



Make Sure You Stick the Landing (Page)

How integrators can leverage strong, focused web landing pages for more effective online campaigns. *by Don Kreski*

THE QUALITY OF YOUR “landing pages” — that is, the pages visitors first see when they land on your website — can make or break your marketing efforts.

Strictly speaking, web developers create landing pages for pay-per-click advertising programs, and in many sites, they may be seen only by those who click on an ad in Google or Bing.

That said, these kinds of pages are similar to those you optimize for natural search. For example, if acoustical consulting is an important source of revenue, you’ll want to create a page describing your acoustical consulting services, and you’ll want to advertise those services in Google AdWords as well. Can you use the same page for both purposes?

Yes and no (see sidebar). While I wouldn’t use just any page as a landing page, the principles behind good landing pages can help you build stronger pages throughout your site.

Characteristics of Good Landing Pages

Whether a visitor comes to your site from natural or paid search, you must make it obvious that he landed on the right page. “People can jump from site to site so easily,” says Tim Grant, director of search and social media strategy at Gamma Partners in Chicago. “It’s not like driving to a store where you might as well look around once you’re there. On the web, if you don’t see what you need immediately, you’ll go

somewhere else.” For that reason:

- › Building the page starts with the proper keyword or key phrase
- › In pay-per-click campaigns, the ad you write should use that same word or phrase in its headline
- › Most often, the headline on the landing page should use the same keyword again
- › Photos or illustrations must also show that concept clearly
- › Body copy must stay on topic, explaining the product, the process, or the concept that the page (and the key phrase) is about
- › Always to move readers one step further along the road to a purchase, so include a strong call to action.

Develop Calls to Action

As you create your pages, think about what the next step for the reader should be. Set a clear goal for each landing page and make it easy for your readers to act in a way that moves them toward your goal.

Amazon is a master at this process. Whatever page you land on, you'll always find a summary of what the product is and why you should buy it, plus more detailed information. The e-tail giant always includes good illustrations, pricing, availability, buyer reviews and even suggestions for related products. Each link is a call to action. Do you need to learn more? Click here. Ready to buy? 'Add to cart' here.

Most service firms, however, are trying to prompt a contact, not a direct sale. How to do so is a little less obvious, but you still want to lead people through the information gathering process and always include a call to action.

"One obvious goal is to prompt people to fill out a 'contact us' form," Grant explains. "But you don't want to stop there. Be sure your address, phone and an email link are on every page, positioned in a consistent, obvious place. Make it very easy for them to communicate with you."

Can you offer useful information in the form of a white paper, video or webinar, perhaps including installation tips or explanations of an important technology? If the information you are offering is truly useful, people will start to look to you as a resource and will call when they need to know more. If the information is useful but hard to find, consider asking for a name, phone and email in return for access. Then you can call them, and your visitor has become a sales lead.

Can you give people a free consultation, 20 percent off on their first order, or make some other compelling offer? If you're willing to give up something of real value, then potential clients will have a reason to contact you, rather than call someone else or simply put off the decision to move forward.

Keep things simple. Crucial components should be "above the fold," near the top of the page so visitors don't

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**—TIM GRANT,
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have to scroll down to find them. That includes your call to action.

Give people a reason to trust you. Visitors will come to your landing page from literally around the world, and most of them will not know who you are. Naturally, they will be wary of you. If you can include an InfoComm CAVSP logo or key vendor certification logos, do so.

Testimonials can be helpful, as can be cover graphics from magazines that have written about your projects.

Tell your story. Remember that potential clients will come to your landing pages without first seeing your home page. You need a brief description of who you are. Be sure to include your site navigation, so they can start to learn more about your company. Some of this can be "below the fold," since they will naturally want to investigate your company only after they've established that you can, in fact, provide the information or service that they're looking for.

Try the five second test. Open your new landing page, then cover or turn off the computer monitor. Sit someone down and reveal the page for just five seconds. Can they tell you what the page is about? **CI**

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Using the Same Page for PPC and Natural Search

A CRUCIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN landing pages created specifically for a pay-per-click (PPC) campaign and pages on the same topic optimized for natural search is the amount of text.

"I usually think of PPC landing pages as shorter and more concise than other web pages, more to the point," explains Tim Grant, director of search and social media strategy at Chicago-based Gamma Partners. "For natural search, you have to think about the search engines as well as potential customers, and Google and Bing value longer, more detailed explanations than you might need for someone coming in from an ad."

The key to creating multi-use pages is what you put "above the fold" and what you put below. The top section of the page includes the headline, main illustration, a summary of what you're offering (perhaps in bullet points), and ideally your call to action. Below that you can add more detail about your product or service.

If your page is informational, perhaps a white paper or a technology description, then include an executive summary at the top. You can also break the topic into sections, each with a bold, carefully written subhead. If visitors are interested in your topic, they will want detailed information, but you have to make it easy for them to skim through your text to make sure it's the information they want.

Multi-use pages depend on the quality of the writing and graphics you include. You'll probably create multi-use pages to save money, but there's a limit to how far that can go. You may be better off hiring a professional to craft a small number of great pages, rather than creating a large number of potentially mediocre pages in house. Remember, the web is very competitive; don't let a prospective client jump off your page and land on your competitor's.