequences are benefits. Secondly, ask yourself why are you better than the other options (the competition) for solving the problem? Is it a lower price, better shipping, better return policy, etc?

Online you have two primary ways to communicate information: image and copy.

All good pages are going to cover the following 5 things:

- 1. A headline with a Unique Value Proposition**
- 2. A demonstration of the product or the benefit - preferably in the context of how it would be used**
- 3. A clear value for the viewer**
- 4. Support of value**
- 5. One action**

Your action and your headline are the only things that need to be copy driven, everything else is wide open. When you create your control page, make sure all 5 of these elements are represented. If you have done this you **will have a solid foundation for testing.**

Building a Control Page

Control pages are your first step in creating a generation of tests. Your control is the parent and variations are the children. The winning variation becomes the next generation's control for further variation.

A good place to start your control page is a wireframe. Take a look at KissMetrics' [Landing Page Blueprint](#) (seen on the right).

But, don't let that stop you from using your own vision in how you layout your elements. Just because a certain structure is popular doesn't mean it's right for you, also, standing out can be a very effective strategy for good results.

Once your basic structure and content is in place you will have a starting point for tests. **Good structure will make a world of difference in your testing success, because it will make each change less time consuming.**



Building Page Variations

Each variation should have one hypothesis of change: color of background, different major image, different CTA in the headline, different CTA in the action button, etc. It doesn't matter how many hypotheses you have, but **you will always get the best data by only having one hypothesis per variation.**

Once you get used to how your target market behaves you may be able to get away with a multi-hypothesis test, but when you start out [stick to a framework that maximizes test cleanliness.](#)

What Makes a Test Champion

In simple terms your champion is the page variation that converts the best. Once you've crowned your champion though you'll want to dig a little deeper and gauge the quality of your projects too; **The reality is that no matter how much time you put**

into designing your test, if you are communicating to the wrong audience, you will acquire the wrong customers or leads. Keep an eye on what your new customers or leads do, and if they're not the right ones, run a new test with different messaging to be more inline with your most important business goals.

A good technique for tracking your test performance is to keep a record of your hypotheses and your results, so you know where you're going right and where you went wrong. That will make your next test better, and serve as a record for stakeholders, as well as yourself.

Note: You should use descriptive experiments names like **Form Length 2012 Catalog** or **Call To Action: Registration**, something that makes the test parameters apparent, not *Steve's Test* or *PPC Test*.

A Case Study for A/B Testing

After the launch of the [Noob Guide to Online Marketing](#) we made a landing page that used PayWithATweet.com to help expand the distribution of the guide, which averaged a 13% conversion rate. We then decided to see if we could get better results from the landing page.

[We had gathered some data](#) by inserting a KISSinsights (now Qualaroo) widget on the page that suggested many people (about 45%) would rather provide their email to get the PDF download, so we decided to see which would convert better, “pay with an email” or “pay with a tweet”. In addition, some feedback indicated that it was fairly common for people to pay with a tweet and then immediately delete it from their stream.


Our Test Hypothesis

Will allowing visitors to download the PDF by providing their email address perform better than receiving it in exchange for a tweet? Considering that not everyone has a Twitter account, or is willing to share such information with their followers.

Pay with a Tweet Averaged an 18% conversion rate.

Pay with e-mail averaged a 22% conversion rate!


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THE NOOB COURSE FEATURES!
50 essential internet marketing techniques to help you ways to market your business online, including...

- A giant infographic**
Click the image above to preview the 15 million pixel infographic or see how one of **our fans printed it out!**
- Track A: Learn each marketing channel**
A simple channel based approach that lets you learn a marketing discipline at a time (such as social media marketing)
- Track B: The 6-month guided action plan**

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Moving on from this test we've decided to discuss a possible hybrid option that might produce the best of both worlds; A single version that lets the user decide whether they want to pay with a tweet **or** provide their email.

What To Test

Developing a hypothesis of what to test

The first step in any A/B test is to create a hypothesis for what will make the page perform better. There are two very common approaches: one revolves around data, the other involves people.

The data approach uses statistical data like bounce rate, exits, conversion starts, and funnel analysis. Data driven hypothesis use tools like [Clicktale](#), [Google Analytics](#), [Omniture](#), and [CrazyEgg](#).

The people approach employs tools like [Qualaroo](#) (formerly KISSinsights) and [SilverBack](#) to gather user feedback. These are all about addressing the quality of the experience on your site or specific pages.

Your most effective hypotheses will come from combining both the data and people approach.

On the data side you may see something like a high bounce rate and know that there is something wrong. You might look at time on page too, since this can be a good indicator of how people are interacting with your page. If you have a high bounce rate and a high time on page you probably have a problem near the bottom of the page, maybe the call to action button. If you have a high bounce rate and a short time on page it means that you have something repelling at the beginning of the page, maybe your headline.

If you cannot determine from the data approach what is it specifically that is hurting your conversion rate, you should then use the people approach to gather direct user feedback to gain insight.

So What Should You Test?

The Headline

Your headline is your first impression. Its success is dictated by how closely it matches what your viewer expected when they made the decision to visit your page - whether from an ad, banner or email link etc.

You can try testing positive versus negative language in the way you express your value in the headline, for example: *Save Time By Downloading Now vs. Stop Wasting Time, Download Now.*

People are impatient and will read your headline very quickly, so communicates your core value proposition in a way that makes it really obvious what your offer is.

To assess problems with your headline try a 5-second test: where you flash the page in front of a person unfamiliar with your brand for 5 seconds and ask "What is this page about?" If they don't know, it's not clear enough and time to revisit the messaging.

Headline Test Ideas:

- Long vs. short
- Positive vs. negative
- Benefit oriented vs. feature oriented
- Single headline vs. primary and secondary supporting copy
- Enhance the contrast to make your headline more visually powerful, to focus people's attention on it

Images

Since images can convey complex ideas and emotions quickly they are a phenomenal source for testing.

This is one of the few areas that has clear best practices. Make sure you use high quality images ie. no pixelation or blurriness. If you use people, have their gaze directed to your call to action, and choose images that enhance the understanding of your offering.

It's also been shown that image annotations are one of the first things people read on a page, so make sure you write something compelling right below your primary image.

The most basic image tests will be:

- Color vs. black and white
- People vs. product
- One image vs. many images
- Masculine vs. feminine

Video

Using a video on your pages can have a dramatic effect on engagement and your conversion rate. But what do you test?

- 1. Autoplay vs. press play:** Usability guidelines advise against autoplay as it is an interruption technique that annoys people and makes them click the back button. However, it can also increase conversions. You'll have to weigh up the potential negative impact on your brand's perception versus the potential for increased conversions.
- 2. Calls to action (CTA):** This can be permanently visible, or be shown at strategic times throughout the video, or be presented at the end.
- 3. Length:** Try short and long versions to see what your customers need. Some products may need a detailed study, while others might be better suited to a 30 second "commercial" style.
- 4. Directional cues within the video:** Point your visitors at your landing page's conversion goal. This can be a physical action (a person pointing) or a verbal instruction.
- 5. Image vs. Video:** Try a static image in one page variant and a video in the other.
- 6. Spokesperson:** Not everyone is a natural speaker, and maybe your audience doesn't want to listen to the CEO pitching them. Find someone who comes across as natural and likeable.
- 7. Number of videos:** If you are using them for testimonials, you might want to consider having more than one to increase the trust factor.
- 8. Lo-fi vs. Hi-fi:** Professional videos are good at communicating your focus on quality, and are usually the best way to go. But with a tight budget and even a camera phone, you can create a convincing and authentic experience.

Some Example Tests - Video

In this case study by VidYard they show how they got a conversion lift of 100% by using video on their landing page.

In this second test, [adding a video](#) made version B increase conversions by 216%!

VERSION A vs. **VERSION B**

Version A is a landing page for 'Buy Real Twitter Followers'. It features a blue header with the company logo and navigation. The main content area has a white background with three columns of follower packages: 1000 Followers (\$27), 5000 Followers (\$87), and 10000 Followers (\$187). Each package has a 'Try It Now!' button. Below this, there are four columns of text: 'How Many Twitter Followers?', 'Why Buy Twitter Followers?', 'Make More Money', and 'Safe and Manual Expert Service'. At the bottom, there is a 'Which Package to Choose?' section with a table and a payment gateway.

Package	Price	Delivery Time	100% Real	100% Manual
1000 Followers	\$27	2-3 Days	✓	✓
5000 Followers	\$87	2-3 Days	✓	✓
10000 Followers	\$187	2-3 Days	✓	✓

Version B is a landing page for 'Buy Real Twitter Followers'. It features a blue header with the company logo and navigation. The main content area has a white background with three columns of follower packages: 1000 Followers (\$27), 5000 Followers (\$87), and 10000 Followers (\$187). Each package has a 'Try It Now!' button. Below this, there is a video player with the text 'BUY REAL TWITTER FOLLOWERS* REAL PEOPLE'. This is followed by four columns of text: 'How Many Twitter Followers?', 'Why Buy Twitter Followers?', 'Make More Money', and 'Safe and Manual Expert Service'. At the bottom, there is a 'Which Package to Choose?' section with a table and a payment gateway.

Package	Price	Delivery Time	100% Real	100% Manual
1000 Followers	\$27	2-3 Days	✓	✓
5000 Followers	\$87	2-3 Days	✓	✓
10000 Followers	\$187	2-3 Days	✓	✓

Copy

The typical rule of thumb is to keep your pages short and concise, but don't dismiss the long form either - it's been proven to convert - but typically only for the sales letter type of page.

Whether you have 5 paragraphs or just a set of bullets it is important to focus first on benefits and then support with facts and function.

A good way to judge the effectiveness of your copy (if you can't tie your tests success or failure to it), **try reading it aloud to see how it sounds and flows.** Even better, get a coworker to read it to you and see how much you cringe.

If you find that you are writing a lot of copy on your landing pages you should utilize the famous advice of Steve Krug, **"Remove 50% of your copy, then delete half of what's left."** Being overly verbose can hurt your conversions if your message can be described adequately in the short form. Again, test both versions to see which resonates best.

Forms

The majority of landing pages include some kind of form to capture data from your visitors. To make them effective you need to be offering something in exchange for the data. Examples would be an ebook, whitepaper or webinar registration.

But what do you test on the form? What you're trying to do is balance your need for data with the "size of the prize" (what you're giving away) to find the optimal point of conversion.

Some things you can test on your forms:

- The number of fields
- The relevance of the fields to what you're giving away
- The design of the containing element for the form (e.g. a box that encapsulates it)
- **Required vs. non-required fields (the test below examines this)**
- The position of the form (on the right or left hand side of the page)
- Adding directional cues that point to your form
- The form header (a description of what you're asking the visitor to do that matches closely what you say in your CTA)
- Placing a privacy policy link next to an email address field to improve trust (make it pop up in a lightbox to prevent people leaving your page)
- Splitting your form over more than one page
- The button copy (discussed next)

The Call to Action (CTA)

Your call to action **IS** your conversion. It's what you want your visitors to do (and nothing else). If people aren't converting your call to action may be in need of updating.

CTA's should be very descriptive, describing exactly what will happen when clicked. A good tip when writing your CTA is to finish the phrase "I want to...", for example:

I want to...

- Read More
- Subscribe to the Newsletter
- Download the ebook
- Get Free Shipping
- Upgrade Now

Strong CTAs should reinforce the line of thinking introduced in your headline, content and imagery, effectively ending the story of your page with a solid "what to do now".

An Example Test - Call to Action

This example from our blog shows a series of case studies on how [to write CTA's that convert](#) including a simple one (shown below), where they achieved a 38% lift in conversions by changing a single word.



Colors

This is a contentious one. Some people insist that the color of your buttons is highly influential in creating desire to act; Green for go, blue as the standard color of an interactive web element, or orange/red to illicit an emotional reaction.

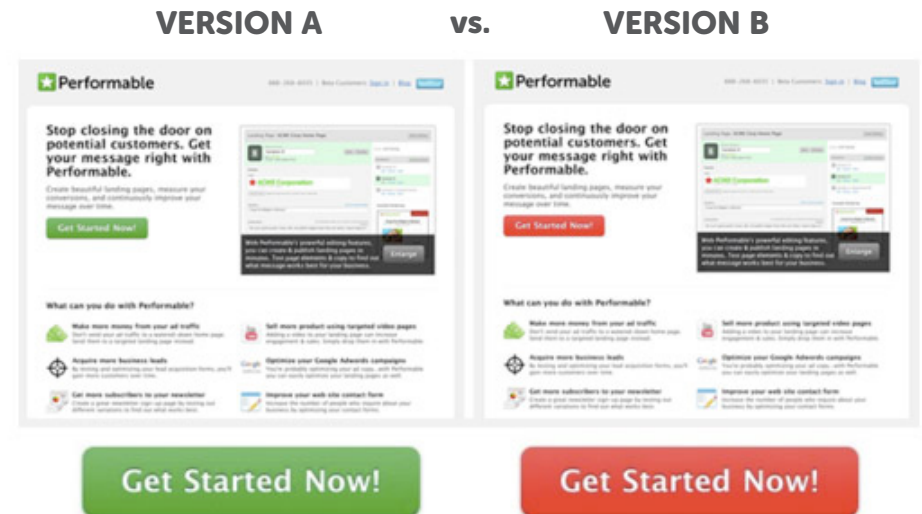
Others say it's not relevant and the more important aspects to consider are the contrast of the button so that it stands out clearly from the rest of the page. This is why A/B testing is so useful, because you can remove the conjecture and find out if it will make a difference with your audience.

Also remember that many people are color blind, especially men, so if you have a male demographic you will want to focus more on contrast rather than color.

Just remember, that **more often it's the text on the button that is going to have the most dramatic effect on conversions**, as described above.

An Example Test - Color

Going with the first idea, that button color does have an impact, [read this case study over at Hubspot](#) that shows how the red button outperformed the green button by 21%.



Social Proof & Trust

People are like sheep in many ways. They follow the herd and like to join in with what others are doing. To illustrate this, imagine walking down a street and seeing one person staring up at the sky. You probably wouldn't give it a second thought. But if there was a crowd of 30 people all staring at the same thing, you'd quickly divert your attention to see what was going on. That's social proof and it builds trust in your visitors, helping conversions.

So how do you add social proof to your landing pages?

There are many types of social proof you can include, such as:

- Testimonials
- Endorsements: Logos of important press placements, and customers with well known brands
- Social influencers: A great example is to show the number of registrants attending a webinar.

Other types include follower counts from Twitter or Facebook. You can also show social sharing buttons to illustrate how popular the page is - but it's often better to place them on your confirmation pages so that your main page retains its ability to have a single CTA (we'll get into more detail in a moment).

Below, you'll find some things you can test on your page, and the ways to test them would be:

- How many you use - one main testimonial vs. five
- Position on the page - is it more important to establish trust right away or can it be an afterthought at the bottom of the page?

An Example Test - Social Proof & Trust

This example, run on [VisualWebsiteOptimizer](#), the use of testimonials in version B resulted in a conversion lift of 34% for all organic search traffic arriving at the page.

VERSION A

vs.

VERSION B

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All questions come complete with online marking and complete answers to help you learn.

Why WikiJob?

WikiJob's tests are written in such a way as to simulate the kind of question you will receive during online assessments. Although these do not contain any questions from the real tests, they are based upon them, and designed to provide practice to help you through.

Each test is automatically marked and you are given your percentage, which shows how you did in relation to everybody else who took the test.

Verbal Reasoning Practice Test 1

Question: Which of these best describes...
Options: True False Cannot say

FULLY WORKED SOLUTIONS

Response: True False Cannot say

Feedback: Cannot say - in context but grammar are used to help identify whether this is possible.

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All questions come complete with online marking and complete answers to help you learn.

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Each test is automatically marked and you are given your percentage, which shows how you did in relation to everybody else who took the test.

"Good training for the work environment in Europe."

"Very useful for practice!"

"Almost a carbon copy of the real aptitude test."

Verbal Reasoning Practice Test 1

Question: Which of these best describes...
Options: True False Cannot say

FULLY WORKED SOLUTIONS

Response: True False Cannot say

Feedback: Cannot say - in context but grammar are used to help identify whether this is possible.

Post-Conversion Confirmation Pages

This is my favorite and probably **the most overlooked area for testing**. Confirmation pages appear after the completion of a lead gen form or after completing a shopping cart checkout on an ecommerce site.

The reason it's such a hot spot is that it's the first page a customer sees after converting, meaning that they have invested trust, time, personal data or money with you. So you need to take advantage of this short window of opportunity to try and get a little more out of them.

Things you can test placing on your confirmation pages are:

- Social sharing widgets: As mentioned earlier, by placing them here you are removing the clutter from the main page.
- Newsletter subscription: Ask them to subscribe to your newsletter (and explain the benefits of doing so, i.e. what they'll get: tips, advice, discounts etc.)
- Suggested products: Follow the Amazon model, for ecommerce confirmation pages try adding the classic "If you liked that, you might like this."
- A bonus prize: If you are trying to establish yourself as a thought leader by giving away content, consider adding an extra free PDF download, it gives them extra incentive to spread the goodwill via word of mouth recommendations.

An Example Test - Post-Conversion Confirmation Page

WiderFunnel did a test for TourismBC on their confirmation pages and increased engagement by 44% with the interactive elements on the page.

THANK YOU!
We have received your BC ski guide order. We have entered you in the draw and you should receive your guide in the mail in 2-3 weeks.

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DISCOVER 12 BC SKI RESORTS

Learn more about our resorts and the incredible ski terrain, après ski activities and accommodations on offer. Start planning now for your winter vacation.

FEATURED RESORTS	NEW SNOW	BASE DEPTH
Whistler Blackcomb	122cm	122cm
Mount Washington	112cm	180cm
Fernie	137cm	275cm

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The Sun Peaks Icewine Festival is coming up in mid-January, and it's an event not to be missed. I attended last year's festival, and had a great time. Held at a ski resort in the BC Interior.
[Click to continue.](#)

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 - Fernie
 - Popo
 - Big White
 - Silver Star
 - Sun Peaks
- 4 Kootenay Rockies
 - 7 Fernie
 - 8 Elkina Horze
 - 9 Sunbaker
 - 10 Panorama
 - 11 Red Slope
 - 12 Weststar
- 5 Cariboo Chilcotin Coast
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- 4 Kootenay Rockies
 - 7 Fernie
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 - 12 Weststar
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A/B Testing Workflow

Whether you are an individual marketer wearing many hats or a fully fledged team, you're going to have a similar workflow.

Next is a sample workflow you can use to create, optimize and test your pages, and who is responsible for each step.

If you **do** have a team, it would look something like this:

- The Marketer (for social, email, PPC etc)
- The Copywriter
- The Optimizer
- The Designer
- The Campaign Manager

Each has a different role to play in the process of **running a successful marketing campaign that involves A/B testing.**

A/B Testing Workflow

Step 1 - Brainstorming

All members participate in brainstorming and discussion of potential elements. The designer creates major element assets and builds a control page layout with filler copy and every page element you think might be needed to convey your message.

Step 2 - Creating page variants

The optimizer and marketer then each take an independent stab at coming up with page variations they think will convert best, removing elements and working with the designer and copywriter to help with messaging and layout changes.

Step 3 - Running your test

The test is launched and traffic is driven to the page by the channels chosen by the marketer. Meanwhile, the campaign manager will be coordinating the team and any external contacts if there are co-marketing opportunities involved.

Step 4 - Promoting your winner

Once you have identified the winning page variation, it will be promoted to be the new control page (and receive all of the inbound traffic) and any side bets placed about who was going to make the best page will be settled (makes it more fun).

Step 5 - Start a new test

Add, rinse, repeat. It's now time to document your test results and begin work on a new hypothesis for your next test. Remember testing should be an ongoing series of experiments.

Dealing With Data

The purpose of A/B testing is twofold: improve the results of specific pages or campaigns, and derive insights to improve your future campaigns.

Your process of dealing with the data you glean from your tests will be something like this:

	I understand the results	I don't understand the results
Conversion Improvement	Woo Hoo! You are a genius start your next test. (Pass)	Really? Ok, do a test to figure out the next step. (Pass, kinda)
Conversion Decline	Good save. Stop the test and try a new hypothesis. (Pass)	Seriously, a kitten just died because of you. (Fail)

How to Deal With a Failed Test

The bottom line with data is that tests don't fail, analysts and test designers fail. The test can only report data that is as useful as the question that is being asked. There will be times when the data is surprising, but if you ran a clean test then you should be able to figure out what needs to be tested next to keep on track.

When Should You Stop Testing?

Your end parameters should be defined when you start your test. That means setting a minimum sample size, and a length for your test. Generally speaking (as mentioned earlier), you'll want to push at least 100-200 unique visitors through each page variant and ensure the test runs for 1-2 weeks to account for day and time variations in visitor and demographic behavior.

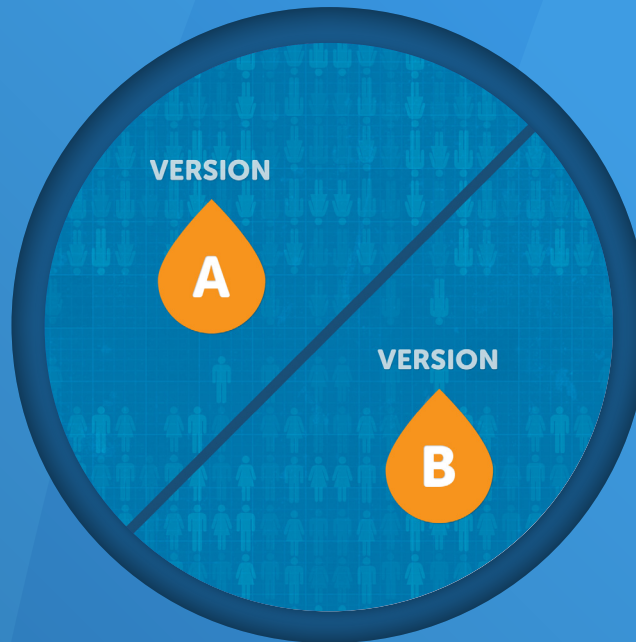
When you're nearing the end of a test, if your statistical confidence level is still low, but you're seeing a decent difference in conversion rate

between the variants, make a gut-check call and remove the poorer performing pages. If you can't see an obvious winner, keep the test running until it reaches around a 90% confidence level - this is when you'll be able to make a decision based on data.

What next?

Just keep testing. Continue to make hypotheses and new experiments until you aren't getting acceptable improvement. Once you reach the point of diminished returns you should start looking for new sources of inspiration; A perfect example is your customer support team, who are in direct contact with your customers daily, and likely understand their needs better than anyone.

Finally, remember to have fun. A/B testing can be a great way to involve other members of your team and to share in the success of their ideas.



Start A/B Testing Your Pages Now

<http://try.unbounce.com/for-a-b-testing>

A/B Testing

Let's start with the big picture. A/B testing is a research technique that marketers have leveraged for decades (yes, it's older than the Internet). Start with one page element like your [headline](#) or [call-to-action](#), and split your inbound traffic equally so that each group sees a different version and you can discover which version resonates most strongly with your target market.

A/B Testing Tip

Clearly define what you're testing up-front as you'll need numbers to compare between your groups. Do you care about open rates, [click-through rates](#), [conversions](#), none of the above, or all of the above? Hint: there's more than one right answer.

Anxiety

Fence-sitters are the hardest type of customer. They can't make up their minds, and unless you use [user feedback](#) tools you'll never learn **what's preventing them from converting**. Visitor anxiety is created by barriers on your page, for example: unclear messaging, pricing, long forms or a lack of trust.

Anxiety Tip

Adding [social proof](#), testimonials and other trust inducing elements to your page will reduce this anxiety. As an example, consider a lead gen page that's asking a lot of questions in exchange for an ebook. Providing a preview lets the visitor see how good you and your content really are, and will be more inclined to break through those anxiety barriers.

Big Idea Testing

If your brand is going through a major change (like if you're changing your website's user interface), it doesn't make sense to adjust one small variable at a time. Instead, you'll want to test everything at once to see the effects of all elements bundled together.

Big Idea Testing Tip

When you're dealing with big idea testing, you're running an aggressive experiment with probabilistic successes and failures. Make sure to weigh the risk vs. reward of your test when running such an aggressive test.

Bounce Rate

Your bounce rate is the percentage of people who visit your page and leave immediately, in A/B testing this is also often referred to as abandonment rate. This is a great metric to use when justifying your time spent on A/B Testing. If your bounce rate is high, no matter what you do to improve your product or service offering, your bounce rate will never decrease until you start making changes (and testing) to your page elements.

Bounce Rate Tip

If you have a high bounce rate and a high time on page you probably have a problem near the bottom of the page, maybe the call to action button. If you have a high bounce rate and a short time on page it means that you have something repelling at the beginning of the page, maybe your headline.

Click-through Rate

Click-throughs are the first steps to conversion. Measured as outgoing clicks/unique visits, you'll want this number to be as high as possible.

Click-through Rate Tip

Keep in mind that there are some nuances to this number. For one, you're not directly attributing clicks per person, as a visitor may click more than once. You can also have multiple CTRs per page (hint: for each and every link).

Look for rough numeric ranges to tell the story that you want. It's unlikely that one user is going to sit there clicking 100 times. Unless it's you trying to cheat on your test, which would be very, very bizarre.

“ The best **design** isn't the one that makes your company look cool and edgy and sophisticated. It's the design that supports **conversion**, has room for good copy and powerful calls to action that **make people click** the big orange button.”

Brian Massey

www.conversionscientist.com

Call to Action (CTA)

Your CTA is what you want your visitors to do on your page, whether completing a form or clicking through to an ecommerce shopping cart page. It's the big shiny button that you want to focus all the attention on.

CTA Tip

Use the tips of [conversion centered design](#) to focus people's attention on your CTA (or in the case of a form, the entire conversion area).

Champion

Champion refers to the [control page](#) in your test. The one you are testing against.

Champion Tip

An important thing to note here is that even though the Champion is your main page in the test, as soon as it gets out performed (with statistical significance – or personal gut-based confidence), you need to promote the current leader to take its place. It's just like any championship fight. The winner needs to get all the attention (in this case, the traffic).

Click-through Page

A click-through page is most often used middle man between your ad and an ecommerce cart page. Its purpose is to expand on the intention of the ad and warm up the prospect with enough information that they'll be ready to click your "Buy Now" button.

Click-through Page Tip

There's no point in breaking your [sales funnel](#) by pushing traffic directly from an ad to a cart without at least a little love. Remember the adage, about kissing before sex. The same principle applies here.

Confidence Level

The confidence level is the probability that the measured conversion rate differs from the champion page conversion rate for reasons other than chance alone.

Confidence Level Tip

If you're a stickler for data, wait until the confidence level reaches 90-95% – then you will have good data to back up your choice of the winner of the test. Other times you'll just know in your [gut](#) that a page just isn't working, in which case, just dump that variant and try again.

Conversion Rate

The percentage of unique visitors that come to your page and complete your conversion goal.

Conversion Rate Tip

Never be happy with your conversion rate. Just remember that **every** page can be better. That's the whole point of A/B testing.

Control Page

Your control page is your (A) page. The one that existed first that you are going to start running tests against. If you run a test and discover a better performing page, it would be promoted to be the control or “champion” page.

Control Page Tip

It can be a good idea to puke a ton of content onto your control page, so that you can make variants that remove and simplify the content. This will give you an idea of the level of content your prospects need to be convinced to convert.

Distraction

The first thing a distracted visitor will do is hit the back button, so don't let them escape from your page. Make it feel like a nicely contained unit.

Click-through Rate Tip

Often you'll want to link to other pages or assets, such as a photo gallery or a privacy policy page – or just a deeper explanation of a certain point. At this time, you **absolutely** do not want them to leave the page. So instead, try to launch lightbox windows that contain your supplementary content. As an example, [click the “Privacy Policy” link next to the email address on the form on this page](#). This way you keep them on your page and remove the risk of them wandering off.

Element

A discrete unit on the page: a block of text, a form, a button, an image, etc.

Element Tip

Page elements will typically be the basis for your A/B tests. Start with the most important ones which typically follow this type of order:

1. Headline
2. Call to action
3. Secondary benefit statement
4. Hero shot image or video

Test one at a time for a clean test.

External Factors

Your A/B test can never be a fully controlled experiment. There are way too many external factors that could skew results. Screaming babies. Lightening storms. Internet outages. Or more realistically, inbound traffic that comes from an origin you didn't expect.

External Factors Tip

If you are doing PPC, you only want traffic to arrive at your page from your paid ads to prevent contamination of your data. To help this, ensure the page isn't getting indexed by Google etc. so that it doesn't appear in organic results.

Extra Tip: If you want to send traffic from multiple sources: email, PPC, social – create a different page for each so that you can figure out which channel is performing best. You can also change the content on each page to suit the origin.

Experiment

An experiment is just another way of saying “Running an A/B test”.

Experiment Tip

Don't make changes to your pages during an experiment. If you come up with a new hypothesis for something that might work, either add it as a new variant to the current test, or choose the best performing variant from the current test, make it the champion and run your new idea against that in a new experiment. Remember to document the reasons ([hypothesis](#)) behind all of your experiments.

Eye Flow

This is the concept that by presenting any imagery of people (or even animals) looking in the direction of your conversion goal area will lead you to look there too. It works – we're like sheep.

Eye Flow Tip

If you are using a video on your page, engage the viewer by looking them in the eye, then when the time is right, look and point towards your form or button from within the video, and ASK them to complete your conversion goal.

The Fold

The fold is a term from ye olden days, referring to what you could see on the top half of a newspaper when it was folded. The assumption that it's the area that gets the most attention.

The Fold Tips

This became a big deal in the web world too with pages being longer than screen heights. Lately though, due to several factors (mouse scroll wheels and larger monitors and screen resolutions) the fold isn't quite as important as once thought. Here's an interesting post [debunking the myth of the fold](#). One of the key takeaways from the post is that you should design pages that imply there is more to be explored further down the page.

Form Testing

Forms are the life-blood of any marketer in the business of [collecting leads](#), and how you [design and layout your forms](#) (and what you ask for in exchange is critical to your success.

Form Testing Tips

Some things you can test on your forms:

- The number of fields
- The relevance of the fields to what you're giving away
- The design of the containing element for the form (e.g. a box that encapsulates it)
- Required vs. non-required fields
- The position of the form (on the right or left hand side of the page)
- Adding directional cues that point to your form
- The form header (a description of what you're asking the visitor to do that matches closely what you say in your CTA)
- Placing a privacy policy link next to an email address field to improve trust (make it pop up in a lightbox to prevent people leaving your page)
- Splitting your form over more than one page
- The button copy (your CTA)

Funnel

The sales or conversion funnel is the pathway your prospects follow from entry into your marketing sphere to your end conversion goal. The obvious idea is to pour as many people through this funnel as possible, getting them all to Conversion Land vs. Back Button Avenue.

Funnel Tip

A great way to visualize what could be happening in your conversion process (and develop ideas for testing) is to tell the story from start to finish of what a potential custom goes through on their journey. [A Pain Point Analysis](#) is an interactive story plotted on a chart that walks through the experience of the user, assigning positive and negative points along their traversal of the funnel. As soon as you hit a downturn in the experience graph you know you've hit a pain point and can use this to focus your next testing hypothesis on improvements.

Usage: Click the "Continue" link in the top left of the page to see experience graph tell the story. It ends with a green "success" hypothesis that is an idea of how to fix the broken experience.



Garbage in, Garbage Out (GIGO)

A common example of GIGO in testing would be someone who changes more than one element in one test. In essence you “might” be making smart decisions for each element you test, but you’ll never know which change resulted a the conversion improvement or decline. So you might actually want to call it “Ideas In, No Information Out” (IINIO).

GIGO Tips

Avoid GIGO by ensuring that you’re [running a clean test](#).

Goals

Goals can be categorized between business goals and those in analytics software, which we'll get to later. What are the goals of your business? Do you even know (beyond making money). If you don't, you're likely not marketing correctly and to the wrong people.

Know exactly what you're trying to achieve, and **design your pages with a singular mindset** to do just that.

You want your **customers** to complete your conversion goals, not you!

Goal Tip

Use congruence: This is the ideas that every element of your page is geared to steering the visitor towards your intended goal. It's all about focus. Check over your page, and if you're doing/saying anything that isn't "in congruence" with what the visitor should be doing, either change it or remove it.

Gut Instinct

Sometimes you just have to go with your gut.

Gut Instinct Tip

If you quickly see one of your test pages tanking soooo badly that it's obviously a total failure, get it out of there right away and stop wasting valuable traffic.

Caveat: It's sometimes worth keeping a little traffic going to that page (maybe 20%) because you never know when you might get some surprise results. I've seen it happen.

Headline Testing

Your headline is the most critical [element](#) on your landing page to test.

Headline Testing Tip

Drayton Bird, perhaps the most experienced direct marketer in the world, suggests spending 80% of your time writing your headline. (Source: [KISSmetrics](#)). Why is it so important? [Message match](#), if it doesn't match what the "clicker" was expecting to see when they made that all important click, then you've failed them. Shame on you.

A good exercise is to stick your ads and page on the wall and compare the messaging, then refine it until it's very clear that they are in concert with one another.

Heatmaps

This is another tool that you can use to summarize user behavior and click patterns on your site. See where people are scrolling and concentrating their visual attention.

Heatmap Tip

See where people are spending their mouse time on your page, if it's around your CTA, bravo. If they spend an awful lot of time wandering or focusing on a less important area, you may have written something confusing.

Tools you can use for these types of studies include: [Crazy Egg](#) or [EyeQuant](#).

Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a statement aimed at solving an identified problem with your page. It should be written in simple language with a problem and a goal. A good example would be:

Our Test Hypothesis

Will allowing visitors to download the PDF by providing their email address perform better than receiving it in exchange for a tweet? Considering that not everyone has a Twitter account, or is willing to share such information with their followers

Hypothesis Tips

[Read this blog post](#) to understand the concept in more depth.

Bonus Tip: Brainstorm with people from different departments to get a fresh perspective: customer support (the front lines), a designer, copywriter and an information architect. You'll be surprised how much untapped wealth exists in your company.

Iterative Testing

A/B tests aren't a one time deal. You should continuously test your landing pages so that you can make incremental improvements as you continue to move forward.

Iterative Testing Tip

Document the reasons and results for every test, so when your boss asks you why you did something 6-months later you can say exactly why and what happened.

“ We listen to our gut, **then test what it says**. We gather marketing research, **then test it**. We create best practices, **then test them**. We listen to opinions, **then test them**. We hear the advice of experts, **then test it**.”

Brian Massey

www.conversionscientist.com

Jumping to Conclusions

Don't do it. Give your tests enough time to reach a statistically relevant level. The exception being the gut-check mentioned earlier.

Jumping Tip

Patience is definitely a virtue here. It's really easy to make a quick assumption that your test is failing and ditch a variant that may make a comeback and surprise you. It's far too easy to do and you'll often be mistaken, this is why we test. #fairwarning

Justifying A/B Testing

Justifying testing to your boss, CEO or client can be a tough business.

Justification Tips

Use these two posts to learn how to convince anyone of [the value of A/B testing](#) and [conversion rate optimization](#).

Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Valuable business data is more complex than just a click-through rate or bounce rate. Some of the important KPI's include:

- Visitor to sign-up ration (acquisition)
- Sign-up to paying ratio (adoption)
- Churn % (retention)
- Average value per customer

KPI Tip

[Read this Onboardly post on vanity metrics](#) for a better understanding of data points that matter most.

Keywords

If you're running PPC campaigns, one of your primary concerns will be [message match](#). This means you need to include important keywords or phrases in your ads that match closely or exactly with those in the important areas of your landing page (primarily the headline).

Keyword Tip

Don't build your page entirely out of images. Use text so that the search engines can parse their meaning and give you a decent quality score.



Landing Page

In the purest sense, a landing page is any web page that a visitor can arrive at or “land” on. However, when discussing landing pages within the realm of marketing and advertising, it’s more common to refer to a landing page as being **a standalone web page distinct from your main website** that has been designed for a single focused objective.

Landing Page Tip

Two tips:

1. Your landing page should have no global navigation to tie it to your primary website. The main reason for this is to limit the options available to your visitors, helping to guide them toward your intended conversion goal.
2. [Subscribe to the Unbounce blog.](#)



Lift

The % difference between your control page and a successful test variant. Or a British elevator.

Lead Generation

Lead gen is all about fairness. In simple terms, if you want \$100 worth of data from someone, give them \$100 worth of useful business information. This is known as balancing the “barrier to access” with the “size of the prize”.

Lead Generation Tip

Write great content with original and timely data or instructional information and package it up in a PDF. Then offer it up to people in different ways. In the most recent version we did here at Unbounce, [we let people choose to receive the ebook for their email address or by tweeting about it.](#)

Message Match

We've touched on this a couple of times already, but in case you're not the type to read a phone book from cover to cover, we'd better start at the beginning. Message Match is a measure of how closely your ad text correlates with the primary text of your landing page. If your ad says "Laptop repairs from \$100" and your landing page says "Computer fixed starting at \$50" you're getting too generic.

Landing Page Tip

If you're running any kind of marketing campaign, start by creating the ultimate landing page to sell your product or service, then (and only then) write an ad to lead people to it using language that matches from start to finish. Your landing page should look like a bigger extension of your ad. And if you're running PPC, you'll get a higher Quality Score and your ads will be cheaper.

Multivariate Testing

With traditional A/B testing, marketers typically focus on one clearly defined element. Multivariate testing refers to the discipline of testing many variables simultaneously.

When you run a multivariate test you use one page and dynamically supply multiple versions of multiple elements. For instance, testing 3 versions of your headline, 2 versions of your call to action, and 3 button colors simultaneously.

That would give you 18 versions (3-headlines x 2-CTA x 3-button-color) of the page that you are testing. As you can see, with each successive element and variation on an element you multiply the number of versions that you are testing. This means that the amount of traffic required to reach confidence increases.

If you are testing 2 versions of 3 elements you have 8 variations (2 x 2 x 2) and if you have 3 versions of 3 elements you have 27 variations (3 x 3 x 3), adding extra tests adds up very fast.

Multivariate Testing Tip

Don't do it unless you are driving a lot of traffic, otherwise you'll be waiting a long time for meaningful results.

Non-Conclusive Results

[Most tests fail](#). That's just an unfortunate reality, unless you're a conversion god(ess).

Non-Conclusive Results Tip

Don't try to force success when it's not there. Ambiguity is totally okay. Just begin the process of devising a new hypothesis again and keep on testing.

And don't panic. Here's what to do [when your test fails](#).



Open Rate

Many email service providers let you A/B test your open rate based on things like subject line & delivery date/time.

Open Rate Tip

Services like [MailChimp](#) do this really well, where you get to A/B test your headline etc. for a small percentage of your list, then the winner is what gets sent to the remaining bulk of your recipients.



Oli Gardner

Hmm, what do I say about myself without sounding like a self-congratulatory egomaniac? (FTR It wasn't my idea to add me in here).

Oli Gardner Tip

Follow [@OliGardner](#) on Twitter :) I know stuff about A/B testing and conversion.

Post-Conversion Strategy

This is my favorite and probably the most overlooked area for testing. Confirmation pages appear after the completion of a lead gen form or after completing a shopping cart checkout on an ecommerce site. The reason it's such a hot spot is that it's the first page a customer sees after converting, meaning that they have invested trust, time, personal data or money with you. So you need to take advantage of this short window of opportunity to try and get a little more out of them.

Post-Conversion Strategy Tips

Things you can test placing on your confirmation pages are:

- **Social sharing widgets:** As mentioned earlier, by placing them here you are removing the clutter from the main page.
- **Newsletter subscription:** Ask them to subscribe to your newsletter (and explain the benefits of doing so, i.e. what they'll get: tips, advice, discounts etc.)
- **Suggested products:** Follow the Amazon model, for ecommerce confirmation pages try adding the classic "If you liked that, you might like this."
- **A bonus prize:** If you are trying to establish yourself as a thought leader by giving away content, consider adding an extra free PDF download, it gives them extra incentive to spread the goodwill via word of mouth recommendations.

Privacy Policy

Having a privacy policy is essential for landing pages that have a lead gen form. It builds trust and for PPC it keeps Google from banning you.

Privacy Policy Testing Tip

Test the position. Many people put it in the footer, but I find it's more successful in providing that sense of trust when placed directly beside the email field in your forms.



Qualitative Research

This is a technique used to gather useful insights from your target market and/or existing customers. It's based on opinion and needs to be considered carefully (e.g. don't listen to one person, listen to 20 and develop your insight from the bigger picture).

Tip

When developing ideas for your next A/B test, use tools like live chat ([Olark](#)), or surveys ([Qualaroo](#)), so you can figure out where you're going wrong.



Quantitative Research

This is where you dig through your analytics to find extra insight as to where, when, and why people are moving through your site/page and converting (or not), using purely statistical analysis.

Quantitative Method Tip

Hire a Google Analytics expert for a day session and get all of your goals, funnels and reports set up, so that you're ready report to the higher-ups at the drop of a hat.

Return on Investment (ROI)

This falls in line with the earlier discussion about justifying testing to your boss or clients, and also the last point about analytics.

ROI Tip

If you need to understand the effect testing and optimization can have on your bottom line, read this post on [Finding Your Customer Acquisition Sweet Spot](#).

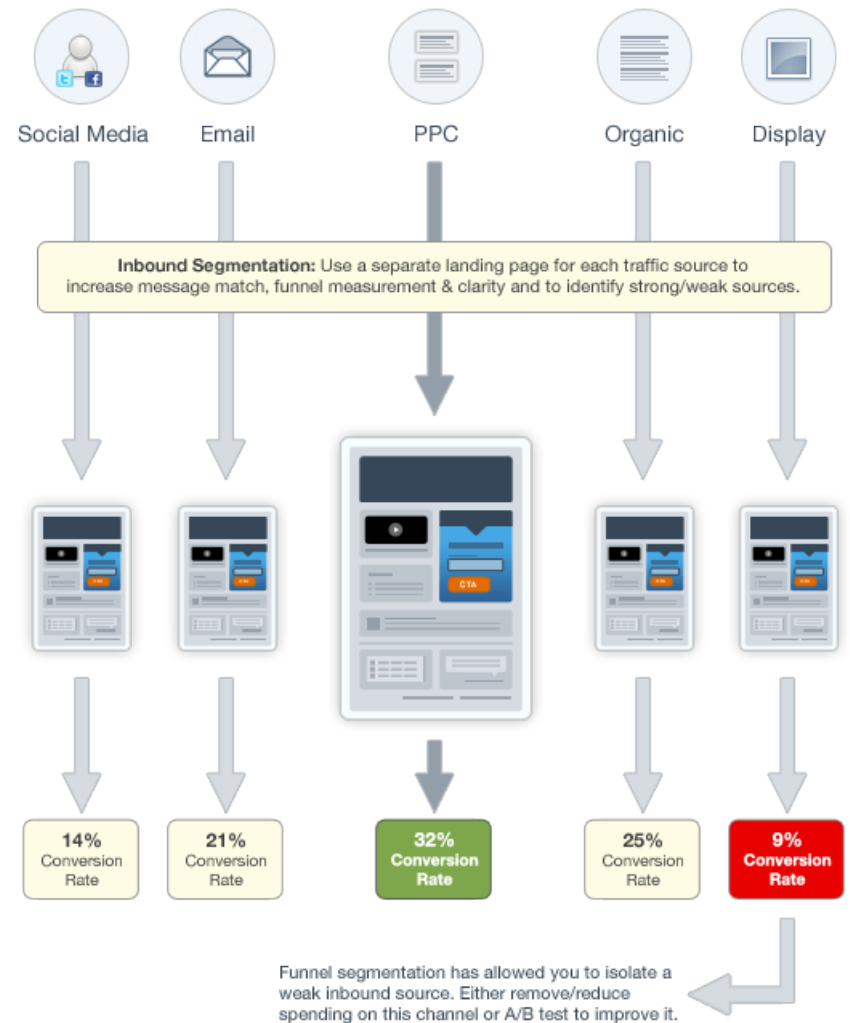
Segmentation

Marketers are using more sources for driving traffic than ever and it's causing funnel gridlock. Sending up to 7 different traffic sources into the same page (hopefully you're using landing pages and not your homepage) makes it impossible to know what's working and what isn't.

So how do you figure out which traffic sources are performing and where best to focus your marketing efforts?

Segmentation Tip

By using separate landing pages for each funnel, you are free to test and optimize to your heart's content. This lets you empower your different inbound marketing team members (the email guy can run his own show – as can the social media girl) to improve their own area without interfering with or interference from the other channels. It can also build a fun and competitive "which funnel is best" type environment.



Social Proof

People are like sheep in many ways. They follow the herd and like to join in with what others are doing. To illustrate this, imagine walking down a street and seeing one person staring up at the sky. You probably wouldn't give it a second thought. But if there was a crowd of 30 people all staring at the same thing, you'd quickly divert your attention to see what was going on. That's social proof and it builds trust in your visitors, helping conversions.

ROI Tip

You can add social proof to your tests in many ways: Testimonials, endorsement or customer logos, what social influencers have to say about your product. Other types of social proof are follower counts or even adding social sharing buttons to illustrate how popular a page is. More often than not though social follow and share buttons should go on the confirmation page to reduce [distraction](#) from your [CTA](#).

Traffic

Where is your traffic coming from? How does your paid traffic behave differently from your organic traffic? What about direct visits and social media? And referral visits? Testing different landing pages for each traffic source will answer these questions and improve your marketing campaigns moving forward.

Traffic Tip

A common question that's asked is "how much traffic you need when running a test?". If you can run 100-200 visitors to each of your pages, you can often make gut decisions about pages that are obviously underperforming and initiate a new test. But generally you'll want to wait for about 1,000 total visitors and make sure you run the test for a week to cover daily variances.



Unbounce

Start shameless plug: Unbounce is the DIY landing page platform that lets you build, publish and test your landing pages without any IT or dev.

Unbounce Tip

[Try the 30 day free trial](#), it makes A/B testing simple and even fun. If you're already a customer, did you know you can add viewers to your tests for free? They can see stats and previews but won't be able to mess with your tests.

“Show your landing page to someone that doesn’t know **anything** about your business. After 10 seconds you will have a long list of **things to fix.**”

Carlos del Rio

www.unbounce.com

User Feedback

A/B testing data can answer the question of “what,” but the answer to “why” can be less than straightforward. Complement your numbers with qualitative findings. This means taking a step beyond your A/B test to ask more complex questions.

User Feedback Tip

Check out tools like [Qualaroo](#), [UserTesting](#) and SilverBack for quick, reliable, and low-cost usability testing.

Bonus tip: Read these two posts about user feedback.

- [29 Ways to A/B Test Pages Based on *Real* User Insight](#)
- [The Top 10 User Feedback Tools for Improving Conversion](#)



Video Testing

Using a video on your pages can have a dramatic effect on engagement and your conversion rate.

Video Testing Tip

Test things like autoplay vs. user-controlled play, adding [CTAs](#), the length of your video, how many you use etc. Take a look at this [Case Study: Using Video to Lift Landing Page Conversion Rate by 100%](#)



Visitors

A visitor is a unique individual coming to your website or landing page. We often talk in terms of “Unique Visitor” which means each individual, no matter how many times they visit your page, only gets counted once.

Visitors Tip

When you’re building your landing pages take a few minutes to really understand your visitors. If you know they are coming from an email campaign, particular ad group or a guest blog post, try addressing them personally to improve conversions. ie. From your blog -“Hi Blog Reader!”, from a guest post “Special offer for Hubspot Readers”

Web Analytics

Even marketing rockstars sing the praises of Google Analytics, a free program that makes it possible to track various features of website performance. While there are other, proprietary programs that offer more advanced analytics features, I find GA (as it's known) to be adequate – even if it can be overly complicated at times.

Visitors Tip

Learn some tricks:

- [Using Analytics to Measure Your Landing Page Performance](#)
- [Measuring Social Media ROI & Goal Conversions with Google Analytics 5](#)



“X”

E[X]periment is about the best I can do here. After all, that’s what this whole post is about, so it’s kinda perfect.

Tip

Read the [Experiment](#) section again.

Y

“Y”

Y should you be doing A/B testing?

Why You Should A/B Test Tip

[Read back over this.](#)

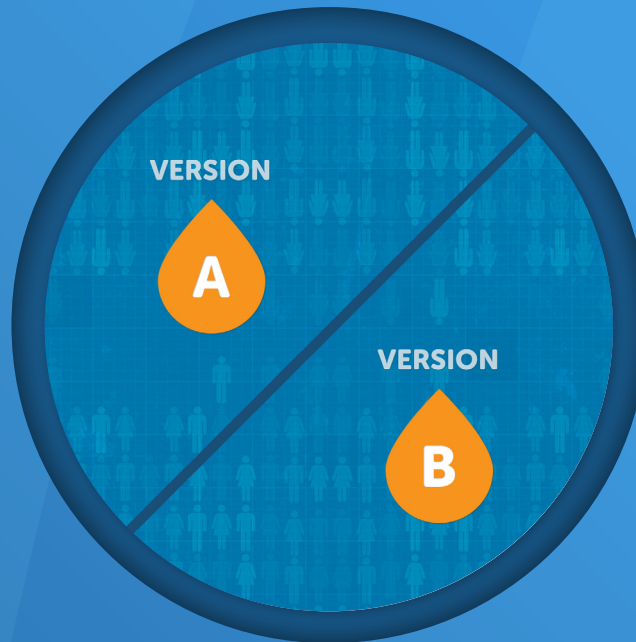
Zero Conversions

Wow, nobody likes your product.

Zero Conversions Tip

Before you panic, check your testing tool to see that there is a conversion goal set, otherwise you may be missing a bunch of conversions that are actually happening.

How's that for a happy ending?



Start A/B Testing Your Pages Now

<http://try.unbounce.com/for-a-b-testing>



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