

Improving Web Site Landing Pages

By BNET Editorial

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When a Web user clicks on a link, perhaps in an email or from an online advertisement, the user's directed to a Web Site page known as a landing page. The page features information on the product or service that was advertised. Its objective is to encourage the visitor to buy online or take some other action that leads to a sale.

What You Need to Know

What's the difference between a home page and a landing page?

The home page is the first page your visitors reach if they simply want to visit your Web Site to see what is on it. If they were responding to an advertisement, e-mail, or a direct marketing piece that featured a particular product or service, the link would take them to a landing page—a specific page that would be relevant to their inquiry. Your link in the promotional piece could take them to your home page, but you will save visitors time by directing them to the right place.

What to Do

Take Visitors to the Right Place

A landing page gives you greater control over the way your visitors act when they are on your Web Site. The typical process for a visitor who was not using a landing page would be to:

- arrive on the home page;
- select an option from a menu or an offer on the page;
- arrive on the page with the offer/product;
- purchase.

However, there are many opportunities for visitors to drop out of the sales process for your main offer if the navigation is not clear or if they are distracted by other offers or content.

The visitor arriving on a home page can be bombarded with information, links, offers, images, service listings, and advertisements, all competing for attention. The original message or offer that compelled them to visit the site is lost.

Create a Landing Page

You can avoid this risk by creating separate landing pages for individual marketing campaigns. By integrating your marketing campaigns with specific landing pages online, you can reinforce your message and maintain interest in the offer. You can also use the landing page to capture leads and visitor information that might otherwise be unavailable.

Set Objectives

The objective of a landing page is to get your prospect to respond to the offer you made in your marketing campaign. You want them to take action quickly by making a purchase online or requesting information that you can follow up later. If you want to follow up later you could ask visitors to:

- register for an event;
- complete an information request form;
- download a whitepaper;
- subscribe to an online newsletter;
- request a sales call.

Stick to One Offer

Some commentators believe that a landing page should be solely dedicated to one offer, and nothing else. Others feel that it is good to provide easy access to other areas of your site and mention other offers in case the visitor is not interested in the main offer. It can be tempting to encourage landing page visitors to view the rest of your site so that they can find out about your other products and services.

However, industry experience indicates that distracting prospects with other information or additional offers could reduce the number of leads you are able to capture. A dedicated landing page with no distractions should match your marketing strategy which is to target specific groups with a relevant offer.

Keep the Page Uncrowded

While the general advice is to keep your landing page dedicated to a single offer, you should not crowd the page with excessive information about the product or service you are offering. If it is

important to provide prospects with detailed information, you can create additional pages, but give visitors the choice of clicking onto those pages.

Segment the Offer

If your marketing campaign is targeting a wide audience, you may find that a single landing page is not sufficient. A single landing page makes the same pitch to all of them, regardless of their different needs. If the page focuses on just one sector, it may not appeal to others. If it tries to address all the sectors, the arguments may be diluted.

It may be better to offer visitors a choice when they reach the landing page. Some examples might include:

- information for large organizations or small businesses;
- information for manufacturing companies or retailers;
- information for consumers.

The second page then provides information that is relevant to the particular sector.

Include a Call to Action

A call to action tells the prospect what they need to do to take advantage of the offer, for example, “buy today,” “buy now,” “limited offer”; or “register now for your free gift.” Create a clickable button beginning with the action word—“register here,” “contact us,” “download now,” “buy now.” The button should be linked to an order form or registration form.

Free offers on a landing page can be effective, provided they give you information that you can follow up. Even if the visitor does not accept the main offer, by offering a free report that requires their e-mail address in order to download, you will be able to maintain contact and make further targeted offers. A free newsletter subscription, for example, will allow you to build a relationship over time.

Your call to action should appear at the top of the page to attract prospects who are ready to buy immediately. You can also include other calls to action in other areas of the page to catch prospects who want further information before making a decision. The call to action should be the main focus of the page—it should not be lost at the bottom of the page.

Capture Visitor Information

Regardless of the main offer, you should create a response device to capture prospect information. For example, if you offer a free downloadable white paper, create a call to action button that links to a short form the visitor must complete to finalize the download. However, do not ask for too much information as this may put prospects off.

Integrate Page Design

The look and feel of the landing page should be consistent with the design of the marketing item that drove the prospect to the landing page. Where possible, you should use the same images, design elements, and colors. You should also repeat the offer to reinforce the original message and the benefits of the product or service.

To ensure that prospects stay on the landing page and take appropriate action, keep the landing page simple. You should remove the main Web Site navigation and keep any internal or external links to a minimum. The only links on the page should relate directly to your offer.

Test Your Pages

Commentators recommend that you should test and optimize different elements of your landing pages for best results. As well as changing the offer, you should also consider the page layout and content, the position of the call to action and any forms that prospects have to complete.

Manage Your Landing Pages

It is important to manage your landing pages, particularly if you regularly create new ones to tie in with different marketing campaigns. The more landing pages you have, the greater the risk of outdated content or broken links, which can leave visitors feeling frustrated. Although managing individual pages may be straightforward, multiple pages make the task more complex. It is important to delete landing pages at the end of a campaign. You should arrange to check your Web Site for any broken links that might result.

What to Avoid

You Distract Prospects from Taking Action

A landing page has a single purpose—to make visitors take the next step toward a purchase. That means keeping the page free of navigation links that might take your visitors to another page. On a landing page, there is only one link you want visitors to click—the one that enables them to take action. You should also avoid multiple choices, which could dilute attention and reduce response rates. If you have a number of offers or products to promote, create separate campaigns and separate landing pages to keep your prospects focused.

You Try to Force the Prospect to Take Action

Although the call to action should be prominent, you should not force the prospect to take action immediately. A landing page should consist of more than an order form or a registration form. It should present relevant information with an encouragement to take further action. Landing pages that are too aggressive tend to have a low conversion rate, while a more informative approach builds trust before requesting action as a second step.

Where to Learn More

Book:

Eisenberg, Bryan, and Jeffrey Eisenberg, and Lisa T. Davis, *Call to Action: Secret Formulas to Improve Online Results*. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006.

Web Site:

The ClickZ Network: www.clickz.com