High-Conversion Landing Pages

How to Write and Design Sales Pages That Maximize Opt-ins, Leads, and Orders

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Section 1:

The Motivating Sequence

"Amateurs may talk about creativity, but professionals insist on structure," copywriter Martin Chorich recently said to me.

In direct marketing, structure is key: if your copy does not follow the formula for persuasion, it won't work … no matter how creative you get.

There have been numerous formulas for writing persuasive copy throughout the years. The most famous of these is probably AIDA, which stands for attention, interest, desire, and action.

In copywriting seminars I've taught a variation on AIDA known as the "motivating sequence." The motivating sequence provides a helpful structure for writing long-copy promotions, especially sales letters and landing pages.

The five steps of the motivating sequence are as follows:

Step 1: get attention.

Before your promotion can do anything else, it has to get your prospect's attention. It must get the prospect to stop, open the envelope, and start reading the materials inside instead of tossing your mailing in the trash.

You already know many methods of getting attention, and see dozens of examples of them in action every day. In TV and magazine advertising, sex is often used to gain attention for products ranging from soft drinks and cars to diets and exercise programs.

Or, you can make a bold statement … cite a startling statistic … ask a curiosity-arousing question … put a bulky object in the envelope … or use a pop-up graphic. You get the idea.

Step 2: Identify the problem or need.

Most products fill a need or solve a problem that a group of prospects are facing.

But what are the chances that the prospect is thinking about this problem when she gets your promotion? Probably not great.

So the first thing you have to do is to focus the prospect's attention on the need or problem your product addresses. Only then can you talk to them about a solution.

For instance, if you are selling an economical office telephone system, instead of starting off by talking about your system, you might say, "Are you sick and tired of skyrocketing long-distance phone bills?"

Step 3: Position your product as the solution to the problem.

Once you get the prospect to focus on the problem, the next step is to position your product or service as the solution to that problem.

This can be a quick transition; here's an example from a fundraising letter from the Red Cross:

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Dear Mr. Bly:
Some day, you may need the Red Cross.
But right now, the Red Cross needs you.
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Step 4: Proof.

As Mark Joyner points out in his new book *The Irresistible Offer* (John Wiley & Sons, 2005), one of the questions at the tip of your prospect's tongue upon receiving your promotion is, "Why should I believe you?"

You answer that question by offering proof. That proof is of two sorts.

The first type of proof goes to credibility. It convinces the prospect that you, the seller, are a reputable firm or individual, and therefore someone to be trusted.

A diploma from a prestigious medical school displayed prominently on a doctor's office wall is an example of proof of credibility.

The second type of proof has to do with the product, and convinces the buyer that your product can do what you say it can do. Testimonials, case histories, reviews, performance graphs, and test results are examples of proof in this category.

Step 5: Action.

The final step is to ask for action. Your goal is usually to generate either an inquiry or an order.

To ask for action in direct marketing, we make an "offer." I define the offer as "what the reader gets when she responds to your promotion, combined with what she has to do to get it."

In a lead-generating direct mail package, the offer might be as simple as "mail back the enclosed reply card for our free catalog."

In a mail order online promotion, the offer might be "click here, enter your credit card information, and purchase our product on a 30-day money back trial basis for $49.95 plus $4.95 shipping and handling."

I am willing to wager that every successful piece of copy you have ever mailed or e-mailed follows, to some extent, the steps in the motivating sequence … even if you've never heard of it before.

That's because you have an instinct for how to sell, and that instinct leads you to organize your selling arguments according to the motivating sequence.

So, if you can sell instinctively, then what use is knowing AIDA, the motivating sequence, or other persuasion formulas?

The answer is this: when you have the steps written out in front of you, you can more consciously make sure that you've handled all five steps fully and in

correct sequence … and make sure no step is short-changed or left out … increasing your odds of writing a winner.

Section 2:

10 Rules for Writing Landing Pages That Sell

When you strip away all the bells and whistles – streaming audio or video, floaters, banner ads, Taguchi testing – the success of your landing page depends mainly on the copy. When all is said and done, a landing page is basically a long-copy sales letter posted on a server at a specific Web address or domain.

Therefore, the best copywriters for landing pages are not necessarily the young and Web savvy kid; they are the grizzled direct response veterans who possess the ability to write long-copy sales letters that sell.

However, it's not enough just to be a great sales letter writer. There are differences between print sales letters and landing pages, and without this knowledge, a landing page crafted by a traditional DM copywriter without Web knowledge may bomb.

Specifically, here are 10 keys to writing landing pages that maximize online conversion rates, some of which apply equally online and offline, but many of which are strictly conventions for the Web:

1—Build credibility early.

Put a great testimonial or three above the headline on the first screen. Use an official seal in a banner at the top of the page.

2—Capture the e-mail addresses of non-buyers.

There are a number of mechanisms available for [capturing the e-mail address](#) of visitors who click on your landing page but do not buy the product.

One is to use a window with copy offering a free report or e-course in exchange for submitting e-mail address.

3—Use lots of testimonials.

Testimonials are even more important online than offline, since people are super-skeptical and wary of Internet marketing scams. The latest and greatest technique: video testimonials. You click on the customer's picture and get a video testimonial from her.

4—Use lots of bullets.

Build lots of selling points into your products and then on your landing page have a great bullet item or fascination on each. Online buyers like to think they are getting a lot for their money, so longer bullet lists are better than short ones.

5—Arouse curiosity in the headline.

The headline should either arouse curiosity, make a powerful promise, or otherwise grab the reader's attention so he has no choice but to keep reading.

6—Use a conversational copy style.

Most corporate Web sites are unemotional and sterile: just "information." But a landing page is a letter from one human being to another. Make it sound that way.

7—Incorporate an emotional hook in the lead.

Logical selling can work, but tapping into the prospect's emotions is much stronger – especially when you correctly assess how the prospect is feeling about your product or the problem is solves right now.

8—Solve the reader's problem

Once you hook the reader with emotional copy dramatizing her problem, position your product as the solution. Then prove it.

9—Make it timely and current.

The more your online copy ties in with current events and news, the higher your response rates. This is especially critical when selling financial and investment information.

10—Stress the money-back guarantee.

All your competitors give strong money-back guarantees. So you can't get away without doing the same. If your product is good and your copy truthful, your refund rates can be as low as 1% or even less.

11--Bonus tip -- Offer bonuses.

Online buyers want free stuff: free CDs, free reports, free access to Web content, free software, free tools. Have at least one and preferably two or three bonuses for every product you sell.

Section 3:

Name-squeeze Pages

A name-squeeze page (see sample below), also known as a squeeze page, is a technique used to convert Web traffic into leads.

The traffic is generated through standard methods including pay per click advertising, e-mail marketing, viral marketing, social media, or co-registration, to name a few.

Instead of driving the traffic to a Web site or landing page selling a product, the hyperlink connects to a name-squeeze page.

The page is designed for one single purpose: to capture the e-mail address of the visitor. By doing so, you get the visitor to join your opt-in e-list. Once he has done so, you have permission to send e-mails to him. These e-mails should be a mix of free content and sales messages.

The sales messages are how you monetize the list: by selling them your products. But if you send nothing but sales e-mails, subscribers will become disinterested and start unsubscribing from your list.

To retain subscribers, build goodwill, and deliver value, you must alternate your marketing e-mails with e-mails that deliver free content. Internet marketing guru Fred Gleeck suggests a ration of 3 content e-mails to one sales e-mail.

The incentive for the user to give his e-mail address is in exchange for free content you offer. The free content can be a subscription to a free e-newsletter or a one-shot offer such as a free special report, available as a downloadable PDF document.

The best results are generated by combining both offers in what is known as a "free-on-free squeeze page," an example of which is shown below. In the free-on-free offer, the user gets a free subscription to your e-newsletter AND one or more free bonus reports as a reward for signing up.

"Why do I have to offer a free bonus gift?" you may be thinking. "After all, isn't the free e-zine incentive enough?" Sadly, no. Your prospects are already getting too many e-newsletters.

When you offer the report, they will join your list even if they are not sure they want your e-letter, provided the free reports you offer is desirable, relevant, valuable, and interesting. Then, if the e-newsletter in fact provides more of the same good content, they will stay with you and not unsubscribe.

Section 4:

The Agora Model

In the Agora Model of online marketing, you use a variety of methods (shown in the yellow ovals in the diagram below) to drive traffic to a squeeze

page. The squeeze page offer the visitor a free report, free e-zine, or both in exchange for submitting his e-mail address.

Once visitors register on the squeeze page, you have their e-mail address and can now market to them via e-mail as often as you like at no extra cost. The bulk of your online leads, sales, and profits will come from repeat e-mail marketing to this "house" e-list of prospects, both through solo e-mails and product ads in your e-zine. The e-mail or ad has hyperlinks that connect to the landing page for the specific product being promoted.

The Agora Model
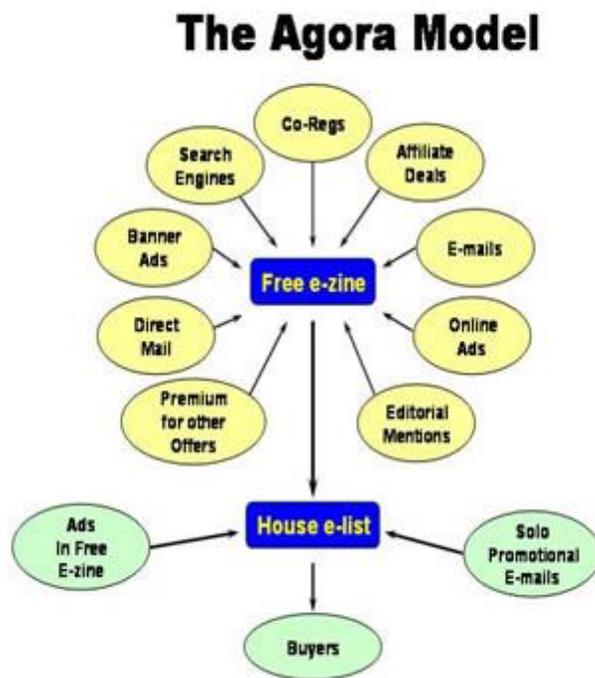
Section 5:

7 Ways to Increase Online Conversions

One of the biggest mistakes you can make in online marketing is to simply put up a landing page for a product and accept whatever conversion rate it generates as the final number – the "best you can do."

There are at least 7 ways you can incrementally improve online conversion rates on landing pages. Even a small incremental improvement can substantially increase orders, sales, and profits in your online business.

1—Stronger landing page copy … test new and different landing page copy, themes, approaches, offers, price points.

2—Online video … adding audio or video to a landing page can boost conversion rates 25% or more.

3—E-mail address capture … use a pop-under, floater, or other mechanism to capture the e-mail addresses of visitors who do not purchase to build your opt-in e-list. Each name added to the list incrementally increases total online sales.

4—Online conversion … target a 7-effort e-mail conversion series to visitors who do not respond but submit their e-mail address (step #6 above) delivered via autoresponder.

5—Split testing of landing pages … most shopping carts allow A/B or A/B/C split testing of landing pages for headline and other tests – well worth doing.

6—Multi-variate testing – even more effective than ordinary split tests are multi-variate or [Taguchi](#) tests; we can recommend tools and vendors to help you perform these tests. Many more elements are tested than in simple A/B splits, which can lift conversion rates 25% to 200% or more.

7—E-mail marketing … if you drive traffic to the landing page with e-mail blasts (solo or ads in e-zines), changing copy can not only increase click-through rates but also increase conversion rates. Test different copy and boost both.

Section 6:

Double or Triple Your Landing Page Conversion Rates with Taguchi Testing

Direct marketers are forever saying, "Test, test, test."

But in actuality, many direct marketers do little or no testing at all.

Sure, the big-volume consumer direct marketers – like Publisher's Clearinghouse and Phillips Publishing – test all the time.

But many small and mid-size companies say they don't have the budget, time, or a large enough universe to make testing worthwhile.

Even among big direct marketers, testing is often limited to simple A/B split tests – headline "A" vs. headline "B," or a price test between $99, $199, and $299.

And that's in direct mail. In space ads, A/B split testing is increasingly rare, as the majority of publications neither offer nor encourage it.

But thanks to technology … specifically the Internet … testing is undergoing a revival using a technique called "Taguchi testing."

If you're already familiar with and using Taguchi testing, you may get a few useful ideas out of this article.

But if you are not, then listening to what I am about to tell you could be the most important development in your Internet marketing this decade.

Since I am not a Taguchi expert, I won't attempt to go into the technical or statistical details, which I don't really understand anyway.

Instead, let's discuss Taguchi testing on a high level.

Specifically, Taguchi testing is a system where, with a landing page or other online direct response promotion, you test not one but many variables – economically and in a relatively short time frame.

David Bullock, President of Results Squared, a consultancy offering Taguchi testing services to direct marketers, says that his program typically involves testing the following promotion elements: three pre-heads, six headlines, three subheads, three salutations (e.g., "Dear Home Builder" vs. "Dear Lumber Buyer" vs. "Dear Wood Trader"), three lead paragraphs, three visuals (e.g., a product photo vs. a photo of the inventor vs. a photo of a happy customer), three guarantees, and three calls to action.

But you can choose to test other elements – bonuses, prices, even different lists of bullets in the copy – really, anything you want. Other factors Bullock often tests include traffic source (e.g., organic search traffic vs. Google Adwords vs. e-mail) and what he calls "predisposition to purchase."

"Predisposition to purchase" is a measure of how convinced the prospect is of the offer's value before he even clicks onto the landing page. For instance, a visitor responding to an e-mail sent by a joint venture partner to his list of loyal readers has a greater predisposition to believe the message than a visitor who finds the page from a keyword search.

With specialized Taguchi testing software, each unique visitor to the site sees the landing page with a different combination of the elements being tested.

The results are measured, tabulated, and analyzed. Reports are generated to show which headline pulled the best, which lead paragraph pulled best, which visual pulled best, and so on.

The advantage is that you are testing multiple versions of many key variables in landing page performance, and not just two versions of one variable as is usually the case with traditional A/B split tests.

Therefore, conversion is increased incrementally for each variable, e.g., a 20 percent lift in orders for the best headline, a 17 percent increase in conversion for the best lead, and so on.

By incorporating the winning versions of all variables tested in the final landing page, Taguchi testing can double, triple, even quadruple or more the conversion rate of your landing pages.

To do Taguchi testing, you need to write complete copy for your landing page along with the needed elements listed above: the six headlines, three subheads, and so on.

Then, you give the copy to your Taguchi testing service and you are ready to roll. You can find several Taguchi testing vendors listed under "Taguchi Testing" on the Vendors page of my web site www.bly.com.

In the "good old days," it would take many weeks, or even a couple of months, to get a valid reading on a direct mail test – and even then, it was usually just an A/B split of two different packages, prices, or headlines.

But because Taguchi testing is done online, you get the results much faster. Depending on the amount of traffic being driven to the URL and the conversion rates, says Bullock, a complete test can be completed and verified in 3 to 5 weeks.

The amount of traffic required also depends on conversion rate, since statistical validity of testing is based not on "number of pieces mailed" – or online, on amount of traffic – but on number of responses – or in the case of a landing page, number of sales made.

Typically you want to get at least 1,000 unique visits per test cell. Depending on the number of test cells, you need anywhere from 12,000 to 20,000 visits for a complete test.

Section 7:

5 Ways to Capture E-mail Addresses of Landing Page Visitors

Most Internet marketers I know who use landing pages to make direct sales online focus on conversion: getting the maximum number of visitors to the landing page to place an order for the product being advertised.

Other Internet marketers, when writing landing page copy, focus not only on conversion, but also on search engine optimization: key word selection and meta tag creation that can increase traffic by raising the site's search engine rankings.

But in addition to conversions and unique visits, savvy Internet marketers are also concerned with a third performance metric: e-mail address capture.

If you have a two percent conversion rate, then for every 100 visitors to the landing page, only two buy – and of course, during these transactions, you capture the e-mail addresses of those buyers.

What happens to the other 98 visitors -- those who do not buy? You will not be able to add their e-mail address to your list unless you incorporate a deliberate methodology into your landing page to capture it.

Here are four different methodologies for capturing the e-mail addresses of landing page visitors who do not purchase. Every landing page you operate should use at least one of these methods:

1. *E-zine sign-up box*. This is a box where the visitor can get a free e-newsletter subscription just by entering his name and e-mail address. You can see an example of a simple e-zine sign-up box at www.bly.com and countless other Web sites.

The e-zine sign-up box placed prominently on the first screen is a widely used method of e-mail capture for Web sites. But it is less commonly used for micro-sites and landing pages.

The reason is that, if your headline and lead properly engage the reader's attention, he won't bother to sign up for the e-newsletter – instead, he'll start reading.

Then, if he loses interest or reaches the end but does not order, and instead clicks away, you haven't captured his e-mail address.

2. *Squeeze pages.* Also known as preview pages, these are short landing pages that require the visitor to register – by giving his name and e-mail address – before he is allowed to go on and read the long-copy landing page. To see a squeeze page at work, visit: www.squeezepagegenerator.com.

In some cases, the long-copy landing page itself is positioned as a "report" which the visitor can read only if he submits his name and e-mail address first. For this to work, your landing page should be written in an informative, educational style.

Many squeeze pages offer a content premium, such as a free report, just for submitting your e-mail address. Those seeking to capture snail mail as well as e-mail addresses make the premium a physical object that must be shipped, such as a free CD.

Squeeze pages work well when your primary source of traffic is organic and paid search. Reason: search visitors clicking to your site are only mildly

qualified, because they are making a decision to visit based on only a few words in a search engine description or paid Google ad.

Therefore, they may not be inclined to read long copy from a source they are not familiar with. A squeeze page lets them absorb the gist of your proposition in a few concise paragraphs. The main advantage of the squeeze page is that it ensures capture of an e-mail address from every visitor who reads the full landing page. In addition, these prospects have been pre-qualified, in terms of their interest in the subject, and so are more likely to stick with long copy.

3. *E-mail capture sidebars.* These are forms built into the main landing page as sidebars, again making a free offer. In a long-copy landing page, the e-mail capture sidebar usually appears early, typically in the second or third screen, and may be repeated one or more times throughout the page. Example: www.rocketfrench.com.

The drawback of the e-mail capture sidebar is that the prospect sees it before he gets too far in the sales letter, and therefore before you've sold him and ask for the order.

Therefore, the risk is that if your product teaches, say, how to speak French, and the e-mail capture sidebar offers free French lessons, the visitor will just take the free offer and feel no need to spend money on the paid offer.

4. *Pop-under.* When you attempt to click away from the landing page without making a purchase, a window appears that says something like, "Wait! Don't leave yet!" – and makes a free offer. To see how this works, go to one of my sites, www.becomeaninstantguru.com.

The big advantage of the pop-under is that the visitor sees it only *after* he has read to the point where he is leaving without ordering. Therefore, the free content offer doesn't compete with or distract visitors from the paid product offer.

The disadvantage is that about half of Internet users run pop-up blockers on their PCs, and these blockers will prevent your pop-under from showing.

5. *Floaters.* A floater looks and functions much like a pop-up window, but it's actually part of the landing page's HTML code, and therefore, won't be blocked by a pop-up blocker. You can see a floater at http://bhg.com/.

The floater blocks a portion of the landing page when you click onto the site. You can enter your e-mail or click it away without doing so. Either action removes the floater and allows you to see the complete landing page.

As you can see, all of these e-mail capture methods offer some sort of free content – typically a downloadable PDF report, e-course delivered via auto-responder, or e-zine subscription – in exchange for your e-mail address.

Why bother to maximize capture of visitor e-mail addresses on your landing pages and other Web sites?

There are two primary benefits. First, by sending an online conversion series – a sequence of e-mails delivered by auto-responder – to these visitors, you have another opportunity to convince them to buy and increase your overall conversion rate.

Second, the best names for your e-mail marketing efforts, far better than rented opt-in lists, are in your house e-list. So the faster you can build a large e-list, the more profitable your Internet marketing ventures will become.

How much more profitable? Internet marketing expert Fred Gleeck estimates that, for information product marketers, each name on your e-list is worth between ten cents and a dollar or more per name per month.

Therefore, a 50,000-name e-list could generate annual online revenues of $600,000 a year or higher. In other businesses, the sales could be significantly higher. Hewlett-Packard has 4.5 million e-zine subscribers, from whom they generate $60 million in monthly sales.*

* B-to-B, 4/4/05.

Section 8:

Autoresponders

An autoresponder is software that automatically delivers to an e-list a series of e-mail messages, which you write, according to a schedule you specify. Delivery of the series is typically triggered by e-mail address capture.

The most popular autoresponder is Aweber. The shopping cart software Web Marketing Magic also has a built-in autoresponder.

The use of autoresponder e-mail series is limited only by your imagination, but here are the 5 most common applications.

1—*Online conversion* – in [online conversion](#), a series of e-mails is sent to a visitor who requested your free content but did not buy a product, in an attempt to get him to reconsider his decision and place an order.

2--*Cross selling* – when a customer orders a product, the autoresponder serves him a series of e-mail messages attempting to sell him another product that might be of interest, usually related to or complimentary to the first product.

3--*Up sell* – similar to cross-selling except you are trying to sell the customer a product at a higher price point than the one he purchased; if the initial purchase was an e-book on Topic X for $39, the up-sell e-mails might offer an audio album on Topic X at $97.

4—*Consumption* – a series of e-mails that explains how to use the product and encourages the buyer to do so; the logic is that a buyer who uses your product is more likely to buy more products from you and less likely to return the first product.

5 – *Maintenance* – for membership web sites, subscription newsletters, and products sold with monthly payment schedules, a series of e-mails is sent to encourage the customer to stick with the product and not drop out or cancel.

Section 9:

Selling Newsletters with Online Conversion

We publishing types don't give up.

When the Internet sprung into life, we said, "Direct mail works offline to sell subscriptions; why not online, too?"

So we rented e-mail lists and sent them e-mails asking them to subscribe.

It bombed.

But instead of giving up, we went back to the drawing board, asking, "If traditional acquisition direct response does not work online, let's find something that does!"

And that something is online conversion. Both traditional and online publishers are testing it, and many are enjoying promising results.

In a nutshell, here's an oversimplified version of how online conversion works:

1. You create some free content.

2. You offer people the free content online.

3. When they accept, you then upsell them to your paid subscription product – again, online.

Let's break down each step.

Step 1: Create some free content.

This is the easiest step. Just repackage some of your content as an information premium.

The content does not have to be long. Re-purposing existing articles works fine for this purpose. So do special reports specifically written for the online conversion campaign. Or the same reports you offer as premiums in postal direct marketing.

The premium is typically offered as a "free special report." It is usually available as a downloadable PDF file. Some marketers prefer to post the report as a multi-page html document on the Web.

Step 2: Offering the free content

The most common way to offer the free content is by sending an e-mail to your house file. You can also test outside lists.

The e-mail offers the content as a "free special report." To get the free report, the recipient clicks on an embedded URL in the message text.

If the content is a downloadable PDF file, the recipient is brought to a short transaction page. He enters his e-mail address, and is then allowed to download and print the PDF file.

If the content is a series of sequential html pages, the recipient is again brought to a short transaction page. He enters his e-mail address, clicks SUBMIT, and is brought to the first page of the micro site where the report is available to read as a posted html document.

(Within the html report, put a number of links to a landing page or transaction page for your paid subscription product. Many readers may click on these links and order your paid product while they are in the middle of reading your free bonus report online.)

Either way, the reader must give us his e-mail address to read the free report, which is the key to the online conversion method.

There are other methods you can use to generate leads for your online conversion campaign, as shown in Fig. 1. Some publishers have had great success with postcards. Others have used banners or online ads in e-zines.

Step 3: Converting the leads to paid subscribers

Now two things have happened. First, we have captured the prospect's e-mail address, so we can market to him as often as we like at virtually no cost.

And second, we know that the prospect is interested in the topic of our content, because he at least requested a free article or report on it.

Since the content was free, we do not know at this point whether he will pay for more content on this topic. But he is a qualified lead in the sense that he is (a) interested in the topic and (b) responds to online marketing.

The next step is to send him a series of e-mails, known as the online conversion series, with the objective of converting him from a requester of free content to a subscriber or buyer of our paid content.

Planning the online conversion series

While the online conversion process is still relatively new, experience so far shows that our online conversion series works best with between three to seven efforts.

Some marketers like every e-mail in the series to attempt to make a sale. That is, they all have a URL the reader can click to reach a page from which the product may be ordered.

Others like the first two e-mails to be simply goodwill, promoting the value of the information and encouraging the reader to actually read the free content – and in some cases, even giving him more free content. These are called "free touch" e-mails, because they touch the reader without asking him to purchase.

Subsequent e-mails in the series ask for the order; these are called "conversion e-mails." In a six-effort series, the first one or two e-mails might be free touch; the remainder, conversion e-mails.

Designing the online response vehicle

When the reader clicks on the URL link in your e-mail, he may go either to a landing page or a transaction page.

A landing page has a fair amount of descriptive copy about the product you are selling and your offer. It does a strong job of selling the reader on the value of the product.

A transaction page has minimal description of the product. It is basically an online order form.

Some marketers always send the e-mail recipient who clicks on the link in the e-mail to the landing page, on the theory that the more sales copy there is, the more sales that will be made.

Other marketers believe that if the conversion e-mail is long and has a lot of sales copy, there is no need to repeat this in a landing page; and so they just send the prospect to a short transaction page.

Creating the conversion offer

The best offer for an online conversion effort is a free 30-day trial of the product. If you can set up your site so that the recipient's credit card is not billed until after the 30-day trial period, that's the best choice. Then you are truly offering a free trial or free 30-day subscription.

By comparison, if you charge their credit card as soon as they submit their order, it is not really a free 30-day trial; it is a risk-free 30-day trial. They are paying, but if they cancel within 30 days, they get a refund.

Planning the online conversion series

You can experiment with timing, number of efforts, and mix of efforts (free touch and online conversion) in your series.

A typical series might go like this:

Day 1 – e-mail #1, free touch. Thank the prospect for requesting your free content and reinforce its value.

Day 2 – e-mail #2, free touch. Encourage the prospect to read the free content and highlight its value. Point out some especially good ideas, tips, or strategies it contains.

Day 4 – e-mail #3, online conversion. Tell the prospect he can get more of the same content by accepting a free 30-day trial to your publication. Sell him on the publication and its value.

Day 7 – e-mail #4. Remind the prospect that he can still become an expert on the topic by getting your publication and accepting your free trial offer.

Day 14 – e-mail #5. Tell the prospect the free 30-day trial is expiring, resell him on the content you are offering, and urge him to act today. Tell him after that, it's too late.

Writing the online conversion series

Write your online conversion series e-mails the same as you would write other online and offline promotions to sell your products. Use the same copy, content, and organization. Get attention in the lead … generate interest … create desire for your product … and ask for the order.

One key difference: In your lead, always acknowledge that they are hearing from you as a follow-up to the free report or article *they asked you* to send them. This has two benefits.

First, they may feel slightly more obligated to read your message; after all, you did give them a gift. And second, if they liked the free content, it

automatically puts them in a receptive mood for more of the same – even if they have to pay for it.

Should you try online conversion?

Every publisher who wants to market information products on the Internet should try an online conversion series.

Just renting an e-list of opt-in names and asking them to subscribe won't work; people who are online tend not to buy from strangers.

But send those same names an offer of a free article or report, and they will take you up on it. After all, what's to lose?

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About the Author

Bob Bly is a freelance copywriter and the author of more than 90 books. McGraw-Hill calls Bob Bly "America's top copywriter" and he is AWAI's 2007 Copywriter of the Year. Bob has written copy for more than 100 clients including IBM, AT&T, Ingersoll-Rand, Praxair, Intuit, and Agora Publishing. His main Web site is www.bly.com and his e-mail is rwbly@bly.com.