Understanding Landing Page Optimization

I

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:

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

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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?

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.

You have slaved for months to tune and optimize your campaigns. Countless hours and days have passed in a blur. You have created great pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns, bought additional banners and exposure on related websites, optimized your site for organic search engines, set up dedicated Facebook fan pages and Twitter accounts, created a powerful affiliate program with effective incentives, and set up the website analytics needed to track visitor behavior in real time.

You are standing by with a powerful series of e-mail follow-ups that will be sent to prospects or customers who respond to your initial offer or leave their contact information on your site. This approach should significantly increase the lifetime value of the relationship with your website visitor.

You feel pretty confident of the success that your marketing efforts will bring. Your website launches, and you log on to your web analytics tool to check what your visitors are doing. Much to your dismay, the first visitor arrives—and leaves in half a second. The next one lands on your site, clicks another link, and is gone as well. More and more visitors flash by—a virtual flood. Yet only a tiny percentage will take the action that you would like them to take.

Tim's Online Shopping Adventure

I was looking to buy a new camcorder online. First I used the Web to gather information about desirable features. Then I researched appropriate models. After deciding on the one for me, I invested hours of my time making sure that I bought the best possible one. I started looking for a place to buy it by typing the specific camcorder model name into a search engine. I got back a page of search results and began investigating the promising ones.

As I clicked on each link in my mission-oriented "hunter" mode, I looked in vain for intangibles that would cause me to stick around. One site was too cluttered with confusing links and options; another featured obnoxious colors and was plastered with banner ads; the next looked too cheesy and unprofessional. Other websites' failings were subtler: I could not readily tell the depth of their product or brand selection, and could not see at a glance which models were most popular or well received. I gave them a little more of my time and attention, but ultimately abandoned them as well. Click, backtrack, click, backtrack, click, backtrack—and so it went…until I found a company that was just right, and I bought my camcorder from them.

Sound familiar? The fact is that most of the companies that I had briefly visited sold the model that I wanted, had it in stock for quick shipping, and were in a similar price range. So why did one particular company get my money whereas most of the others got just a second of my attention? Helping to unravel this puzzle is what this book is all about. We want to make sure that your company is the one that is experienced as "just right" (or at least the best of the available choices) by more of your website visitors.

It's hard to figure out what went wrong since you only have your website visitors' fleeting attention for a split second. There is a lot that you do not know, including

- Who they are
- How they found you
- What they are thinking or feeling
- Why the vast majority of them leave so soon, without buying or "converting" in some other fashion

Luckily for you (and your job), you aren't the only one to be left in the dark. This type of situation plays out on thousands of new or redesigned websites and landing pages every month. This is because websites are usually built or designed with little thought for the visitor experience, and conversion rate optimization typically takes a back seat both to the visual design of the website and to driving traffic.

All of your hard work comes down to the few precious moments that your visitor spends on your page. During this fleeting interaction, all of your tools of persuasion need to be brought to bear in a powerful yet subtle fashion to achieve the desired result. This book will arm you step by step with all the important tools that you will need.

Your Baby Is Ugly

This book is not simply about learning new skills. It is about changing your relationship to your website and its visitors. Like a parent, you are probably very proud of your creation but you probably can't see it objectively. But let's get one thing straight. It's going to be painful to hear, but it's true.

Your baby is ugly.

Your landing page has significant and fundamental problems that affect its business performance.

Let's clarify. When we say "ugly," we don't just mean that it is lacking in artistic appeal (it may actually be very "pretty"). We are talking about the whole host of gross and subtle elements that contribute to your visitor's suboptimal total experience—often without your knowledge.

You are probably much invested in your role as a competent online marketing professional and are justifiably proud of your skills and experience. Other people in your organization are paying you for this knowledge and expect you to know what you are doing.

But let's take a look at the reality of the situation. Conversion rate optimization is a complicated activity requiring diverse skill sets. You are more than likely not trained in all the important skill sets necessary to become a world-class website optimizer.

Some of these skill sets include

- Usability principles and user-centered design
- Psychology and motivation
- Neuroscience
- Social psychology and persuasion
- Web analytics and statistics
- Direct-response copywriting
- Visual and website design

Even if you are trained and/or have experience in some of these skills, it's the well-rounded and deep *combination* of them all that is likely to produce results.

Please check your ego and your biases at the door. The first step is admitting that you have a problem.

Your Website Visitors: The Real Landing Page Experts

You can (within the limits of ethics and accuracy) represent yourself in any way that you want on the Internet. Your landing page is not written on stone tablets. In fact, it is the most ethereal of objects—a set of data residing on a computer hard disk that is accessible to the whole world. No one is forcing you to use the particular colors, page layout, pictures, sales copy, calls-to-action or headlines that comprise the page now.

> The only things stopping you from creating more compelling landing pages may be a lack of attention and imagination, and an intentional disregard of your intended audience.

The promise of better-performing landing pages is often tempered by a fear of making things worse than they already are. How are you to know in advance what will or won't work better? Yet you are supposed to be the "expert." Shouldn't your landing page already be perfect based on your extensive online marketing experience? What if your design knowledge was exposed as nothing more than subjective posturing and guesswork?

Don't be afraid. You have access to a real expert—in fact, thousands of them. You are interacting with them daily already, but you have mostly ignored their advice to date.

> The real experts on the design of your landing pages are your website visitors.

There is a lot of lip service paid in the profession of marketing to the "voice of the customer," when in reality we often ignore the customer and substitute opinions of people from our own company in their place. No matter how well intentioned, this policy is a big mistake.

Although you may never be able to answer why a *specific* person did or did not respond to your landing page, there are ways to determine what *more* of your website visitors would respond to. In fact, landing page testing can be viewed as a giant online marketing laboratory where your test subjects (your website visitors) voluntarily participate without being asked. Their very actions (or inactions) expose them and allow you to improve your appeal to a similar population of people that subsequently visit your page.

Websites and stand-alone landing pages have three properties that make them ideal as online laboratories. Let's look at each of these in turn:

A High Volume of Traffic   With high website traffic volumes, statistical analysis allows you to find verifiably better landing pages and to be confident in your decision. The best landing page version from a valid head-to-head test is a proven winner. Unlike previous nontested designs, they are no longer based solely on subjective opinions. Nor are they the results of popularity contests within your company or chosen according to the highest paid person's opinion (HIPPO). Without enough traffic, you risk making decisions that are not representative enough of your true audience.

Accurate Tracking Tools   Web analytics tools support the accurate real-time tracking and recording of every interaction with your website. Each visit is recorded along with a mind-numbing amount of detail. Reports can tell you the source of the visitors, the pages they most visit, their path through your site, the time that they spent lingering over certain content, and whether they were persuaded to act and to return in the future.

Ability to Easily Make Content Changes It can be easy to swap or modify the content that a particular visitor sees on your landing page. The content can be changed to show many variations of the same landing pages and can be customized based on the source of the traffic (referred to as *segmentation)*. Different content can also be displayed based on the visitor's behavior on the page or their past history of interactions with your site (referred to as *behavioral targeting*). In nonweb environments, it is expensive or time-consuming to come up with an alternative version or prototype. On the Internet, countless website content variations can be created and managed at minimal cost for a landing page optimization test. The more easily you can make changes to your website, the more flexibility and options you will have at your fingertips when coming up with ideas for improving your landing pages.

Understanding the Bigger Online Marketing Picture

Before we focus on the specifics, let's get oriented and see where landing page optimization fits within the following three key activities of online marketing:

- **Acquisition** Getting people to your website or landing page
- **Conversion** Persuading them to take the desired action(s)
- **Retention** Deepening the relationship with your website visitors and increasing their lifetime value

Each step feeds into the next. The efficiency of each online marketing activity can be viewed as a set of funnels like the one in Figure 1.1.
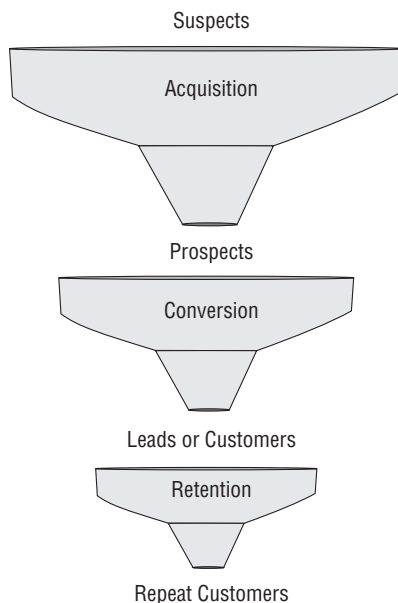

Figure 1.1 The activity funnel

Inefficient acquisition activities will limit the traffic to your site. A confusing landing page with a low conversion rate will restrict the number of leads or customers. Uncoordinated retention follow-up will fail to extract added value from your current prospects or clients. Ideally, you would like each step to have the highest possible yield.

Conversion Is the Weak Link

In the marketing world, a lot of time and resources are spent in acquiring traffic from sources that are thought to provide more high-converting visitors. You buy media, track PPC campaigns, drive organic traffic via search engine optimization (SEO), and implement web analytics tools to properly track all channels. Dedicated in-house or agency staff craft keyword lists, write ad copy, and manage keyword bidding to achieve the proper profitability, cost per action (CPA), and return on investment (ROI). Copywriters adjust our sales copy to improve clickthrough rates (CTRs). Every aspect of performance can be scrutinized under a microscope.

Once someone converts, extensive retention e-mail campaigns are set in motion to persuade visitors to deepen their level of engagement. You worry about every single word in your e-mails as you test headlines and offers. You analyze bounce rates, open rates, and unsubscribe rates with almost religious fervor in order to extract the last penny of revenue and profit possible over the lifetime of your interaction with someone.

But you have almost completely ignored your website and landing page and how well they are converting visitors for the site's goals. Figure 1.2 perfectly illustrates the common and sad state of affairs.
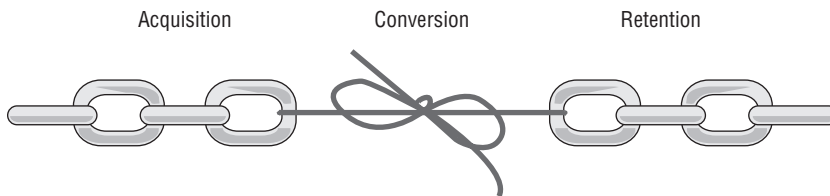
Figure 1.2   The weakest link

What's wrong with this picture?

Sure, you occasionally do minor facelifts or even complete redesigns of your sites. But these changes are rarely tested and are simply assumed to improve the situation. They are just a cost of "doing business." And even though you may spend obscene amounts of money to buy traffic, the effort that you devote to the landing pages to which it is sent is negligible. A couple of hours of graphic designer and copywriter time are often all that the landing page merits. After a cursory review by the higher-ups, the landing page goes live.

Worse yet, you assume that the quality of the landing page cannot be changed, so you do not even look to it for improvements. You turn all the other knobs and dials at your disposal and continue to neglect the biggest profit driver under your control—the

conversion efficiency of the landing page. And this is costing a lot of money in the form of missed opportunity. Double- or triple-digit conversion rate gains are routinely realized by conversion consultants and in-house optimization teams. Yet there is still a widespread perception among online marketers that their landing pages are already solid and can't be improved significantly.

> Your website and landing page conversion rates have been neglected for much too long—costing you a lot of money.

Because of the large amounts of money spent on acquisition and retention, sophisticated systems have been created to maximize the ROI of these activities. When you neglect the langing page, the money you spend on acquisition and retention is largely wasted, flushed down the proverbial toilet. Many companies are now beginning to understand that website and landing page conversion can have a dramatic impact on online marketing program profits. That's where the new battleground is in the coming years. As management guru Peter Drucker stated, finding keys to competitive advantage can be the difference between a mediocre company and an industry leader. Don't forget also that if you are one of the few in your industry to understand this weak link and fully optimize it, your company, your boss, and ultimately your career will certainly benefit.

Acquisition

Acquisition activities focus on generating traffic to your website or landing page. The goal is to create an awareness of your company or products and enough interest for your target audience to visit your site.

Web marketing experts use a variety of methods to drive traffic. They can be broadly grouped into online and offline methods, although there is often some overlap and mutual reinforcement between the two.

Online Acquisition Methods

Web marketers typically use the following *online* methods for driving traffic:

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) The process of making your website pages appear near the top in unpaid search engine results for important keywords relevant to your business is known as *search engine optimization*, or *SEO*. People using search engines show focus and a specific intention to act, so search engine traffic often has a high onsite conversion rate.

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising continues to be a popular way to get seen on search engine results pages (SERPs) and content networks. Short paid advertisements appear side by side with traditional SEO results, with the highest bidder usually getting the top (most visible) spots on the page. While optimized PPC campaigns often convert at a high rate, competition for many commercial keywords may be high and result in increasing prices.

Banner, Text, and Rich Media Ads Banner ads, which were once the most common form of online ad, have seen a steady decline in CTRs due to banner blindness—the increasing tendency for site visitors to ignore these types of ads. Simple banners have evolved to rich media ads, including interactive, video, peel-back (like Figure 1.3), interstitial, and other ad types that often cost more but often perform better.

Figure 1.3 Example of a peel-back ad

Social Networking Sites Social networking sites allow people to connect in communities of shared interest. Within them, individuals and businesses can engage in powerful and often unguarded two-way conversations with other community members. In addition, many social networks allow a presence for companies and organizations (see the Conversion conference "Fan" page on Facebook in Figure 1.4) and offer segmented advertising opportunities based on the rich profile information of people on the network. Because of these features, social networks can often become a low-cost source of highly targeted, well-converting traffic.

Affiliates Affiliate programs allow a company to pay only on a success basis if someone refers traffic to its landing page. Traditional advertising makes you pay for exposure only (in the form of payment for number of page views that contain your ad or a clickthrough to your site).

The next logical step is to pay for some well-defined success metric (such as a free-trial sign-up or an actual purchase). Many companies have well-established affiliate programs through which performance-based partners direct traffic to the site and are credited on a commission basis if the desired conversion action takes place.

Figure 1.4 Conversion Conference fan page on Facebook

If affiliate programs are set up properly, they can help send targeted and qualified traffic to a landing page. If the activity of the affiliates is unregulated, the resulting traffic can often be of poor quality and experience significant and sudden changes in volume and composition.

In-House E-mail Lists An "in-house" mailing list is one that your company has collected over time in the normal course of its marketing activities. Its quality varies based on the exact activities used to collect the e-mail addresses (ranging from dropping cards in a fishbowl at a tradeshow booth, to free webinar registration, or contact request form-fills on your website).

If used properly, in-house mailing lists gathered from your own website can become an asset that grows in value over time. In-house mailing lists are at the core of retention activities and will be discussed in the "Retention" section later in this chapter.

Third-Party E-mail Lists Third-party lists are ones that you rent for the purpose of sending recipients information about your products or services. Typically the people on the list have no actual relationship to your company and did not specifically request any kind of communication from you.

Usually you do not have direct access to the e-mails on the list—you simply have the right to "drop" or e-mail to the list on a one-time or recurring basis. Often the list owner can filter the list based on additional demographic information associated with each e-mail address in order to more effectively target your intended audience.

The quality and targeting of third-party lists vary widely. Some are clearly low quality and will be perceived as spam by recipients. Others can provide a good overlap with your intended audience, as long as repeated mailing to the same list doesn't lead to burn-out and *list fatigue* (lower response rates over time).

Blogs The number of blogs continues to explode. Blogs exist on an uncountable range of topics and are often focused on deep subject matter coverage of very narrow niches. Once a blog author has a reputation as an expert, resulting exposure from a blog post may result in highly engaged traffic from their reader base. The traffic resulting from a blog post is usually spiky in nature. The vast majority of it will come within hours of the blog post, and a long tail of traffic will dribble in over time as others read the post in the archives section of the blog or discover it in search engines.

Collaborative Authoring and User-Generated Content Sites Certain websites are built for collaboration. Anyone can add content to them in the form of news and discussion forums, product reviews on e-commerce sites, or contributions on reference topics. Often there are communities of dedicated volunteers who police the behavior of other members to make sure they are contributing useful content and following official and informal community guidelines.

Some examples include Yelp's city guides (with restaurant reviews from their readers), Wikipedia (a collaborative encyclopedia completely written by its members), and eBay (the biggest online auction site where your reputation as a seller depends on the reviews of past purchasers). Links in these sorts of content entries can direct visitors to your website or landing page.

Video and Interactive Game Content This content type grew with the increased adoption of high-speed Internet connections. Many video clips now include promotional ties. As video production becomes less expensive, more small companies create rich media and larger companies create YouTube channels, ads, and contests. Many companies are also driving traffic by embedding links in online games and quizzes.

Offline Acquisitions Methods

People do not live strictly in the online realm. They have online experiences mixed with exposure to your brand in the physical world. The offline methods that you use to drive traffic will lead to a web visitor directly typing your URL into a browser. It is difficult to accurately credit the traffic coming from offline sources (with the exceptions noted

in the following list). A single visitor may be driven to your site from multiple sources (both online and offline) and may have been "touched" (interacted with your content or at least noticed it) multiple times before arriving on your site.

Common effective *offline* tactics include the following:

Brand Awareness A direct traffic referral means that the person is specifically aware of and looking for your company, often due to its strength in an industry sector or category. Although not strictly an offline method, brand awareness traffic is usually achieved as a result of repeat exposure to your brand in diverse settings, including offline.

TV, Radio, Print, and Outdoor Advertising Traditional broadcast media are trying to adjust to the accountability inherent in the online marketing channels and become more trackable. Many of these broadcast ads specify a campaign-specific URL as one of the possible response mechanisms (for example, a TV campaign might direct viewers to `http://YourCompany.com/tv`). This is not foolproof, because many people may still drop the last part of the URL and simply type in the company name.

Public Relations and Media Coverage Various public relations activities can result in mentions of your company in print and broadcast media. Typically your site will experience a spike of coverage-related traffic after such events.

Industry Tradeshows and Events An opportunity to speak and exhibit in front of a targeted audience can generate highly targeted traffic. Many key influencers, analysts, and decision makers also attend or network at topical conferences.

Client Referrals Current and past clients can be excellent sources of additional traffic. If a company has a specific incentive program to reward existing and past clients for referrals, the mechanism for completing the referral transaction is done via the Web.

Direct Marketing and Catalogs Direct response marketing (from TV infomercials, to mailers and printed catalogs) has a long history of trackable success. Many of the conversion points for traditional marketing have moved online. This is accomplished either through specifying dedicated landing page URLs or by using "promo code" discounts that must be entered during online checkout.

The resulting mix of offline traffic hits a website at a number of places. Some visitors will arrive on your homepage, whereas others may land deep within your site, or even on specially designed single-purpose landing pages that are not connected to your main website at all.

Conversion

Since conversion is the main topic of this book, let's start with some definitions.

As explained earlier, a *landing page* is the point at which an Internet visitor lands on your website and is often the critical first point of contact. Landing pages can

be stand-alone with no connection to your main website. They can also be part of a specialized microsite that is focused on a particular audience and desired outcome. The landing page can also be a specific page somewhere on your main company website.

A conversion happens when a visitor to your landing page takes a desired *conversion action* that has a measurable value to your business. The conversion action must be defined ahead of time, it must be trackable, and its business value must be clear (either directly calculated or estimated based on historical numbers).

The desired action can be a purchase, a download, a completed web form (a lead), or even a simple clickthrough to another page on your website. Conversions can also be measured by having someone interact with a particular feature of your site (such as taking a product demo tour, viewing a video, or submitting a product review). A conversion can also be considered in more subtle brand-interaction terms, such as reaching a certain threshold of page views per visit, repeat visits, return frequency, time spent on your site, or a high site rating response from survey tools.

Websites often have more than just one conversion action but usually will have a few main *macro conversions* that are the most important (such as a sale, free trial sign-up, or lead form completion).

Websites will also often have additional intermediate *micro conversion* points on the way to the macro conversions (such as a clickthrough to another important page, a download of informational materials, adding an item to a shopping cart in an e-commerce catalog, or the completion of a single page in a multistep process).

The basic definition of *conversion rate* is the percentage of visitors to your website or landing page who take a desired action, and it is usually calculated by dividing the number of conversions by the number of unique visits that occur during the same timeframe, as follows:

$$\text{Conversion rate} = \text{Number of conversions} \div \text{Unique visitors}$$

The full catalog of possible conversion actions is covered in detail in Chapter 2, "Understanding Your Landing Pages." You may also find Chapter 14, "Developing Your Action Plan," helpful in terms of calculating the economic value of your conversion actions and building the business case for your projects.

Conversion rates vary widely across different industries and even between competitors in the same industry. Often conversion rates can even vary significantly between different sources or segments of your traffic. For example, targeted PPC traffic sources and repeat visits will often convert higher than other segments.

Retention

Retention is the third key online marketing activity, and it is closely tied to conversion. Once someone has become aware of your company and made initial contact, you must deepen your relationship with them to extract any future value. In *Permission Marketing: Turning Strangers into Friends and Friends into Customers* (Simon &

Schuster, 1999), author Seth Godin accurately lays out the changing balance of power between consumers and companies. Consumers are in almost total control and are increasingly immune to traditional advertising assaults. They tune out most interruptions and focus only on what is important to them. If they notice you, they will give you limited "permission" to interact.

Retention programs should seek to build on the initial permission with anticipated, personal, and relevant ongoing communications. Over time, as you earn the consumer's trust and continue to provide value, you are granted higher levels of confidence.

Retention programs start immediately after the initial conversion action on your site has been taken. This initial action may have been an e-mail sign-up for your newsletter or a whitepaper download. It will often not be the actual initial purchase of your products or services. But you can leverage the right to contact the person by educating them via a set of automated e-mails and leading them closer to the ultimate desired action.

The basis for all retention programs is the ability for the user to receive information from your company on an ongoing basis. So the minimum requirement is that they have given you their e-mail address or phone number, or included you in their blog or news feed reader (also known as an RSS feed). Let's take a look at these sorts of communication channels:

E-mail E-mail is probably the most widely used of all retention media. Sophisticated e-mail campaigns can be set up to touch specific recipients with a preprogrammed sequence of messages and have recently proven successful in retaining and converting existing website visitors.

Automated e-mail content can be customized and modified based on interactions with previous e-mails or even webpages themselves. The key is to not lose your hard-earned subscribers' trust with unrelated offers or overly heavy sales pitches.

Newsletters Newsletters are a close cousin to and a specific use of e-mail retention marketing. Their main goals are to educate a prospect and offer news regarding promotions and new features, ultimately aimed at enabling the reader to make an informed buying decision at some point. Their editorial tone is generally neutral, and calls-to-action subtly nudge the reader to come back to the website and take the next step in the buying process.

Blogs and News Feeds The goal of news feeds is to get a reader to subscribe to and automatically receive updates from a blog or an accredited news source or publication. Unlike e-mail, newsletters, or news feeds, blogs allow for two-way interaction between the company and an audience. Often the real value of a solid blog is in the comment threads and discussions among its readers. This is one of the major reasons for a recent major shift toward public company blogs.

Rewards and Loyalty Various "points" programs give people incentives to act, such as frequent-flyer miles or "every fifth car wash is free." Online tracking allows retention marketers to reward granular events such as responding to e-mail promotions, participating in surveys, or referring others. All of these rewards are designed to get a user to engage and convert later for other goals that are more valuable to the company.

Retention marketing is critical to an online company's profitability. Effective programs can have a multiplier effect on revenues by increasing lifetime value of the client relationship. You will also typically have much higher profit margins with repeat customers because the incremental cost of marketing to them is minimal.

The Myth of Perfect Conversion

Don't make the mistake of assuming that every visitor is a potential prospect that will become a repeat, long-term buyer of your goods or services. That would be a delusion. The mythical 100 percent conversion rate simply does not exist.

There are three types of visitors to your website:

1. Noes—Those who *won't ever* take the desired action
2. Yesses—Those who *will always* take the desired action
3. Maybes—Those who *may* take the desired action

You should completely ignore the first two and concentrate on the last group. Let's examine this concept more closely.

Some visitors to your website are not prepared to take action. They may be unable to afford what you sell. They may work for your rival and are merely checking the competition. Or they may have been simply surfing the Web and thought that it was worth a second of their time to look at your landing page—kicking your website's tires, so to speak. There are countless reasons why someone will not take the desired action. The important realization is that there is *nothing that you can do to influence them to act*. For most landing pages, this group is by far the largest of the three.

There is also a group of visitors who will always take the desired action. There is ample evidence for this. People will put up with maddeningly difficult registration or checkout processes. They will seek out links and information that are buried deep within websites. In general, they will display a degree of tenacity that is staggering.

Why do they do this? Some are already sold on what you are offering due to outside influences. Still others have searched far and wide and have been able to find only your company as a viable answer to their immediate and burning needs. Others are just tired of looking further and have settled on your company as the best alternative that they have seen thus far. Regardless, short of a broken website, nothing will deter these people from taking the desired action on your landing page. The main point is that *these people do not need any convincing by you*.

The final group of undecideds contains a wide variety of people. Some of them are almost there—a small improvement in your landing page or website might get them over the hump and result in the desired action. Others may need significant additional persuasion and hand-holding in order to come around. Figure 1.5 shows the range of possible visitor dispositions toward the desired conversion action.
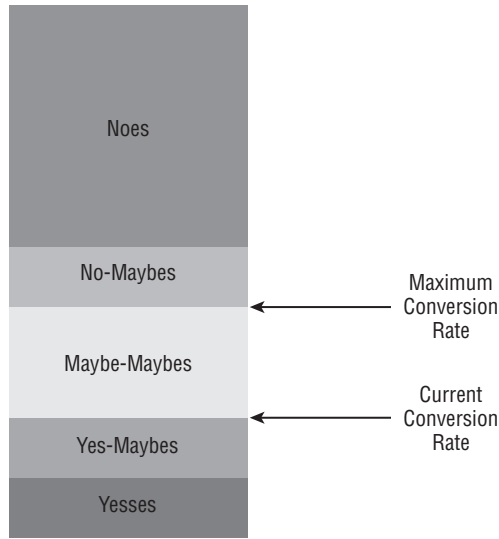
Figure 1.5 Visitor dispositions

Unless your website is truly ineffectual, you are already converting some of the maybes. This segment of "yes-maybes," along with your yesses, makes up your current conversion rate. However, even with the best landing page you will not be able to convert all the people in this group at once—they have contradictory needs. Landing page changes that sway a particular person might repel another. So at best, you can hope to convert only a portion of the undecideds. The remainder (the "no-maybes") will forever be out of your reach. So the maximum conversion rate improvement that is possible for your business is limited to capturing the rest of the "maybe-maybes" that are still up for grabs.

Of course, it is impossible to precisely measure or even estimate the sizes of these segments for a particular landing page or website. But you should understand that your actual conversion rate "ceiling" is well below 100 percent.

The next chapter defines different landing page types and discusses conversion goals in detail.