

Getting It Right Online – Paper 2

Why landing pages are so critical to the success of your campaigns

895 words

Landing page definition: The first page that a visitor to your site sees, usually designed with the aim of getting the visitor to take a specific action. A lot are designed solely to convert visitors from online adverts into donors.

Many organisations are experimenting with Google adverts and using the web as a response mechanism for TV, radio and press campaigns. More and more supporters are choosing the web as their way to donate. However, organisations are slipping up and losing a lot of potential donations because of poor quality landing pages. It's all very well getting people to the landing page, but the important thing is to get them to act.

You and I have probably both had experiences where the landing page we were sent to from an advert didn't really relate to the advert. Many organisations just use their home page for a campaign rather than a dedicated page. This is wrong.

I recently did a bit of desk research after seeing an item on the news about the famine in the Horn of Africa. I wanted to find a charity to donate to who were working in the Horn of Africa. To begin with I typed the words 'hungry children' into Google and a range of charity adverts appeared beside the search results.

Then I clicked one of the adverts with the hope of making an immediate donation. The advert looked promising. It talked about 11 million people in the Horn of Africa who were hungry and needed help.

But the landing page that came up wasn't very helpful and was actually about the charity's strategy for responding to emergencies not about this specific emergency.

There was no mention of the 11 million people starving in the Horn of Africa nor was there an opportunity to donate on the page. This was quite frustrating and many potential donors would give up at this point and look elsewhere. However, when I did attempt to go elsewhere, and looked through the other charity adverts against the search results, nearly all failed dismally – most sent the visitor to a home page, which was general, not specific.

It can be incredibly frustrating to find the page you're taken to has little or no relevance to the advert text, particularly when you're looking for something to buy or, as in this instance, to donate to charity.

Charities are slipping up in a whole series of ways with landing pages because they're not adopting a scientific approach to developing them that is based on testing. However, there are

some simple principles and techniques you can follow to make your landing page successful in converting supporters. Here's a few of them.

Rule 1 - make your landing page relevant to the text in your advert. Don't send people to a general home page because you'll lose most of them. To emphasise continuity use some of the text from your advert in the headline or sub headline.

Rule 2 - keep the page as simple as possible. Don't have a top menu or any unnecessary links. These will cause some visitors to leave the page.

Rule 3 - the right approach to design is very important. For example, the landing page needs to be optimised for all browsers. The text should be set within a key line which can be surrounded by a coloured background. Any photos should be set left. There are many studies on the way people peruse direct marketing materials. It has been shown that web photos on the right of a page tend to draw people away from the copy.

Rule 4 - the single most important factor on any webpage is the headline. Just like with any direct marketing campaigns – press, direct mail etc – the headline is the key element that persuades the visitor that they have come to the right place to donate and take action. Test your headlines.

Rule 5 - the best landing pages are focused on a specific objective, like making a donation. Some landing pages need to work hard and may contain as many as 8,000 words. Others, like those in response to an international emergency, just need to outline the basic case for giving. And just like a direct mail letter you need to ensure the copy is based around the acronym AIDA - attention, interest, desire, action.

Rule 6 - test, test, test. Test your landing pages. Google have a package of software for optimising and analysing web campaigns. Within this package there is a specific piece of software called Website Optimiser. With this tool you can set up multivariate tests on your landing pages. <http://services.google.com/training/websiteoptimizer/2995095/index.html>

Rule 7 - reassure the reader. Be upfront about your data protection and the security of your donation processing by putting an information box beside the copy at the top of the page very briefly outlining your policy on these areas. An example: www.themagicofspain.com

These suggestions simply represent a starting point. Take some time to do some in-depth research into landing pages and you will find your conversion levels soaring. Try reading *Landing Page Optimization: The Definitive Guide to Testing and Tuning for Conversions (Paperback)* by [Tim Ash](#), which is available from Amazon.

In the next article in this series we'll look at some of the ways of advertising and marketing online that could potentially bring you thousands of new supporters.

Tim Walker
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