

RICH PAGE

TIM ASH

MAURA GINTY

LANDING PAGE OPTIMIZATION

The Definitive Guide to Testing and Tuning for Conversions

FULLY REVISED
2ND
EDITION



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Advance Praise for Landing Page Optimization: The Definitive Guide to Testing and Tuning for Conversions, Second Edition

I love it when someone who's obviously a true expert shares almost everything he knows. [Well, you've got to save something for your paying clients, don't you?] And I can't think of anyone who shares more than Tim Ash. I can't believe the amount of useful information and actionable insights he's crammed in here.

—Steve Krug, Author of Don't Make Me Think

Tim has figured out what so many people don't understand: your website can (and should) get better. Every single day.

—Seth Godin, Author of Meatball Sundae

Tim combines science, art, and psychology to show you how you can make your website both more usable and more profitable. Real-world examples and illustrations make each point clear. This book isn't just for big budget click buyers—every page of every website is a potential landing page. Landing Page Optimization is the ultimate guide to making web pages that get results, and it's an essential addition to every marketer's bookshelf.

—Roger Dooley, Author of Brainfluence and founder of Dooley Direct

You know that landing page optimization is important. What's missing is a manual that tells you exactly how to go out and get results. Fear not—here it is. Buy this book. Go rock it!

—Avinash Kaushik, *Digital Marketing Evangelist at Google, and author of Web Analytics 2.0*

Do you hear that sound? That is the sound of visitors bouncing away from your site without doing what you wanted them to do. Want a better melody? Tune your site to the sound of visitors giving you their money. Tim's Landing Page Optimization is a must-have for your bookshelf.

—Bryan Eisenberg, *New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestselling author*

Today's diverse and ever-changing Internet marketing environment can require daily, hourly, and even minute-by-minute fine tuning. Tim does an excellent job of explaining common pitfalls, how to avoid them, and how to execute advanced tactics. This book is a must-read for the modern Internet marketer.

—Kevin M. Ryan, *CEO, Motivity Marketing, Digital Next columnist*

A solid, business-focused approach to turning viewers of a website into customers. This is a book written by and for business. It's not about design: it is about increasing sales, gaining customers, and retaining them. Learn how to do the measurements; learn how to conduct experiments. Revise your website by analyzing what visitors actually do. It is always good to see a former student succeed: Tim Ash provides a wonderful example. This is the best business-focused, measurement-based guide to website design I have seen.

—Don Norman, *Cofounder of Nielsen Norman Group, former director of Northwestern's MBA plus MEM program in design and operations, author of Living with Complexity*

Landing Page Optimization

The Definitive Guide to Testing and
Tuning for Conversions

Second Edition

Tim Ash

Rich Page

Maura Ginty



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Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing *Landing Page Optimization: The Definitive Guide to Testing and Tuning for Conversions, Second Edition*. This book is part of a family of premium-quality Sybex books, all of which are written by outstanding authors who combine practical experience with a gift for teaching.

Sybex was founded in 1976. More than 30 years later, we're still committed to producing consistently exceptional books. With each of our titles, we're working hard to set a new standard for the industry. From the paper we print on, to the authors we work with, our goal is to bring you the best books available.

I hope you see all that reflected in these pages. I'd be very interested to hear your comments and get your feedback on how we're doing. Feel free to let me know what you think about this or any other Sybex book by sending me an email at nedde@wiley.com. If you think you've found a technical error in this book, please visit <http://sybex.custhelp.com>. Customer feedback is critical to our efforts at Sybex.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Edde', written in a cursive style.

Neil Edde
Vice President and Publisher
Sybex, an Imprint of Wiley

To my parents, Tanya and Alexander, for your love and sacrifices to get me here.

To my brother, Artyom, for your open heart and unfolding wisdom.

To my wife, Britt, for being my love and perfect partner on this wondrous journey.

To my children, Sasha and Anya, for showing me that joy is endless.

—Tim

To all those many thousands of websites that need optimizing!

To all my family and friends who motivated me to write this book and stuck with me through the many long hours of writing it.

—Rich

To all the people who taught me that words are fun.

—Maura

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—*Tim*

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—*Rich*

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—*Maura*

About the Authors



Tim Ash is author of the original bestselling first edition of the book *Landing Page Optimization*. The book has been reprinted numerous times and has been translated into six languages. Tim is the CEO of SiteTuners, a firm that specializes in improving website conversion rates through landing page diagnosis and redesign, conversion consulting, landing test plan creation, and internal client training/mentoring. Since 2002, SiteTuners has improved conversion rates for over 850 clients large and small, including Canon, Google, Expedia, CBS, Sony Music, Facebook, Nestle, Verizon Wireless, Texas Instruments, Cisco, Intuit, and Coach.

Tim is a highly regarded keynote and conference presenter, and the chairperson of Conversion Conference—the first international conference series focused on improving online conversions. He has published hundreds of articles about website usability, best practices in landing page design, and tactics to improve website conversion rates, and is the host of the *Landing Page Optimization* podcast on WebmasterRadio.fm.

After attending the University of California, San Diego on a U.C. Regents full academic scholarship, he received

his B.S. in Computer Engineering and Cognitive Science “with highest distinction.” Tim also completed his M.S. and C.Phil. degrees during his PhD. studies in Computer Science (specializing in neural networks and artificial intelligence) at U.C. San Diego.

He lives and works in San Diego, California, with his wife and two children. In his nonexistent spare time, Tim is an avid photographer, artist, and a certified Tai Chi Chuan instructor. He dreams of the long-ago days when he still had time to Salsa dance. Tim can be reached by e-mail at tim@sitetuners.com.



Rich Page has been analyzing and improving websites for over 10 years and is currently working as a conversion solution specialist at Adobe, helping Fortune 500 clients improve their testing and optimization strategies. Previously he worked for Disney Online on their web analytics and optimization team and graduated with a Masters in Information Technology from the University of San Diego. He has been blogging about web analytics and optimization topics for five years and is currently in the process of writing *Website Optimization: An Hour a Day*, which is slated for summer 2012 release from Sybex.

He currently lives in London, where he returned after spending nearly 10 years in Southern California. In his

spare time, he is a passionate classic rock fan and loves to sing karaoke and play tennis.



Maura Ginty is a search, content, and social media strategy expert with 13 years in online marketing. She started Autodesk's first centralized search engine optimization (SEO), web content, and social media programs.

She is a member of the Google Technology Advisory Council and a frequent speaker at leading industry events such as Dreamforce, Search Engine Strategies, SMX, Online Marketing Summit, and Conversion Conference. Her previous online adventures ran through JupiterMedia, Lonely Planet, Symantec, and various nonprofits.

Introduction

The train is pulling out of the station—will you be on it?

Landing page optimization is no longer a well-kept secret. It has rapidly become the most powerful method that smart Internet marketers use to build a lasting competitive advantage.

Well-optimized landing pages and websites can change the economics of your business overnight and turbocharge your online marketing programs.

Don't *guess* at what your visitors want. Turn your website or landing page into a dynamic laboratory to find out what they *actually respond to*.

But you must orient yourself quickly to learn a number of new skills:

- What is the real economic value of my landing page?
- Can I see the world from my visitor's perspective?
- How do I uncover problems with my website?
- What page elements should I change or test to get the best results?
- Can I build the necessary team and action plan for my optimization initiatives?
- What tools are available to help me optimize my website?
- How do I avoid the biggest pitfalls when running my test?

If any of these questions ring true, you have found the right book.

Who Can Benefit from This Book

If you are looking for an instant fix for your landing page, put down this book and look around for a "Top 10 ways to

increase conversions” entry on someone’s blog. You will not find any quick or easy prescriptions here. To truly benefit from this book, you will need to commit to understanding all of the important fundamentals of this challenging and rewarding field.

If you are involved in any way with making your company’s Internet marketing programs more effective, this book is for you. If you have already gotten your feet wet in landing page optimization, this book will take you to the next level and provide you with a solid framework for repeatable future success.

This book will benefit people in the following roles:

- Conversion rate optimizer
- Landing page developer
- Web designer
- Media buyer
- Copywriter
- Webmaster
- User experience engineer
- Affiliate manager
- Web analytics manager
- Product manager
- Advertising manager
- Marketing manager
- Director of online marketing
- Media director
- VP of online marketing
- CMO

What’s Inside

Landing page optimization does not fit neatly into any box on an organizational chart. It requires a truly diverse set of knowledge and perspectives in order to be

effective. Among other topics, you need to be familiar with web development, human psychology, copywriting, visual design, usability, team building, and the scientific method.

This book is a guide to this strange and wondrous land. We have spent a lot of time exploring up ahead and we've come back with a comprehensive map. Like many pioneers, we have suffered setbacks and endured many painful lessons along the way. Our sincere hope is that this book can shorten your own learning curve and help you become a more effective conversion rate optimizer.

Here's what you will find inside.

Part I: Understanding Landing Page Optimization

- **Chapter 1: “Setting the Stage”**
Helps you understand how landing page optimization fits into the larger picture of online marketing.
- **Chapter 2: “Understanding Your Landing Pages”**
Helps you understand the different types of landing pages, key target audience segments, and conversion actions.
- **Chapter 3: “The Matrix—Moving People to Act”**
Presents a disciplined framework for making sure that the important categories of people arriving on your landing page are able to complete their desired objectives in a systematic order.

Part II: Finding Opportunities for Site Improvement

- **Chapter 4: “Common Problems—The Seven Deadly Sins of Landing Page Design”**
Takes you through the common pitfalls prevalent on almost all landing pages.
- **Chapter 5: “Conversion Ninja Toolbox—Diagnosing Site Problems”**
Presents a number of powerful tools and techniques to help you uncover conversion problems.
- **Chapter 6: “Misunderstanding Your Visitors—Looking for Psychological Mismatches”**
Deconstructs the basics of the human decision making, social interactions, and cognitive styles from the perspective of persuasion.

Part III: Fixing Your Site Problems

- **Chapter 7: “Conversion Improvement Basics”**
Introduces the foundations of good usability, copywriting, and visual presentation.
- **Chapter 8: “Best Practices for Common Situations”**
Examines specific applications such as e-commerce catalogs, direct response, registration and sign-up paths, and mobile.
- **Chapter 9: “The Strategy of What to Test”**
Creates a framework for determining the most impactful changes to make to your landing pages.

Part IV: The Mechanics of Testing

- **Chapter 10: “Common Testing Questions”**
Reviews important elements of testing, including the basics of the math behind it, required length of data collection, and confidence in the results found.
- **Chapter 11: “Preparing for Testing”**
Surveys the common methods for creating and presenting test content, along with common testing issues.
- **Chapter 12: “Testing Methods”**
Presents a framework for understanding different landing page testing approaches and the implications of using each particular method.

Part V: Organization and Planning

- **Chapter 13: “Assembling Your Team and Getting Buy-in”**
Reviews all important stakeholder roles and company politics common to landing page testing. Suggests several strategies for getting started and discusses the decision to use in-house staff or outsource.
- **Chapter 14: “Developing Your Action Plan”**
Lays out a detailed framework for putting your optimization plan into action.
- **Chapter 15: “Avoiding Real-World Pitfalls”**
Describes several common pitfalls that can derail your testing program.
- **Appendix: “Landing Page Testing Tools”**

Provides an overview of some currently available landing page testing platforms.

- **Glossary**

Comprehensively covers important landing page optimization terms.

Please refer to the ConversionNinjaToolbox.com website for some additional landing page optimization resources described in this book.

Part I: Understanding Landing Page Optimization

All of us have our own unique perspectives and biases when dealing with landing page optimization and testing. The knowledge and belief systems that you bring to these processes will largely determine your success. As you study the topic of landing page optimization, you first have to get the right perspective. Part I of this book lays this groundwork. Leave all of your assumptions at the door, and let's get started. Part I consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 1 Setting the Stage

Chapter 2 Understanding Your Landing Pages

Chapter 3 The Matrix—Moving People to Act

Chapter 1

Setting the Stage

Life is like a sewer...what you get out of it depends on what you put into it.

—Tom Lehrer, American humorist, singer, and songwriter
What is a landing page? What does one look like from your perspective? How does it fit into the overall marketing picture? Can you convince every single web visitor to take the desired action on your page? Are you devoting enough attention to your landing page? Is it the right kind of attention?

This chapter examines these questions and sets the stage for understanding landing page optimization.

Chapter Contents

- What Is a Landing Page?
- A Few Precious Moments Online
- Your Baby Is Ugly
- Your Website Visitors: The Real Landing Page Experts
- Understanding the Bigger Online Marketing Picture
- The Myth of Perfect Conversion

What Is a Landing Page?

In a nutshell, a landing page is any webpage on which an Internet visitor first arrives on their way to an important action that you want them to take on your site. The landing page can be part of your main website, or a

stand-alone page designed specifically to receive traffic from an online marketing campaign.

Strictly speaking, it is not just the landing page that you should be optimizing, but rather the whole path from the landing page to important conversion actions (such as purchases, form-fills, or downloads) often happening somewhere deeper in your website.

So why pay so much attention to landing pages and important conversion paths instead of optimizing the whole website?

The famous 80/20 rule applies perfectly here—landing pages and paths represent your business-critical activities. They are the drivers of revenue and business efficiency. They are the “money” pages.

Of course if you plan to redesign your website from a clean slate, you should rethink everything and do so with conversion improvement primarily in mind. This kind of “best-practices” website blueprint approach has consistently resulted in significant performance improvements for SiteTuners’ clients. But you will naturally find that only a few pages (or page templates) on the site require special thought, work, and care. These are the ones to focus on—the rest are merely supporting pages.

A Few Precious Moments Online

The following is a story that helps to paint a picture of why it’s essential to focus on improving and optimizing landing pages.

Imagine that you are in charge of online marketing for your organization and the launch of its first website.