THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF CONVERSION-CENTERED DESIGN:
A FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGNING EFFECTIVE MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

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THE LANDING PAGE BUILDER FOR MARKETING TEAMS & AGENCIES
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WHAT IS
CONVERSION-CENTERED DESIGN
AND WHY SHOULD I CARE?
When was the last time you went into IKEA to pick up a Billy bookshelf and walked out with only the bookshelf? Despite your best efforts to walk in and out with what you came for, you inevitably wind up with a car full of junk products, an ice cream in one hand and two hotdogs in the other.

There’s a good reason people have such a visceral emotional response to any utterance of the store’s name (other than the traumatic memory of attempting to assemble a dresser with their spouse).

**IKEA stores aren’t designed to help you achieve a single goal.**

They don’t care about the “optimal route” to the cash register — they want you to snake in and out of the showrooms. They want you to stop and fantasize about chopping imaginary vegetables on their impeccable countertops. They want you to fumble over which curtain pattern is just right. And they want you to take a well-deserved break halfway through your shopping trip to devour some Swedish meatballs.

If you’re shopping for a new fridge and you know that’s all you need, you’re better off going to an appliance showroom, where the goal is clear: Get your gadget and get out.

**This focus on a singular goal is the same focus that lies at the heart of Conversion-Centered Design (CCD).**

For a marketer, conversion means convincing a visitor to do one thing and one thing only. Not one of many things, not accomplishing it in under seven seconds, not successfully navigating from one point to another — just completing a single business-driven objective.
CCD helps you design experiences that guide the visitor towards completing that one specific action, using persuasive design and psychological triggers to increase conversions. In other words, it’s about persuasion.

And as you’ll learn, persuading your prospects to take the desired action you want them to take doesn’t have to be difficult (especially when you’re not distracting them with 99¢ hotdogs).
WHY LANDING PAGES ARE INSTRUMENTAL TO CONVERSION-CENTERED DESIGN
While the concepts I’ll be sharing can apply to virtually any web page, the Conversion-Centered Design framework is especially useful for creating delightful and effective marketing campaigns.

When I talk of a campaign, I’m referring to a calculated marketing activity which has a source (email, Adwords/Bing, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and a corresponding destination landing page: a standalone page that uses a variety of psychological and design principles to usher visitors toward a single purpose — like getting prospects to fill in a form or click through to another page.

**WHY LANDING PAGES?**

Why should you send traffic to a campaign-specific landing page as opposed to your homepage or another internal page on your site?

Unlike homepages that call for self-guided exploration, landing pages are uniquely equipped to be optimized for conversion because they are laser focused on a single goal: that of your marketing campaign.

No external links or navigation bars interrupting the flow of the page. No distractions or rabbit holes for prospects to slip into. Just one clear, friction-free path to completing your singular campaign goal.

So prospects can get what they came for and get out.
The principles in this ebook are meant to be tested on your own marketing campaigns and landing pages. But you don’t have to start from scratch.

Unbounce’s landing page builder includes a vast selection of high-converting mobile-responsive landing page templates in a drag-and-drop interface. Unlike other platforms where the templates are fixed and rigid, Unbounce lets you customize everything.

We’ve got beautiful, flexible templates for every kind of marketing campaign, including:

- Lead generation
- Ebooks and webinars
- Agencies and consultancies
- Health and wellness
- Retail and ecommerce
- Real estate
- Travel and tourism
- SaaS products
- Mobile apps

CHECK OUT UNBOUNCE’S FREE TEMPLATES
PART 3

THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF CONVERSION-CENTERED DESIGN
The order in which I’ll present the seven principles corresponds with the order with which your visitors will enter and exit the campaign experience you design. The principles are as follows:

1. **Attention**

   It all begins with your ad or email, which function to attract Attention. Once the visitor arrives on the landing page, it’s your headline’s job to hold or maintain that Attention. Finally, it’s the job of your landing page design to focus your visitor’s Attention on the action you want them to take. In this section, I’ll share techniques for capturing and keeping your visitor’s Attention from your traffic source to the conversion point on your landing page.

2. **Context**

   In large part, Context is how well the initial above-the-fold landing page experience delivers on the promise made in the ad or email. In this section, you’ll learn how to create a strong Contextual bond with the source of the campaign and reassure visitors that they’ve made a “good click.”

3. **Clarity**

   Clear as mud? That’s not what you want people to think when they’re on your landing page. Principle three is all about learning to write copy that quickly and effectively communicates the value proposition of the campaign. Context confirms that you are in the right place — Clarity makes it easy to understand the value in what you’re reading.

4. **Congruence**

   Now that you have your visitor’s Attention, they know they’re in the right place, and they understand the value proposition, don’t get lazy with the content on your landing page. Congruence is all about alignment, and in this section, you’ll learn about the importance of aligning every element of your landing page with the campaign goal. This includes removing anything from your landing page that doesn’t speak directly to the goal you set when creating your campaign.
5. **Credibility**

Trust. Believability. Alignment with your customers’ beliefs. These are the traits of a credible landing page. If your testimonial photos look like stock, or your trust seals and privacy statements seem desperate, you’ll have a hard time convincing a potential customer to believe in you or your product/service. In this section, I’ll discuss ways to encourage and inspire rather than turn people off.

6. **Closing**

The final step in the campaign conversion process is getting people to actually fill in your form and click on your call to action (CTA). The principle of Closing is about studying the area around your CTA, the design of your CTA and the copy you use to inspire a click. I’ll also show you why it’s important to recognize and remove negative influences that can unknowingly creep into your Closing argument.

7. **Continuance**

In this section, I’ll show you how the principle of Continuance — making sure every action you request of your audience leads naturally into the next step — can be used to get a second conversion and create campaign momentum loops, and how to create a post-conversion experience better targeted to your ideal customer.

As we go through each of the principles, ask yourself where you are doing a good job and where there is room for improvement.

It’s all about being open to honest reflection of the experience you’re creating for visitors, leads and customers.

The benefit of thinking about your campaigns in the context of each of these principles is that it gives you clear direction as to where you should start optimizing.
1. ATTENTION

**Squirrels are jerks.** They are bad for conversion. They’re the bright shiny objects that make dogs run in the wrong direction, and made me write this wholly unimportant extra sentence that you’re reading right now.

This is what’s happening to you right now: You’re experiencing diversion, or misdirection. My rambling has diminished your ability to comprehend what my point is and as a result, you’re increasingly likely to stop reading and bugger off to a place that’s less demanding of your brain cells.

“Gaaaaaaa, stop making me think!” — Everyone, circa now.

This is the impact that a poor **Attention Ratio** has on your landing page’s performance.

“What’s Attention Ratio?” you ask. Good question, my friend. And here’s the answer:

Attention Ratio is the ratio of the number of things you *can* do on a given page, to the number of things you *should* do.

When talking about marketing campaigns, you should only have a single goal (or you’re doing it wrong), and thus the Attention Ratio should be 1:1.

Your homepage could have an Attention Ratio of 10:1, 20:1 or 150:1. The worst I’ve seen was 183:1, and I wanted to take a long walk off a short pier when I saw it.

When you are running a marketing campaign, you have three choices when selecting the destination of your campaign traffic: your homepage (HP), an internal site page (IP), or a dedicated landing page (LP).

It’s easy to see that as we progress from HP to IP to LP, the number of distractions — actions that can be taken — moves from what can be 100:1 down to 1:1.
Let’s dig a little deeper into the difference between your homepage and a landing page to illustrate good and bad Attention Ratio.

**HOMEPAGE ATTENTION RATIO 57:1**

The wireframe below is based on the Virgin Mobile USA homepage — it has 57 links. If you’re promoting the campaign in red, then not only will it be hard to find amidst all the clutter (the Attention Ratio is 57:1), but also there are so many competing elements that your prospect will either hit the back button or click on another of your promos. Both of which results in a failed campaign.
What's wrong with them clicking another promo? Surely a sale is a sale. NO.
If they don’t interact with the campaign you’re promoting, your AdWords statistics will reflect a failure.

**LANDING PAGE ATTENTION RATIO 1:1**

Next, take a look at the landing page below. It’s very clear that there is only one thing to do here — Attention Ratio is a perfect 1:1. Accordingly, the purpose of the page is much more clear.
CASE STUDY - REMOVING PAGE NAVIGATION

In a case study from the VWO blog, a homepage with navigation (A) was tested against a landing page with no navigation (B). The Attention Ratio dropped from 15:1 to 3:1 and the result was a 100% increase in conversions.
CASE STUDY - REMOVING LINKS AND SOCIAL SHARE BUTTONS

Unbounce ran its own A/B test for an ebook download landing page:

(A)

(B)
Variant A has a series of links to related content and some social share buttons. (Though a much better location for them would be the confirmation page — who would share an ebook before reading it?)

Variant B has these links removed.

The Attention Ratio test is 10:1 vs. 1:1. The result? Variant B resulted in 31% more ebook downloads.
THE EXCEPTIONS TO A 1:1 ATTENTION RATIO

A common question when discussing Attention Ratio is if there are exceptions where you can actually benefit from a higher ratio. The answer is yes. There are two exceptions.

1. Multiple links/buttons with the same goal

On long landing pages, you should repeat your call to action throughout the page so it’s there to trigger action based on the different content being read. You can even use different CTA copy on each button to see which encourages the click. This is okay as long as each button has the exact same campaign goal.

Have a look at this A/B test for my Landing Page Conversion Course landing page:

The first page has an Attention Ratio of 1:1. The second, with an Attention Ratio of 12:1, outperformed the original version by 15%, as shown in the following test results.
2. When using anchor links in navigation

Consider Unbounce’s **Call to Action Conference** landing page:

Notice how there is a nav bar at the top of the page with six links (an Attention Ratio of 7:1)? Surely that breaks the Attention Ratio principle? Not in this instance because each link simply scrolls you down to the appropriate section of the page. They aren’t “leaks” that take you elsewhere.
ATTENTION RATIO IN EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

Now that you understand Attention Ratio, consider what happens when you’re running an email campaign and sending an email to someone on your list.

The example on the right isn’t a landing page — it’s an email newsletter. The Attention Ratio is 86:1, which means it’s incredibly unlikely that someone will complete the action you want them to take.

And if you consider the context within which the email is read — Gmail for example — the attention ratio shoots up to 130:1 due to the extra distractions of the Gmail interface.

Now the Attention Ratio has become 130:1 due to the extra distractions of the Gmail interface.

Not to mention that you’re fighting with a multi-tab browser environment, with notifications from Twitter, Facebook and your prospect’s mother.

This is why it’s imperative that we adhere as closely as possible to the perfect 1:1 ratio — whether on a landing page or in an email.
WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

At Unbounce we have a massive amount of data mined from our customers’ landing pages. The chart below shows how the number of links present impacts the conversion rate for a sample of 20,000 active lead gen landing pages:

With the average number of links sitting at 4.39, it appears that a large number of businesses could increase conversion rates by testing the removal of links.

As you can see, adding more links progressively decreases the conversion rate of a page.

It’s important to note, however, that these are statistical averages. What this means is that the data is suggesting there could be a positive impact on conversion rates if you remove some distracting links. The way we should be leveraging this type of data is to consider it an insight that can inform a hypothesis for an A/B test.

But wait! While decreasing the number of links on your page may boost your conversion rate, you will want to leave links to privacy policies — they are instrumental to making your page feel trustworthy and aren’t often clicked.

Dealing with Attention doesn’t stop there though — limiting actions to one is only the start. Once you’ve done that, you also need to understand how to use design to focus your visitor’s Attention. Let me introduce Attention-Driven Design.
Attention is a limited resource. Each time you add a link to a page, you deplete your prospects’ mental energy. But if distraction is the enemy in this story, Attention-Driven Design is our hero.

In this 68-page ebook, I’ll take you on a journey towards achieving visual simplicity through psychology and interaction design — with plenty of real-web examples.

**In this free ebook, you’ll learn:**

- How *Horror Vacui* causes marketers to build crappy marketing experiences that deplete our mental energy
- How to design pages with perfect attention ratios (and when to bend the rules)
- How psychology and interaction design can help us increase attention (and conversions)

GET THE FREE EBOOK
2. CONTEXT

In the first section, we learned how landing pages help secure more conversions from your campaigns because they have an Attention Ratio of 1:1. But landing pages are also key to creating targeted pages that provide better Context for visitors — our second principle.

UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT

Are you giving prospects all the information they need in order to convert? It’s your responsibility as a marketer to provide the necessary Context: both pre-click and post-click.

PRE-CLICK

There’s much you can learn about the intent and expectations of your users based on the source they came from.

Put differently, the source of the inbound traffic (pre-click context) gives you clues about what a user will be expecting to see on your corresponding landing page (post-click requirements). The diagram below illustrates the level of pre-click Context that exists according to the marketing channel.

For example, consider if the source of your campaign traffic is coming from a promoted tweet or in-stream Facebook ad. Visitors are less likely to be intimately familiar with your brand, and you have very few characters and a single image to set the stage. Check out this Facebook ad promoting our Attention-Driven Design ebook.
An in-stream ad like this on Facebook only allows for \textit{145 characters and an image} — not much space to provide Context. Luckily your post-click experience can do some of the heavy lifting.

**POST-CLICK**

Depending on the channel being used, the landing experience can require different styles, types and amounts of information in order to connect the dots.

This means that your corresponding landing page has to pick up the slack and make up for missing Context. It should echo the copy from your ad, but also expand on it and continue to persuade.

Check out this landing page for the ebook.
Notice how it elaborates on the value proposition and drives home the conversion by flaunting social proof and detailed benefits?

**MESSAGE MATCH AND DESIGN MATCH**

There are two relatively straightforward concepts that can help you maintain Context from your traffic source to landing page:

1. **Message Match** is all about having a headline that closely matches the headline or call to action of the upstream ad/email.

2. **Design Match** is the same except it’s based on the **hero shot** and color palette of any visuals presented in the ad/email.
I did a webinar recently with Litmus, which lets you build, test and monitor emails. For the webinar, they sent the email shown below, with the target landing page built in Unbounce, shown opposite the email.

Notice how the Message Match and Design Match work to produce a very tightly coupled experience? The hero image is repeated and the copy (from the CTA to the headline) is mirrored perfectly on the email and landing page.

These matches maintain a strong scent throughout the experience. The major benefit of this tight coupling is that it immediately confirms that visitors are in the right place when they arrive on the landing page.

That frees them from re-interpreting the headline and allows them to progress to the remaining content on the page.

Every time you implement strong coupling, you increase the likelihood that your visitors will stick around. After all, they were interested enough to
click your email/ad, so your number one job is to deliver on the promise you made prior to the click.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR HEADLINE

Here’s an example of a landing page I arrived on after clicking a link in a chat thread.

Not much was said about the purpose of the page, so the pre-click Context was low. That’s not my point though. What I want you to consider is the immediate impact of arriving here and attempting to understand what the page is about.

Upon arrival, there is no headline above the fold, so I’m not being greeted with enough information to tell me I’m in the right place. That’s a Context fail.

I reached out to the page author to point this out and he quickly changed it to the following.
What a dramatic change!

Now this page is set up correctly to match the messaging of an ad or email.

Whatever the Context of the pre-click experience, remember that your ad attracts Attention, and it’s the job of your landing page headline to maintain that Attention long enough to determine whether the page delivered on the pre-click promise.

You’ll be surprised how common this situation is, which makes it imperative for you to audit your marketing campaigns for Message and Design Match.

**EXERCISE**

Look at your campaigns in Context — your pre- and post-click experiences side by side. If you step back six feet from the screen (or printouts on a wall), ask yourself how strong is the connection between the two?
3. CLARITY

You’d think that the principle of Clarity is fairly self-explanatory, but confusing landing page copy is everywhere. I look at thousands of pages, and many leave me scratching my head.

Clarity is so important for conversion, in part because we are such impatient internet animals. If we make our visitors strain and struggle to figure out what our offer is or why our business is unique, the back button will become the CTA, sending folks back to the next ad in the list.

UVP VS UCP

There’s an important distinction to draw when thinking about dedicated campaign-specific landing pages vs. your website’s homepage. Your homepage’s primary job is to communicate your Unique Value Proposition, whereas your landing page’s job is to communicate the Unique Campaign Proposition (hat tip to Bryan Eisenberg for that term).

Your Unique Campaign Proposition is related just to the purpose or offer of your campaign, which might not be the same as the value proposition of your website/homepage. For instance, for a webinar, you want to talk about the topic and guest — not your product or service.

If you’re doing branded search PPC then the landing page may well have an identical UVP and UCP, but for other campaigns (for a sale, special offer, webinar invite, ebook download, etc.) the UCP is much more targeted on one specific task.

“Your landing page's job is to communicate your Unique Campaign Prop (a.k.a. What is your offer?)”

TWEET THIS QUOTE
**INFORMATION HIERARCHY**

*Information Hierarchy* is concerned with the order with which the copy on your page is presented, both in literal terms (which comes first) and in terms of the visual dominance (what stands out most).

Consider this page from an unnamed email marketing solution.

Notice how the prominent, bold headline is vague and doesn’t even reference email marketing?

It isn’t until you read the subhead that you understand what the page (and the service) is really about.

To drive this point home, I decided to run an experiment. I ran a five-second test at *Usability Hub* to see what happened when people answered the simple question: “What does the product do?”

Here is a word cloud showing the responses. Common words are emphasized with larger sized text:
A staggering 6% of respondents answered the question correctly. Would you be happy if this was your business? If people didn’t understand your value proposition in the first five seconds?

I decided to flip the headline and subhead to see if the Clarity in the subhead improved the results.

**IT’S EASIER THAN YOU THINK TO CREATE PROFESSIONAL EMAILS THAT KEEP YOUR CUSTOMERS COMING BACK**

We make it easy to grow your business

**The verdict?** With the subhead and headline reversed, **20% of respondents answered the question correctly** — a pretty dramatic increase in correct responses.

Five-second tests are a great way to uncover Clarity problems, and if you have both a headline and subhead communicating your UCP, consider trying the headline flip for a follow up test.
Now, I’m not recommending you simply flip it and forget it. But think about your Information Hierarchy, and make sure you are telling your story in the right order, and that your subhead is there to add Clarity, not be the sole holder of it.

“5-second tests are a great way to uncover Clarity problems.”

TWEET THIS QUOTE
CLEAR VS. CLEVER

Another reason pages often lack Clarity is that marketers are often sucked into trying to be cute or clever in their communications. You can see from some recent changes in CISCO’s homepage headline below how distinct this difference can be when it comes to clearly communicating your UVP or UCP.
The headline “Digital means dollars” could stand in for any online business. It doesn’t speak to benefits or describe what the services actually does. It’s trying to be cute and doesn’t add any Clarity.

But the new headline, “IT is fast, again” speaks a little more to what makes CISCO unique. It could stand to be more specific, but it at least explains a little of the benefits involved.

Similarly, in the next example, the old version (top) is trying to ride the “unicorn” buzzword wave — a vague word that adds zero actual value. Conversely, the updated version (bottom) speaks directly to a startup company, with the subhead clarifying what there is on offer:
If you’re worried that you might be using wishy-washy, jargonistic terms on your pages, we’ve created a Chrome extension to help. Here’s how it works:

1. Download and install Unbounce’s Dejargonator Chrome Extension.

2. Run it on any landing page or website — offending phrases will be highlighted in red. (You can test it on this extra sleazy page here.)

3. Hover over the red text and see what’s wrong.

4. Finally, update your page to be:
   a. Less sleazy and superlative-y
   b. More specific (and thereby more persuasive)
4. CONGRUENCE

Congruence, simply put, is aligning every element on your page with your singular campaign goal. We’ve all been in a meeting with stakeholders from different departments who want a piece of the action. Or maybe your boss insists on adding something extra to everything you do.

Every time you listen to that evil devil on your shoulder and add content or links to your landing page that are not aligned with your campaign goal, you’re beginning a downward spiral into mediocrity. And you’re designing a marketing experience according to the voice of many as opposed to the voice of your customer.

EXERCISE

The simplest way to grade your landing page on Congruence is to take all the content (every paragraph/headline/subhead/image description) and put it into a boring-ass Excel spreadsheet.

This exercise not only removes any emotions caused by the design, but it will also allow you to take an objective look at your content and determine whether it’s moving away from your campaign goal.

For example, check out the following landing page and corresponding Excel document:
Here’s how the scoring works:

If the content is aligned with (congruent with) your campaign goal, it gets a 2. If it’s sorta/kinda aligned, it gets a 1. If it doesn’t have anything to do with the campaign goal, it gets a 0.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Element</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>Ocean of data instantly become security intelligence</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subhead</td>
<td>Whitepaper download: the next generation firewall is here</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero shot</td>
<td>Photo of a man holding some paper which is obscured</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>Watchguard XTM is the next generation firewall of choice for businesses and enterprises alike providing best in class network security at affordable prices</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullets</td>
<td>Blazing fast throughput</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullets</td>
<td>Advanced networking features</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form header</td>
<td>Download your whitepaper! Complete the required fields</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonial</td>
<td>It’s about the product not the value in the whitepaper</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form fields</td>
<td>Country, province/state, phone number</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>About the product, not the form goal which is whitepaper</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy statement</td>
<td>sell, nasty, spam</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call-to-Action</td>
<td>Get my offer</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>3/24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this example, I gave a score of 3/24, which is quite shameful... but also awesome because it immediately teaches you **what you need to change to be more aligned with your initial campaign goal**.

**CONGRUENCE ON YOUR WEBSITE**

There’s an important distinction to draw when thinking about dedicated campaign. As I mentioned earlier, while these principles are most effective in the context of a marketing campaign with a **corresponding landing page**, they are still useful when optimizing your website. We saw this at Unbounce first-hand when we set out to optimize a page on our site that answers the question, “What is a landing page?”
Looking in Google Analytics, we discovered that the most common next step was to visit the “landing page templates” page from the navigation, which is a powerful page in the journey to becoming a customer.

Knowing this, we refocused the page on our new goal: to get more people from this page to visit the templates page.
To optimize the page, we ran an experiment with two overarching changes (this is where the CCD principles of Attention and Congruence came into play):

1. **Attention: We removed all content links and sidebar navigation.** There were distracting SEO-based links spread throughout the content, which distracted from our new campaign goal. They also lowered the page’s Attention Ratio, which originally sat at 27:1 (49:1 if we included the footer navigation).

2. **Congruence: We added a call to action to the bottom of the page linking directly to our templates page.** Because research told us that the common next step was to visit our templates page (and because we knew that every page needs a call to action), we added a big orange CTA button to encourage people to go directly to the templates page.

It seems obvious right? All of the best ideas do. Simply removing these distractions increased visits to the templates page by 172.1%.
5. CREDIBILITY

“I don’t believe you. It’s that simple. I don’t want to listen to what you have to say, and you can’t convince me to change my mind because I made it up the moment I saw your landing page, or read the supposedly real endorsements and testimonials for your product.”

That’s what happens when someone lands on your page and encounters any element that strikes them as untrustworthy.

To counter this, you should create/source/request content for as many types of social proof as are relevant to describing the trustworthiness of your business.

Here are the different types of trust elements that can appear on your page, to give you an idea of which page elements you should be trying to create:

- Tribes and relatability
- Privacy policies
- Seals
- SSL - HTTPs
- Testimonials
  - Quotes
  - Twitter/social mentions
  - Photos
  - Videos
- Social shares
- Referrals
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Customer lists
- Customer lists
  - Photos
  - Logos
- Your friends bought/tried/liked/shared this
- Number of sales
- Rankings
- Endorsements
  - Photo
  - Video

That’s a lot of proof. My recommendation is to create a living document that you constantly update with fresh validatory content as and when it comes to you. You should be monitoring social media and doing regular outreach to your customers, industry partners and fans.
CONGRUENCE AND CREDIBILITY

Another reason pages often lack credibility is that marketers collecting testimonials is only half of the battle. Where you put them and how you use them is almost as important as the content itself.

If you study the Unbounce.com homepage (note: we’re constantly running tests so it may not look as shown below all of the time) you will see that feature-specific testimonials are placed under a description of that product feature.

There’s lots of talk about features and benefits and how to describe your features in terms that demonstrate the benefit. Letting your customer talk about it rather than doing it yourself is one way of adding extra Credibility.

**BONUS TIP**

This technique is repeated throughout the page to provide an experience that leverages three principles of Attention-Driven Design: Consistency, Repetition and Proximity. Check out my ebook on the subject to learn 23 visual principles for designing more persuasive landing pages.
HYPERBOLE, RELATABILITY AND BELIEVABILITY

It’s simple, really. If your testimonials sound vague, your entire page loses Credibility.

Consider this testimonials example from a landing page that is selling an online photography course.

The first thing to note is the hyperbole-laced testimonials. We’ve all seen them before: statements claiming the product or service is life changing, amazing, mind blowing or a game changer.
I very much doubt that this photo course saved Cathy’s life. And that makes me start to tune out.

It continues in the fourth testimonial: “Reaching out to Megan is one of the best things I’ve ever done!”

I think it would be stronger if the first sentence was removed — hyperbole is a Credibility killer (luckily, our Dejargonator Chrome Extension can help with that, too).

Analyzing the testimonials further, I made several observations.

I’m a photographer, and also a man, and seeing that all of the testimonials are from women makes me stop and wonder if it’s a course solely for women. It’s wonderful if that’s the case, but from the information presented I’m a little unsure.
Humans are tribal by nature. We tend to more strongly believe what people say when we have a relationship with them. A biker is much more likely to trust an opinion about motorcycles from a fellow biker than they would from an accountant.

Furthermore, the success of your social proof lies in your ability to demonstrate the transformative effect of your product or service on the lives of your users. There’s nothing in the testimonials above that points to the success of these course members as a result of Megan’s tutelage.

A great way to demonstrate this transformation would be to show the classic before and after shots of how the course improved a student’s photography by taking the course.

Specificity is also key, as specifics are more believable than generic statements. When someone gets specific, we tend to believe that the experience they are describing actually happened.

Here’s how I would optimize a testimonial for this landing page:

Now it contains a relatable photo of Cathy (she’s holding a camera!), specificity by referencing the lesson material in the lesson material and the transformative effect of what she learned. (Photos are mine).
REFERRALS

One of the most potent types of trust is the personal referral.

A referral is a recommendation made by an independent party, often in the form of a social share. Don’t be afraid to ask your customers to tell their network about your product or service. An especially effective way to do this is through manual outreach — it’s time consuming but very effective.

You can also incentivize customers using a more formal referral program, perhaps giving discounted service when they refer other customers.

**Referrals leverage tribal behavior** — when you receive a referral from someone you relate to (someone in your industry, a friend or a colleague) you are more likely to trust in its value as it clearly influenced your peer.

Alex from help desk software Groove talks about the best time to ask your customers for a referral:

Customers who are referred by loyal customers tend to become loyal customers: they trust you more from day one, they stay with you longer and they spend more over their lifetime.

But asking for referrals can get tricky. If you ask at the wrong time, you’ll either get ignored (if you ask when they’re simply not thinking about you) or worse, you’ll get an angry customer (if you ask when they’re actually dealing with an issue with your product).

What I’ve found to work best here is to make the ask when the value that you deliver is most apparent to them.

That will be different from business to business, but for us, that might mean:

- Right after a support interaction where we’ve helped them accomplish something
- Right after hitting a particular usage milestone (e.g., sending
1,000 support emails through Groove

- Right after they add-on another feature/product (e.g., a third-party integration)
- Right after they positively respond to an NPS survey

“Boost Credibility on your page by including specific, transformative testimonials that credit your product/service as the source.”
6. CLOSING

There’s nothing more simple yet complex than asking someone to make a decision. Yes or no. Do it or don’t do it. Now or later. Now or never.

Closing the deal is tricky, but it’s made easier if you understand the dynamics and psychology involved in making a decision. There are several factors that influence the decision to click — some are positive and others are negative.

NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

Negative influences are what I call “stop words”: words, phrases or graphical elements that are placed in close proximity to your CTA which may create a moment of pause as your visitor contemplates its meaning.

Words such as “spam” in privacy statements below your CTA have been shown to decrease conversions because they plant a negative inference in the mind of your prospects right at the point of conversion.

Trust seals are commonly used with the goal of increasing confidence, when in reality they can come across as desperate, causing reflection like, “Why are they trying so hard to convince me of the security of this transaction? Is it not really secure or trustworthy?” More often, the key to a secure transaction is the presence of the lock icon in the address bar that denotes that the page uses a secure socket layer (SSL).

Avoid using stop words like “spam” around your CTA—they induce anxiety and can negatively affect conversions.”
POSITIVE INFLUENCES

Examples of positive influences are statements that reduce anxiety at the point of conversion.

For instance, being explicit about how long it will take for a call back gives people a point of reference. “We’ll respond to your request within four hours” is much stronger than no statement at all.

For a webinar registration, mentioning that the session will be recorded eases the anxiety of not being able to attend, encouraging people to register anyway.

CLICK-WORTHY CTA COPY

Another critical part of the conversion equation is what you actually write on your buttons: your call to action.

At Unbounce, we’ve looked at our customers’ landing pages to learn more about the impact of different words and phrases in CTA copy. And some of the data is quite surprising...

THE PRICE OF FREE

Contrary to popular belief, I’ve found in several A/B tests that the word “free” can have a negative influence on conversions.

I think in part this is because we are all becoming savvier about marketing practices. Giving your email to a company is a form of social currency and thus is not free. We understand that we’ll be marketed to over email — making the reference to “free” seems a little like a bait and switch.

On the microsite for our Landing Page Conversion Course, I used a Qualaroo survey widget to ask what was preventing people from starting the course. Two common answers were “How much does it cost?” and “I don’t know how much it is.”
Based on that feedback, I hypothesized that reiterating that the course was free in close proximity to the CTA would result in more conversions (button clicks).

I used my photo (as the author) and in a subtle way, mentioned that the course was free. The result of the A/B test?

**The new treatment lost by 14%.**
This got me thinking about the power of the word “free.” We dug deep into our customer data and discovered the following impact of including the word “free” in a CTA (versus not mentioning it).

As you can see, across 20,000 landing pages, **CTAs without the word “free” converted on average 16.8% better than those with the word “free.”**

The chart below illustrates some other words that are commonly used in CTA copy, and their effect on conversion.**

**Note: data shown represents lead gen landing pages only (pages with a form).**
7. CONTINUANCE

After the conversion has taken place, your work’s not done. As a optimizer you should **think of what a possible next step could be**, and design an experience to ask your new lead/customer to take that action.

There’s a fine line between being pushy and actually offering someone exactly what they would like to get/have/experience/buy next. It’s an art, and if you’re like me, it’s based on the learnings from multiple levels of experimentation. **Above all though, you must ask for something.**

Let’s start with a list of the types of things you can ask people to do on a confirmation page weighted by how much of a commitment is required to perform the Continuance action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuance Action</th>
<th>CL*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social share</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscribe to newsletter/blog</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webinar registration</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch a demo video</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend a webinar</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend a live demo</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start a free software trial (no credit card)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start a free software trial (credit card required)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I’ve scored each according to an approximate level of commitment or effort required for your customer to perform the Continuance action. The reason for this is that you **don’t want to have too big of a leap between where you are in the customer lifecycle and the next step you’re asking them to perform.**

If they just registered for a webinar (3) and you want them to start a trial of your software (7), you might determine that you’re asking for too much too early. Asking if they want to see a demo might be a 5 — and thus more appropriate.
There’s no science here, it’s just a smart way to look at the types of activities that exist in your marketing funnel and in which order you might want to present them to your leads and customers.

The key is to always be experimenting and measuring the impact of your Continuance actions.

**MOMENTUM LOOPS**

While many campaigns have a set start and end date, some campaigns eventually become evergreen. For those campaigns, there are things you can do to keep the momentum going.

For example, a digital event registration page (like *Unbounce’s Digital Agency Day*) will be active for the life of the promotion, receiving email, social and paid traffic. But when the event is over, **replacing the registration form with gated access to all the recordings** allows you to keep pulling in conversions, so that organic traffic becomes a source of leads now that it’s in its evergreen state.
Because your promotional efforts are over, this is when you might want to consider a social share as the primary Continuance action, so that you can maintain a decent flow of traffic coming back to the landing page.

**WHAT’S NEXT?**

The next steps are simple.

Walk through your current campaigns and reflect honestly on what kind of experience you’re creating for prospects. Are you paving a clear path to conversion? Or are you sending prospects through a labyrinth of distractions reminiscent of an IKEA showroom?

If you’re overwhelmed about where to start, have a look at where you’re sending your campaign traffic. While Conversion-Centered Design principles are effective for designing effective marketing campaigns start to finish, **they also make for high-converting landing pages.**
WANT TO APPLY CONVERSION-CENTERED DESIGN TO YOUR NEXT CAMPAIGN?

Use Unbounce to build delightful, persuasive landing pages that will make your next campaign convert like!

- Choose from 100+ fully customizable templates
- Test landing page variants quickly with our built-in A/B testing center
- Integrate with your trusted email, analytics, automation and CRM tools
- Track conversions with our simple two-step setup

GET STARTED WITH A 30-DAY TRIAL OF UNBOUNCE
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

OLI GARDNER

Unbounce Co-Founder Oli Gardner has seen more landing pages than anyone on the planet, a passion that he draws from his healthy disdain for marketers who send campaign traffic to their homepage. A prolific webinar guest and writer, he speaks internationally about the four corners of conversion: the intersection of copy, design, interaction and psychology.

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Oli is on a mission to help marketers combine data and design to create high-converting and delightful marketing experiences.