

THE CONVERSION MARKETER'S GUIDE TO LANDING PAGE COPYWRITING



EDITOR'S NOTE

Copy is so pivotal to the success or failure of your landing page that it's easy to take it for granted. No matter how valuable your offer or beautiful your design, it's the actual words on the page that will ultimately persuade prospects to click, or drive them to bounce.

Because words are so personal, so specific to your unique offer and audience, I thought finding credible copywriting advice that goes beyond the basics was a fool's errand. Until I saw Joanna Wiebe speak. In her charming keynote at the Call to Action conference in Vancouver, Joanna introduced several **deceptively simple but extremely actionable** principles that have since become mantras around the Unbounce office. Joining forces with her on this ebook was a no-brainer.

What you're about to read is an **advanced guide for professional marketers who are looking to get more out of their online marketing campaigns.** If you're sending traffic to dedicated landing pages and know you could be converting better with strategic copy improvements, look no further. If you're just getting started with landing page optimization and want to get a leg up on the competition, we've included links throughout the book to the **[Conversion Marketing Glossary](#)** where you'll find definitions of key terms and concepts so you can follow along.

The beauty of conversion rate optimization is that it never stops. You can always make your pages more **relevant, more persuasive and more delightful.** The same goes for becoming a better writer. The area where those two ideals intersect – conversion-centered copywriting – is what this ebook is all about. We hope you find it useful.

— **Dan Levy**

Content Strategist, Unbounce



DO IT IN UNBOUNCE

TEST EVERYTHING IN THIS EBOOK

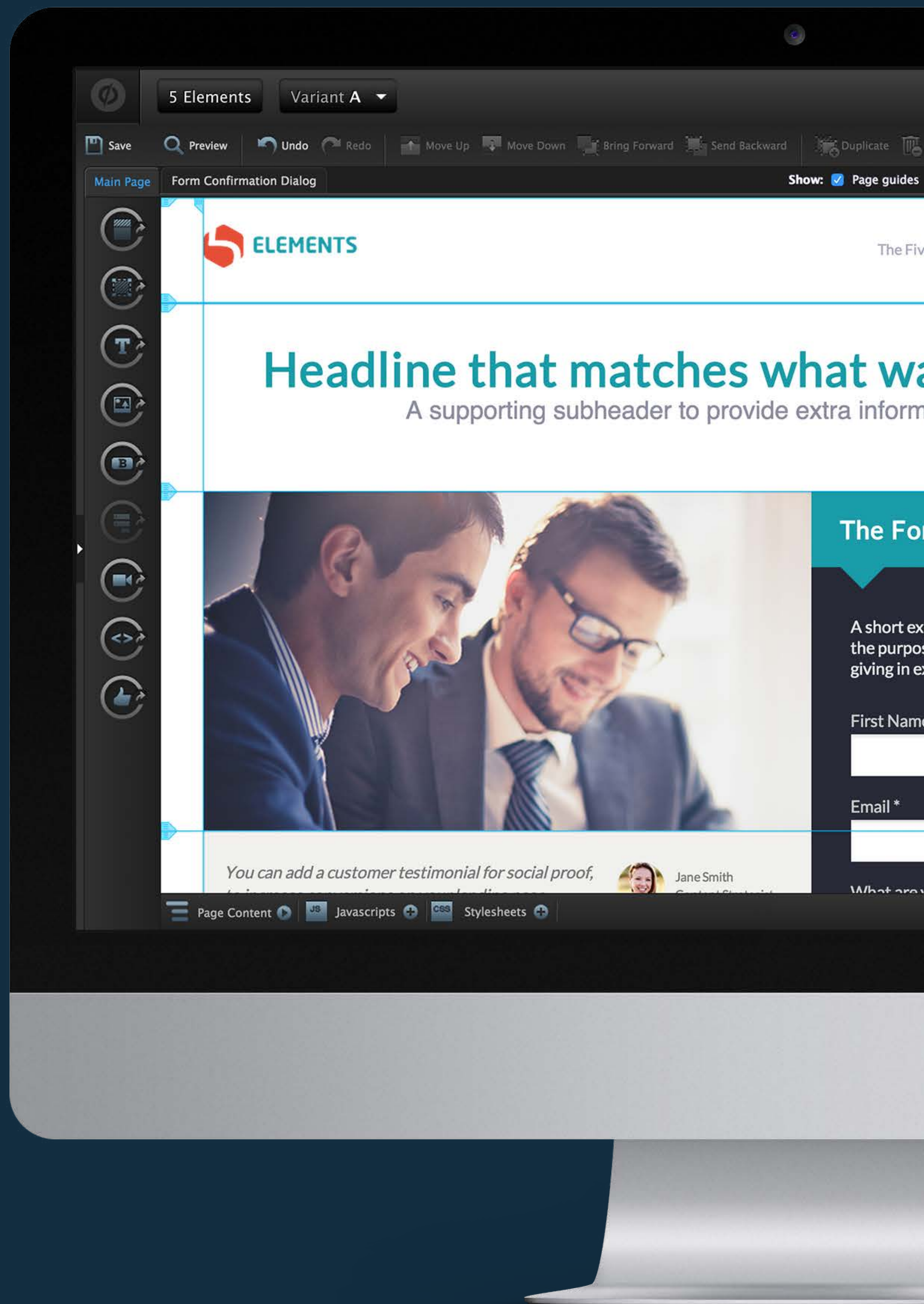
The advanced tips and tactics outlined in this ebook are meant to be tested on your own landing pages.

With Unbounce, you can quickly build landing pages for each of your marketing campaigns and then **test the crap out of your headlines, your body copy and your call to action buttons.**

Unbounce landing pages can be used in your pay-per-click, email, social media and content marketing campaigns to persuade and convert prospects better than your homepage ever could.

With Unbounce, you can...

- *Build, publish and test landing pages without relying on developers.*
- *Optimize your campaigns for mobile by using responsive templates or starting from scratch.*
- *Dynamically replace your landing page copy to match your ads.*



TRY UNBOUNCE FREE
FOR 30 DAYS

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PART

1

**THE 4 FOUNDATIONAL
PRINCIPLES OF WRITING
HIGHER-CONVERTING
LANDING PAGES**

COPY IS YOUR ONLINE SALESPERSON. When it comes to your *landing page*, your copy needs to convince visitors to do the one thing that you most want them to do on your page. Which means the success – or failure – of each and every landing page you create is riding largely on your copy.

How do you write really stellar landing page copy? Not waste-of-time fluff. Not rambling warm-up copy. How do you write copy that actually gets through to visitors?

In this ebook, I'll walk you through the essentials of writing better landing page copy, starting with the following four foundational principles.

What you're about to read is informed by more than 10 years of hands-on experience in copywriting, UX and A/B testing – so it's not just a guess, and it's not just a few tricks that have worked for one client in one industry.

These are the strategies and techniques that could dramatically transform your ho-hum copy into the stuff conversion legends are made of. So print this ebook out and put a copy on the desk of every marketer you know.



1. START WITH THE PAGE GOAL AND WORK BACKWARD

Every landing page should have one goal. Only one goal. Not one primary goal with three supporting goals and a few bonus calls to action sprinkled in here and there. One goal.

Before you write a page – before you even think of the URL for it – you need to decide on the single goal of the page. If you have stakeholders in your business who will be signing off on the page copy, you need to ensure they know what the page goal is from the outset. The goal could be to get visitors to:

- *Opt in for your newsletter.*
- *Opt in for a consult, a webinar, an ebook or other bait.*
- *Watch an embedded video.*
- *Submit a question or comment.*
- *Share on social media.*
- *Invite a friend.*
- *Start a trial.*
- *Pay for your solution.*

Single-goal landing pages not only minimize the paradox of choice for your visitors, but they're also much easier for you or your copywriter to write because they're so focused.

Let's say the goal for your retargeting landing page is to get returning visitors to opt in for the live webinar you host every Wednesday afternoon. Your copy only needs to engage your visitor in a conversation that will convince them to attend your webinar next week.

They don't need to know about your business, your products, your VC funding history, your career opportunities, your latest blog post. They don't need to be bothered with comment fields or buttons to tweet out your page.



They don't need to hear about your free weekly newsletter or how to get sweet offers from you.

They only need to be presented with copy that will make it easy and desirable for them to sign up for your webinar next week. That copy would likely include:

- The **value proposition** for the webinar.
- A quick summary of the webinar topic.
- At least one very intriguing question that will be answered in the first 5 minutes of the webinar.
- Details about the webinar, like the date, start time, length and host(s).
- **Anxiety reducers** about the webinar, such as the fact that a recording will be made available for X period of time to those who've registered.

Then, make it easy to register.

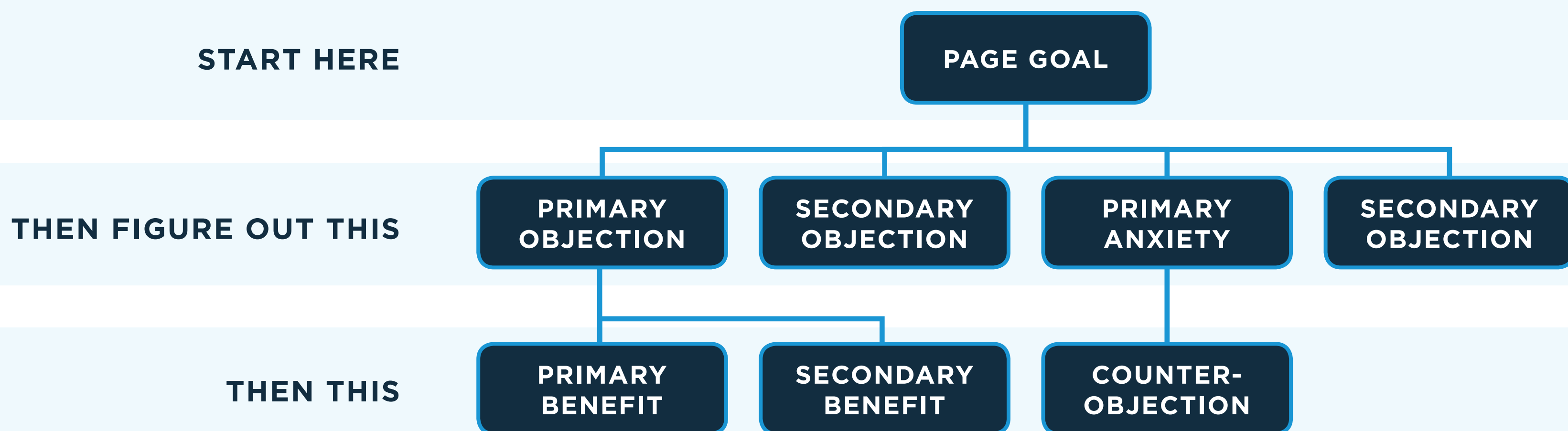
Now, this foundational principle isn't just about having one page goal. It's about starting with that goal and "working backward" - versus starting with a **headline** and trying to move visitors toward the goal.

The goal is what matters. So start there, and work backward through the sequence of objections and anxieties that are most likely to get in the way of conversion, all the way up to the point where you've found the benefit or value prop to message in your headline. This is what I mean:

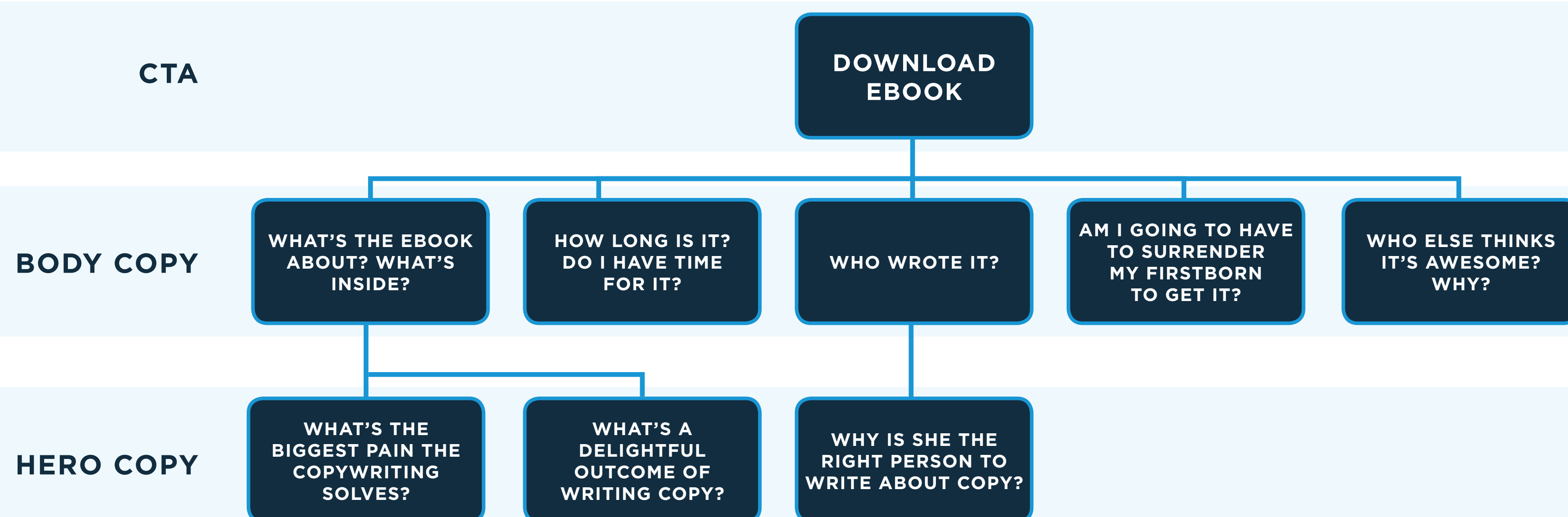


PRO TIP

I call this The Prism Principle: When writing your close, think of your offer as a prism, and shine a light through it. Let yourself "see" a range of colorful outcomes of taking your business up on the offer. Write those in short bullets near your call to action.



So here's what that might look like if you were to write a landing page to, say, download an ebook on writing landing page copy.



You might then write a headline that will lead to your page goal while also connecting with your prospect in a way that is for more meaningful than, “Download This Free Copywriting Ebook.”

Here's what this looks like on a landing page for Unbounce's [*Ultimate Guide to PPC Landing Pages*](#). You'll notice that the objections and anxieties aren't necessarily addressed in the order I laid out in the chart above, but you get the idea:



Everything on your page should fall naturally out of your page goal. Start with the **call to action**, and work backward. Don't start by dreaming up a headline and then trying to fill in the page with stuff that might make people want to complete the page goal. **Start with the goal.**

" Every landing page should have one goal. Only one goal. "

 TWEET THIS QUOTE



EXPERT INSIGHT

HENNEKE DUISTERMAAT

Irreverent copywriter and marketer at [ENCHANTINGMARKETING.COM](https://enchantingmarketing.com)

WHY YOU NEED A DEDICATED LANDING PAGE FOR EVERY CAMPAIGN

Imagine you're on a tropical vacation. You arrived at your resort late last night. You're feeling a little groggy from the jetlag, but the sun is shining. So you decide to go to the sea for a swim. You follow the signs for seaside. But when you get to the seaside... No white sandy beach. No palm trees. Only a stinky little harbor full of fishing boats.

You'd be disappointed, wouldn't you?

This is exactly what happens online when your landing page doesn't live up to your promise.

What did you promise in your email?

Which wording did you use?

As soon as you divert from your message or use a different tone of voice, your reader starts to feel uncertain. His resistance to your sales message increases because you've not lived up to your promise so far.

Your landing page has to match the promise, the tone of voice, the words of your upstream message - whether it's an email, PPC ad, or social traffic.

— Henneke

2. EVERY PART OF YOUR MARKETING CAMPAIGN HAS ONE JOB

You've heard that the headline is the most important copy you'll write for your landing page. Marketers put a lot of stock in – and pressure on – our headlines. For the past ten or so years, content marketers have blogged relentlessly about how to write headlines, which has resulted in a massive accumulation of expectations placed on those six to twelve little words at the top of your page. You may expect your headline to do all of this:

- *Grab visitors' attention*
- *Match the language on the call to action that drove visitors to the page*
- *Help you rank for a keyword phrase*
- *Get visitors to read the next line on the page*
- *Express your value proposition*
- *Summarize the content on the page*
- *Convince people to sign up or buy*

That's crazy. No headline could do all of the above.

Your headline has one job.

Your subhead has one job.

Your body copy has one job.

Your form has one job.

Your button has one job.

Your confirmation message has one job.

Think of the elements on your page as workers on an assembly line. Every worker has her own job for which she is responsible. Every job must be done well to keep the conveyor belt going; if one job along the line isn't done well, it makes it impossible for the other workers down the line to do their job.

Here are the jobs to consider when writing conversion copy:

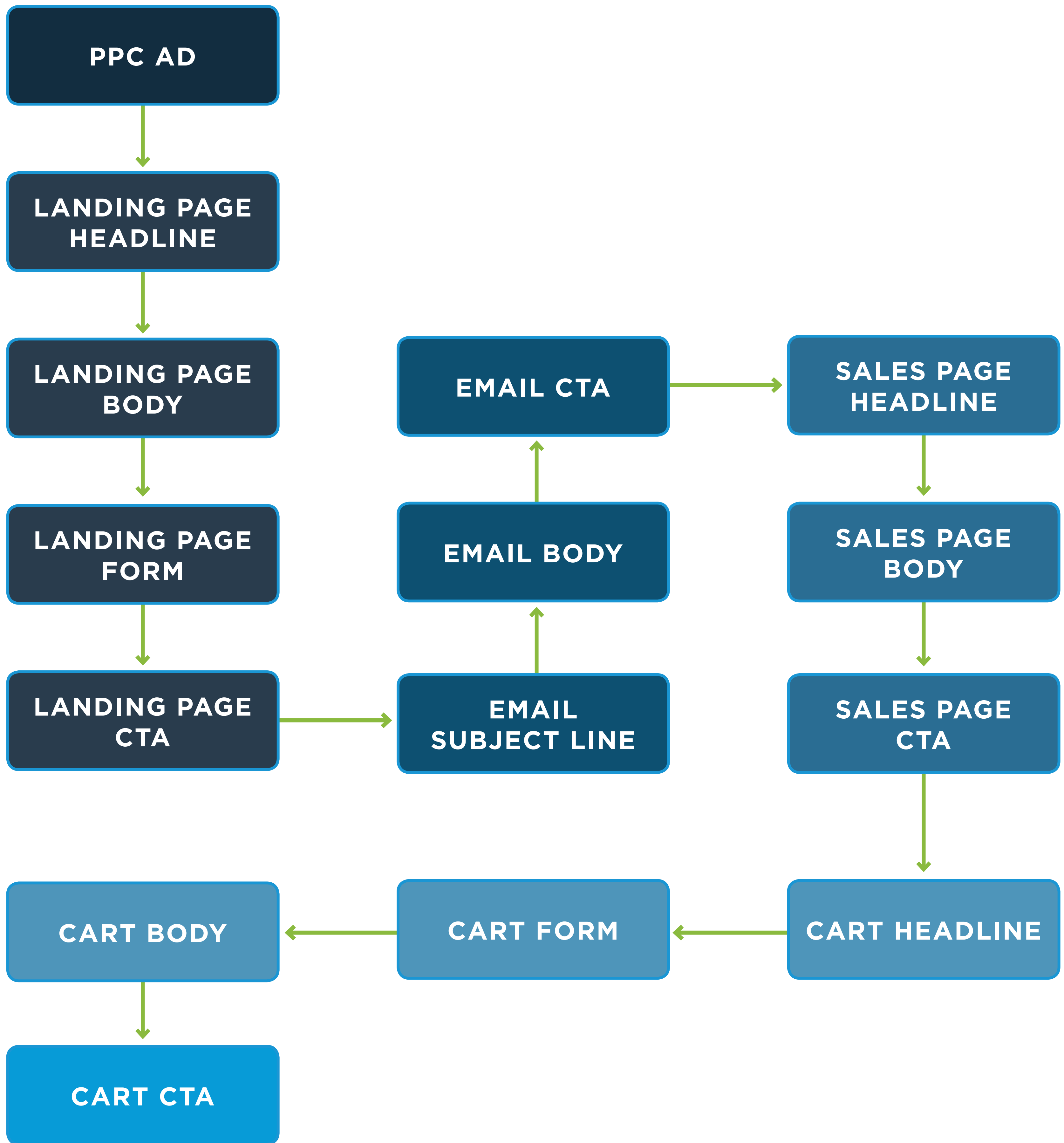


Headline	Keep arriving visitors on the page
Subhead	Move visitors to the body copy
Body copy	Directly support the page goal
Social proof	Turn naysayers into believers
Form headline	Relieve anxiety about completing the page goal
Form	Get filled out
Button	Get clicked

Can each element do more than the work they're responsible for? Sure. But **if you make them responsible for jobs that should be done further down the line, you set them up for failure.** Although a headline can turn naysayers into believers, be careful not to expect every headline to do so.

Now let's zoom out from our landing page in isolation and look at landing pages in the **ecosystem of interactions that they're actually a part of.**

In this ecosystem, every element has one job, too, with dependencies between the elements.



Your PPC ad has to get clicked. The landing page headline then has to keep that visitor; to do so, it will need to **reflect the message that compelled the visitor to click in the first place** while also making it appear worth your visitor's while to stay on the page.

From there, every element continues to do its individual job as part of the bigger team.

Let's imagine that all the elements do their job... until the email subject line, which fails to entice people to open the email. The email goes unopened. Now all the elements that came before will have done their work for nothing, and all the elements that follow will miss out on the chance to do their jobs.

Every element on your page is a worker trying to do one thing. This may feel like oversimplifying the actual work of your copy and content, but you've tried it your way. You've tried making one element do three jobs. How's that working for you? Try it this way instead. Suspend disbelief and see how much easier it becomes to write your pages and pinpoint problem areas.

This approach can also lead to **more A/B test ideas, cleaner tests and clearer success metrics for your tests**. For example, if you hypothesize that your headline is failing to keep visitors on the page, you can develop new copy variations designed to do that job better and set goals in keeping with engagement and bounce.



PRO TIP

Have you tried "The Open Loop"? If you're driving to a landing page from an ad or an email, write your ad or email in such a way that visitors are given the first half of an important or intriguing piece of information in that ad or email, with the promise of "closing the loop" with the second half on the landing page. (Then be sure to close it on the landing page!)

" Every element on your page is a worker trying to do one thing. "

 TWEET THIS QUOTE



EXPERT INSIGHT

NEIL FLINCHBAUGH

Certified Conversion Copywriter

THE CONVERTING POWER OF LANDING PAGES

If landing pages were superheroes, their superpower would be their laser focus. So when writing a landing page headline, make sure to take advantage of this superpower by speaking to that page's traffic segment as directly as you can. Think about who will be landing on that page, where they're coming from, and what they're looking for. Let them know as quickly and clearly as you can that they're in the right place and that this page has what they want.

It's no match for x-ray vision, but it can cut down your bounce rate and boost your conversions to help make you a hero of sorts for your company.

— Neil

3. AWARENESS DICTATES PAGE LENGTH

“How long should a page be?” This is a question I hear a lot. As in, *all the time*. As in, it may be the most commonly asked question in the copywriting world. The long copy vs short copy debate has raged for decades.

Page length – or how much copy and content you include on a page – is dictated by the level of awareness your prospect has when s/he arrives on your landing page. There are five stages of awareness, as described by many a copywriter, from the legendary copywriter and author of *Breakthrough Advertising* Gene Schwartz to Copyblogger’s Brian Clark to yours truly:

1. **Most Aware:** *Visitors know and trust your brand*
2. **Product Aware:** *Visitors know you offer solutions they may need but they have yet to choose your product*
3. **Solution Aware:** *Visitors know solutions exist for their pain but don’t know about yours*
4. **Pain Aware:** *Visitors are aware of their problem but not of any solutions*
5. **Unaware:** *People who are not necessarily in need at this point*

Understanding how aware your visitors are when they arrive on your landing page can help you better understand what’s motivating them and how much you need to say to convince them to choose you. Those who are Most Aware need a smidgen of copy – largely focused on your offer – but those who are only Pain Aware will require a lot of education from you to get to a point of trusting and choosing you.

It is because awareness levels vary so greatly among your prospects that you need to craft multiple targeted landing pages. I recommend starting by writing a landing page for those who are Pain Aware and then cutting sections out to create a page for Solution Aware, repeating that process to create a page for Product Aware, and finally creating a shorter version of



that page to serve Most Aware.

When people are Unaware, they are unlikely to land on your landing page because, well, they don't even feel pains you could solve, so how did they get to your page? Out of curiosity?

It's highly unlikely that the Unaware would arrive on your page; at most, they might accidentally land there after following a link - but that makes them a **very weak lead** and not necessarily worth optimizing for. So let's focus on the other four stages and see some examples of pages written for those.

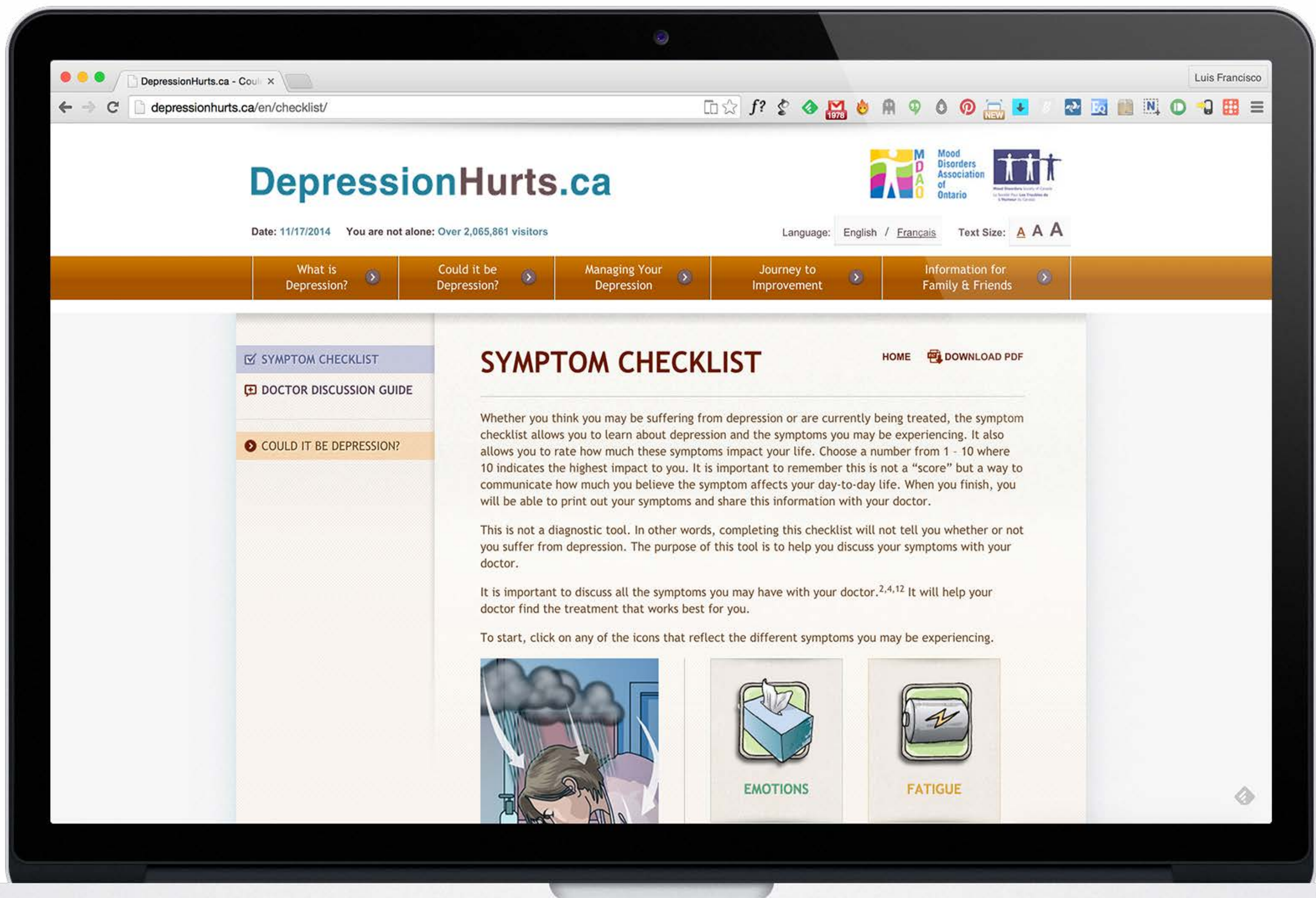
NOTE



The following landing page examples are the actual pages on which I landed when searching keyword phrases. They are not necessarily outstanding landing pages; some of them look a lot more like homepages with too many links distracting from the **one goal of the page**. But they speak well to the concept of stages of awareness.

PAIN AWARE

After searching “what to do if you think you have depression,” I landed on this page, the entry point to a symptom checklist for those who think they may suffer from depression. This page is deceptively short; in fact, it’s the beginning of a lengthy, multi-step online interview to determine the likelihood that the visitor suffers from depression. What’s clear: it’s designed for those who are aware of their pain (literal pain) but not of solutions to that pain.



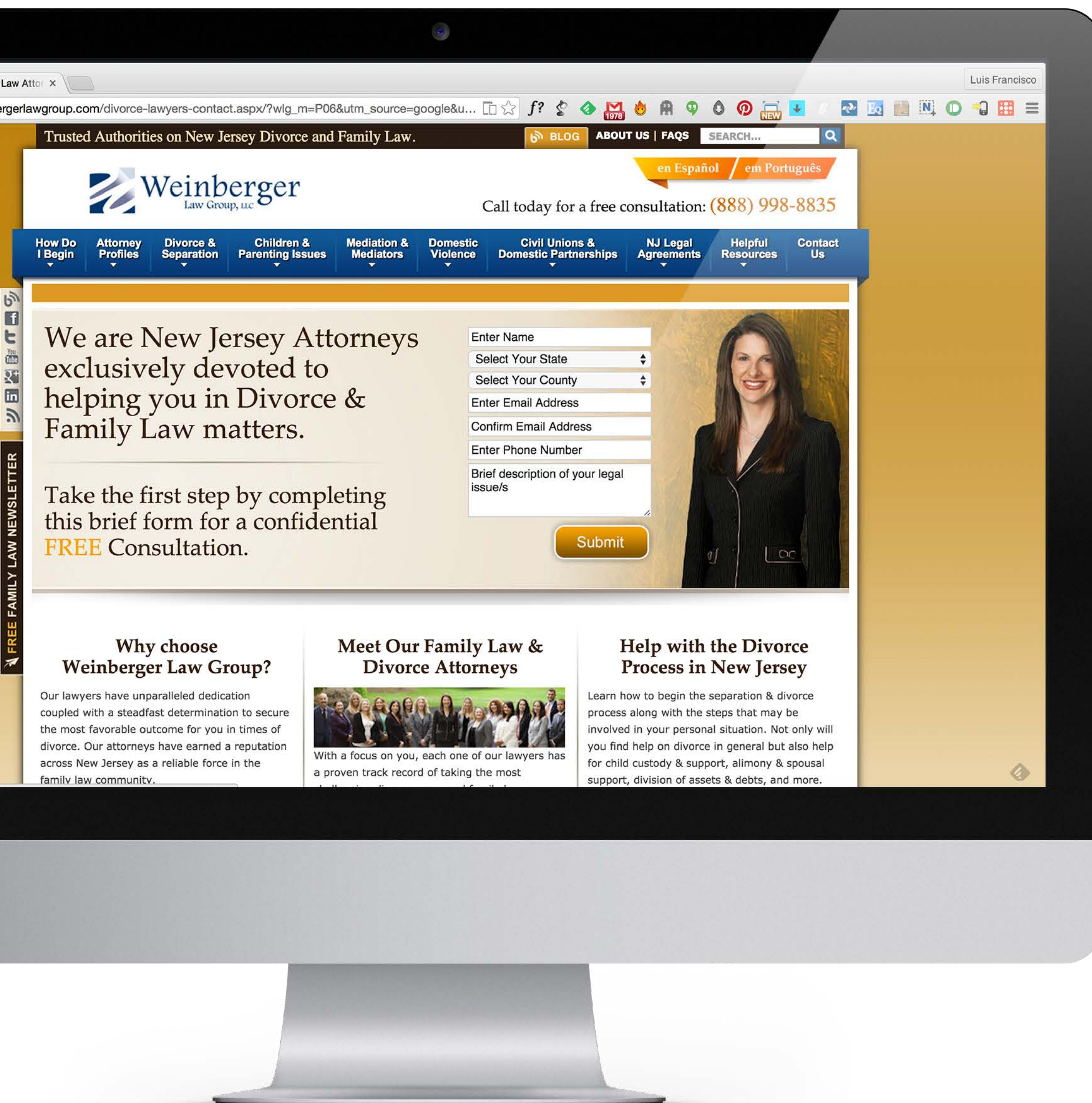
SOLUTION AWARE

The landing page for “top divorce attorneys in NJ,” this page is just long enough to a) help the Solution Aware visitor understand that Weinberger offers the solution they seek before b) moving her from Solution to Product Aware with succinct copy about their brand: why to choose them, who’s on the team, and what they know about divorce in New Jersey.



PRO TIP

*If you're a **local business**, make the name of the city or state/province you serve prominent. When people want an orthodontist in Portland, Oregon, that location is critical. And if you have a **phone number** for folks to call, make it prominent if you're going to show it at all. When split-testing your Unbounce landing page, make sure to use a unique, traceable phone number for each variation.*



PRODUCT AWARE

I landed on this page after searching for “electric car Chevy Volt.”

Here Chevy’s marketers join the conversation already happening in the visitor’s mind, with the headline “Electricity travels” and the subhead “How far can electricity take you?”.

The page is lengthy, but every message on the page is intended to move me from Product Aware to Most Aware.

My one complaint: the offer appears at the top of the page, which may be too soon for visitors that are not Most Aware. “Build Your Volt” could be a more appropriate offer here.

2015 VOLT
Purchase Price From
\$38,895⁰
Includes Freight & A/C Tax

ELECTRICITY TRAVELS
HOW FAR CAN AN ELECTRIC CAR TAKE YOU?

With its ingenious propulsion system, Volt lets you drive on pure electricity for your everyday commute and seamlessly switches to gasoline for longer trips. In just four years, Volt has earned more accolades and more “best buy” awards than any other electric car on the planet.

HOW VOLT WORKS
FROM THE DESK OF VOLT.
SEE HOW VOLT MAKES THE MOST OF ELECTRICITY AND GAS.

Gas is optional
Although the Volt uses gas as well as electricity, don't think you'll be spending much time at the pump. On a full charge, Volt can get up to an estimated 61 kilometers gas-free.

The extra kilometres
This isn't just a car for the commute. When the gas generator kicks in, producing electricity to power the engine, the range of Volt extends by hundreds of kilometres with a full charge and a full tank of gas.

Now for the fun stuff
Let's not forget what is truly important: Volt provides you with an exhilarating drive. 273 lb.-ft. of torque, a track-tested top speed of 100 km/h, and four versatile driving modes make it clear that driving electric doesn't mean sacrificing performance.

BRAINS WRAPPED IN BEAUTY
Turn heads for the right reasons. Volt is designed to look like a car, and a good-looking one at that. Bold lines, complementing an aggressive posture, are sculpted with powerful purpose. This smooth exterior contributes to the quick and agile performance.

AERODYNAMIC DESIGN
Leave the wind in your wake. When it comes to Volt, form and function unite to create a vehicle that's sporty, sleek, smooth and modern, yet it achieves an extremely low drag coefficient of 0.28. Countless hours in the wind tunnel influenced the styling of many exterior components including mirrors, a closed grille, rocker panels, the rear spoiler, and the entire underbody and battery tray.

As it slices through the air, Volt can travel hundreds of additional kilometres in EV mode without using a single drop of gas. Plus, Volt uses its gas-powered generator to travel up to 600 kilometres on a full charge and tank of gas, so you won't have to worry about being stranded in this extended-range electric car.

STRIKING INTERIOR DETAILS
Your personal data centre. Just like the exterior, Volt has an interior with a flow of its own. This unique cockpit-inspired design incorporates a full centre console and four sporty bucket seats. Surrounding the passengers are the latest innovations. There are two interactive 17.8 cm (7 in.) integrated colour LCD screens: the Driver Information Centre behind the steering wheel and the centre panel touch-screen with efficiency feedback, driving mode selections, available rear camera display, and entertainment options.

Select your style. The interior colour combinations are striking. Choose from standard Premium Cloth in Jet Black or Pebble Beige, or take advantage of the available leather-upholstered seats, sharply styled in Jet Black with Dark Argent or Ceramic White accents, or Pebble Beige with sueded inserts.

See the complete list of features and specs.

INNOVATIVE SPACE
Pleasant surprises throughout. Inside, there's a place for everything: cup holders, storage bins, door panel storage, and even 100 bonuses like the umbrella pocket and a dedicated space for the standard 120V charging cord.

Energy-efficient Bose audio
Get incredible sound from an available seven-speaker Bose® audio system with subwoofer that's 30% smaller, 40% lighter and uses 50% less energy than comparable Bose systems.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS
Charging for about \$1.70 per day¹
The standard 120V charging unit allows you to fully charge the battery in about 10 to 16 hours. The available 240V charging station cuts down your charging time to approximately 4 hours (professional installation is required).

Drive intuitively
If you can drive, you can drive a Volt. Instead of turning a key, you push a blue button. Rather than looking at dials and needles, you check two interactive LCD screens for feedback. Seamlessly switch between four driving modes to best suit your driving style.

Regenerative Braking
Even the simple act of braking has been taken to the next level with regenerative braking, which captures some of the energy usually lost during braking and converts it to electricity that's stored in the battery.

THE BASICS OF ELECTRIC PROPULSION
Generator
When the battery runs low, the gas-powered generator kicks in, converting the vehicle's engine to thousands of additional kilometres. The generator also provides enough charge to the battery to re-charge it and to re-charge the car's other internal systems (air conditioning, etc.).

Charge Port
Whenever you want to charge from your garage, a friend's home or a public charging station, you're on the go. It's completely possible to simply plug in.

Lithium-Ion Battery
The advanced 17 kWh lithium-ion battery was designed to charge to maximum speed and efficiency to be lightweight, powerful and efficient. The battery also has a built-in cooling and venting system to ensure a longer life.

Electric Drive Unit
The electric drive unit always propels the vehicle at 100 km/h, with electric or either the battery or the gas-powered engine or charging generator. This vehicle still a world-saving benefit from earlier hybrid cars and has a better energy efficiency.

120V CHARGING UNIT
240V CHARGING STATION



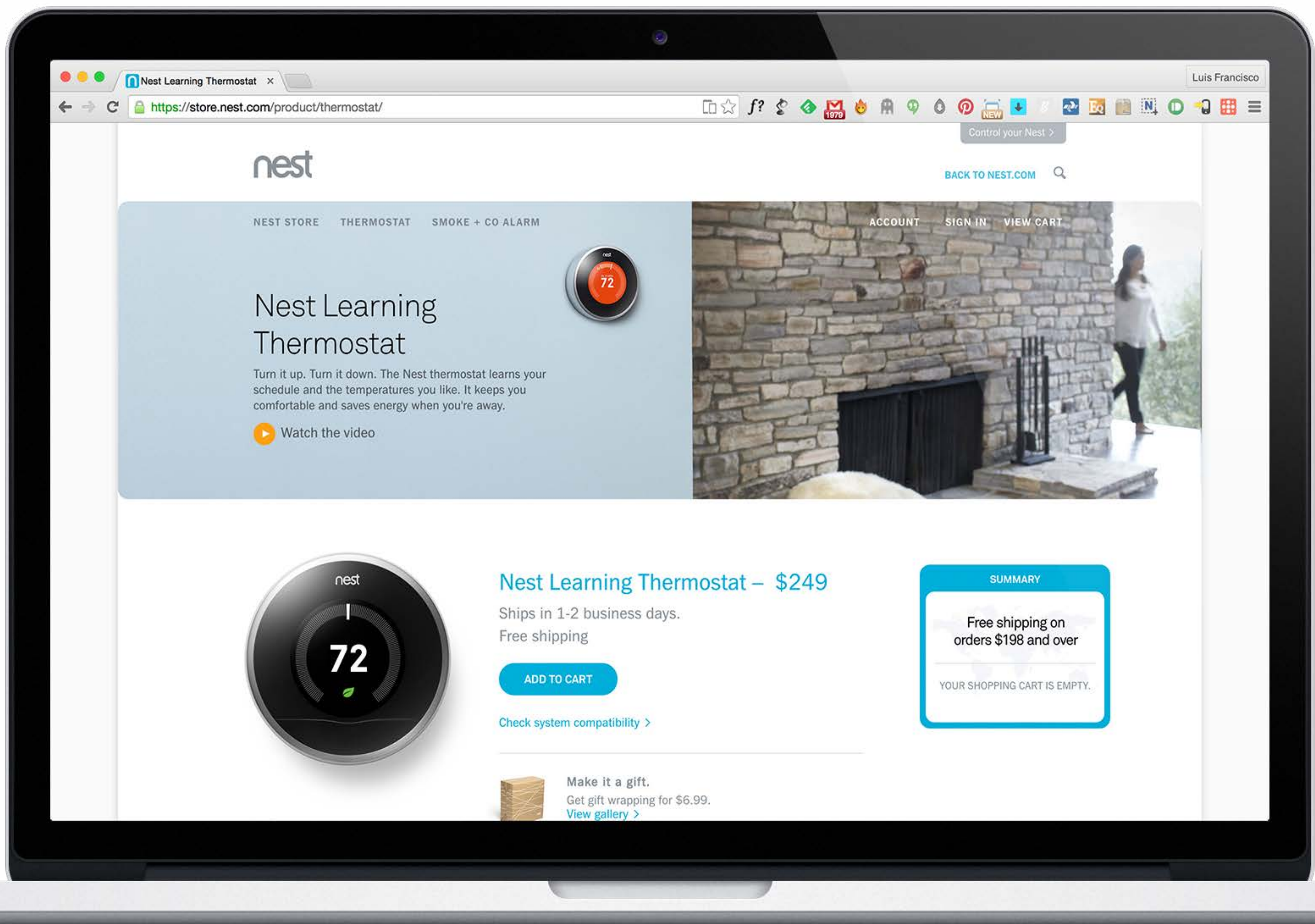
PRO TIP

Add captions to your images! A photo of a hotel room on your hotel's landing page is more likely to act as a message for visitors if you write clearly on or under that photo what's important about the photo.



MOST AWARE

After searching “Buy Nest thermostat,” I was served with this landing page, which leads with the price and a clear call to action to purchase a Nest Learning Thermostat. All the messaging thereafter is intended to help Most Aware prospects overcome their most likely objections: do I really want this, can I afford it, and can I install it? These are objections a Solution Aware person wouldn’t have.





PRO TIP

HOW TO UNCOVER YOUR VISITORS' STATE OF AWARENESS

Put a Qualaroo or Disco pop-up survey on your landing page, and ask one or both of these questions of your visitors:

How familiar are you with [insert brand name]?

- Very familiar (I've been to this site many times)
- Familiar
- Not very familiar (I've never been to this site before)

What's happening in your life that brought you here today?

[short text field]

The first question will quickly help you plot your visitors on the awareness spectrum.

The second question, however, is my very favorite because you can learn about **awareness as well as referral sources and options for opt-in bait.**

You may learn that the majority of your visitors arrived to your page after clicking a link on Twitter, possibly indicating **lower-end awareness**; so informed, you could then tweak your page to be an opt-in page introducing a longer drip campaign designed to educate them about their pains, your solutions and why you're the one to solve their pains.

You may learn that some of your visitors are sick and tired of using your competitor or the incumbent solution, or that they're being referred in by an online course, possibly indicating **Solution or Product Awareness**; with that assumption, you could offer a sample chapter from your ebook, a free trial of your solution or a consultation.

In addition to using an on-page survey, use a combo of your analytics and AdWords. Here's a quick cheat sheet for understanding stages of awareness based on how people arrived on your page.



Most Aware

Visitors arriving direct.

Visitors arriving after searching for your brand name + a word like “sale,” “coupon,” “new release,” etc.

Product Aware

Visitors arriving after searching for your brand name.

Visitors arriving via a partner, JV or affiliate site.

Visitors arriving via email.

Solution Aware

Visitors arriving via your blog.

Visitors arriving via referrals from another blog.

Pain Aware

Visitors arriving via unbranded long-tail keyword phrases.

Informed by how much your visitors know about themselves and about you, you can then write **landing pages targeted to various states or stages of awareness.**



4. STOP TRYING TO WRITE

Take a look at these three headlines:

HEADLINE A

**Collaborate & Share & Store – Online
Keep&Share Makes it Easy**

HEADLINE B

Eliminate Up to 99% Of Your Paper Files

Store files securely online. Access them easily. And collaborate with your staff & customers in a single, private location.

HEADLINE C

**The Only Small Business Collaboration Suite
That Works The Way You Do**

You can customize your calendar, file folders, and to-do lists in ways that other business softwares can't match.

Which do you think outperformed the Control: B or C?

Headline C offered an abysmal (and not confident) **64% drop** while Headline B brought in a statistically confident **103% lift** in clicks on the page.

The Control was written by the fine folks at Keep&Share. Headline B was swiped from a testimonial. And Headline C was written by yours truly. To clarify: **the headlines that were written by non-customers tanked in comparison to the headline swiped from real customer language.**



This is not a fluke result. Repeatedly, the best-performing messages are those that are swiped directly from:

- **Testimonials**
- *Customer reviews of your product or service*
- *Support emails*
- *Surveys*
- *Anywhere your prospects are talking about solutions like yours*

When you stop trying to write and start listening to your customers, your copy writes itself. That's because your best messages are not waiting inside your head for you to find them. They're not sitting untapped in your CEO's brain. They can't be discovered swapping ideas around a boardroom table.

Listen to your prospects and customers. Listen to the words they use, the underlying message and the frequency with which they talk about X. Only then can you fill your landing page with copy that's more likely to convert.

“ When you stop trying to write and start listening to your customers, your copy writes itself. ”

 TWEET THIS QUOTE





EXPERT INSIGHT

PETER MICHAELS

Certified Conversion Copywriter and creator of Rock & Roll Copy

THE #1 MISTAKE SMALL BUSINESSES MAKE WITH THEIR LANDING PAGE COPY

One thing I still see a lot of businesses doing on landing pages is focusing on their product rather than your problem. They'll lead with telling us "How awesome this widget is" (and it's always "awesome") but go really soft on WHY that matters to the prospect.

Don't get too focused on the fact your software widget does X, Y and Z because that's what excites YOU. Remember that your customers are still people with problems to be solved.

Try entering the conversation already going on in their head - explain how your widget solves their problem - and they'll think twice about closing that page.

— Peter

PART 2

THE 5 CRITICAL COPY ELEMENTS ON HIGH-CONVERTING LANDING PAGES

I'll be the first to admit it: It's super-unrealistic to try to force every landing page to adopt five and only five components. The elements you need on your page will vary by industry, solution, audience and awareness levels, among other things.

For example, if you're selling on your page, you'll need to overcome objections around your price and neutralize anxieties about the purchasing experience - doubly so if you're selling a big-ticket solution. This could require video demos, an explainer video, high-res screenshots, money-back guarantees, security iconography - any number of types of content we're not covering here.

That said, the highest-converting landing pages have at least the following five elements in common. Use them as a starting point. And split-test the addition and subtraction of elements.



1. A CLICK-WORTHY CALL TO ACTION (CTA)

It may seem odd to start with the “endpoint,” but you need to think of your call to action first when writing a page, as I mentioned earlier.

This is not because your call to action should be the first element to appear on your page. (In most cases, it shouldn't.) It's because **all the copy on your landing page should be building toward and supporting the call to action.**

Let's agree now on a few things:

1. *Every landing page should have one goal, and that one goal is reflected in the CTA.*
2. *You should have a maximum of one CTA per landing page.*
3. *That one CTA can be repeated on the page – such as at the mid-point and the very bottom – as long as both CTAs are supporting the one goal of the page.*
4. *Passive calls to action – like Twitter and Facebook icons, or like site navigation – are still calls to action and, as such, **shouldn't be on the page unless there is only one of them and it is the primary CTA.***

Cool? Agreed? Okay, with that in mind, how do you write CTAs that people actually want to click?

1. MINIMIZE ANXIETIES

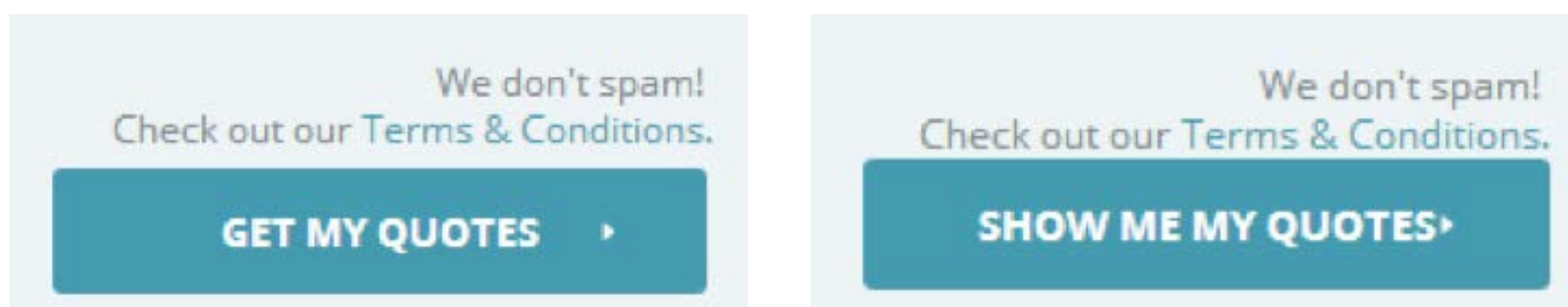
Think of your landing page button as a closed door. Essentially, that's what it is. Your visitors are on a page they know, and a button invites them to leave that page in order to enter a new, foreign space that could be loaded with complications they can't anticipate.

When you're writing your CTA, keep the *anxiety* of your visitors in mind. They're worried about:



- *What's really on the other side*
- *If they'll be surprised by what follows*
- *If the potential benefit of clicking is worth the risk*

On a lead-gen page for an Australian health insurance company, we tested the following two buttons against each other:



Which is worth the risk of clicking?

Which one helps me understand what's actually going to follow?

In our test, we found that the button wording "Show me my quotes" outperformed the copy "Get my quotes" by 10.3%. All it took was tweaking the button copy to minimize the risk associated with clicking the button. "Get my quotes" is ambiguous. What do I have to do to get them? Will I have to pay? On the other hand, "Show me my quotes" assures me my quotes are going to be displayed right after I click the button. No sweat.

2. DON'T INTRODUCE WORK

Buttons often lead users to new experiences – and those experiences are, quite often, rife with WORK. With labor. Not backbreaking labor, but labor nonetheless.

Buttons lead to checkouts. Buttons lead to the next page in a multi-page form. Buttons lead to scary, unknown places that, from time to time, create new work.

Do your buttons suggest work?

Take a look at the following two buttons we tested:



Try It Free Now >



Add It to WordPress Now >



PRO TIP

Try repeating the verb-phrase from your headline in your CTA. We saw a 24% increase in clicks on a landing page button when that button copy matched the headline copy.

Which of those buttons suggests that work is about to follow?

When we tested them, we found that the button “Add It to WordPress Now” decreased CTR by 15%. Why? **It introduces work that people may not be ready for yet.** Sure, whichever button they click, they’ll still have to do the work that follows... but people do not want to be reminded of the work that must be done.

(And, FYI, not only did the “Add It to Wordpress Now” button lead to lower clicks, but it also resulted in fewer completed signups than did “Try It Free Now.”)

Finally, if you have an opt-in form of any kind on your landing page, it is part of your call to action. The fewer fields you have on your form, the more sign-ups you’ll get; however, the more fields you have on your form, the more likely those leads are qualified.

The point is not to have one field or three fields. It’s to ensure that you **ask people to complete only as much work as you think is fair in exchange for the offering...** and, when you do so, you make completing the form highly desirable, with a low-anxiety, low-effort button to finish it off.



2. A MESSAGE-MATCHED UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION (MMUSP)

A unique selling proposition, or *value proposition*, is a specific, succinct statement describing what's uniquely desirable about your product or service. We can get all academic about it, but it's really just **telling your visitor what amazing thing they're going to get from you.** And telling them fast.

Your homepage should lead with your brand or product USP.

But your email, social and PPC landing pages are different. You still need to lead with your USP. You just need to do so while matching the messages written in and the expectations set by the email, tweet or PPC ad that brought your visitor to the page.

With that in mind, we're boldly creating a new abbreviation: MMUSP. Just rolls off the tongue, doesn't it? Lovely sounding acronym.

Your MMUSP should appear in your landing page's hero (or topmost) section, usually in:

- *The headline*
- *The subhead*

That means that the copy in the hero section of your page should both:

1. *Match the message of the call to action that drove visitors.*
2. *Describe what's uniquely desirable about your offering.*

That does not, however, mean that your USP must itself be message-matched. Rather, almost as soon as the visitor arrives on your page, they must see *both* the expected message reflected in the hero copy and the USP. So if I search "lose weight" and click this ad:



How To Lose Weight Fast - OutShineSpaWeightLoss.com

Ad www.outshinespaweightloss.com/Diet +1 250-383-5598

Lose Weight, Maintain Your Results. Call To Learn About Ideal Protein!

Contact Our Clinic - The Ideal Protein Method - Ideal Protein Products

880 B Esquimalt Road, Victoria, BC

...then I should see the following on the landing page for the ad:

MM

How to lose weight fast

USP

A highly desirable outcome, offer or solution related to the MM

But here's what I see where I land:



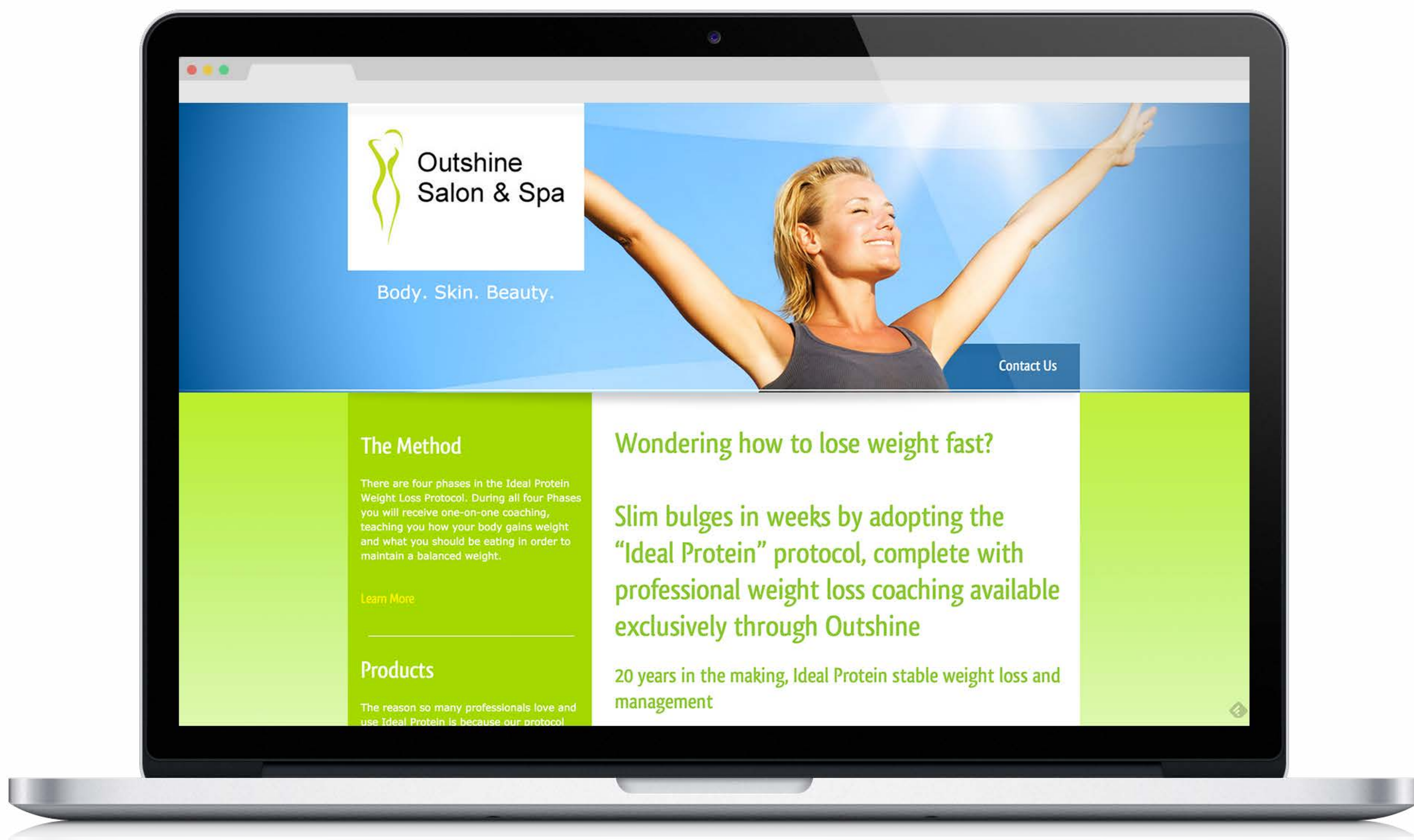
It's the home page. One of the reasons why this "landing page" is problematic is because I don't see the message I expected to see and, although the headline expresses the hint of a USP, I'm not clear on whether *professional weight loss coaching* is something unique to Outshine, something I can get nowhere else.

Now, with **message matching**, you don't have to match the words verbatim. (Exact message matching could hurt conversion if the phrasing is awkward.) But you should do your best to incorporate the message that compelled your visitor to click in the first place.

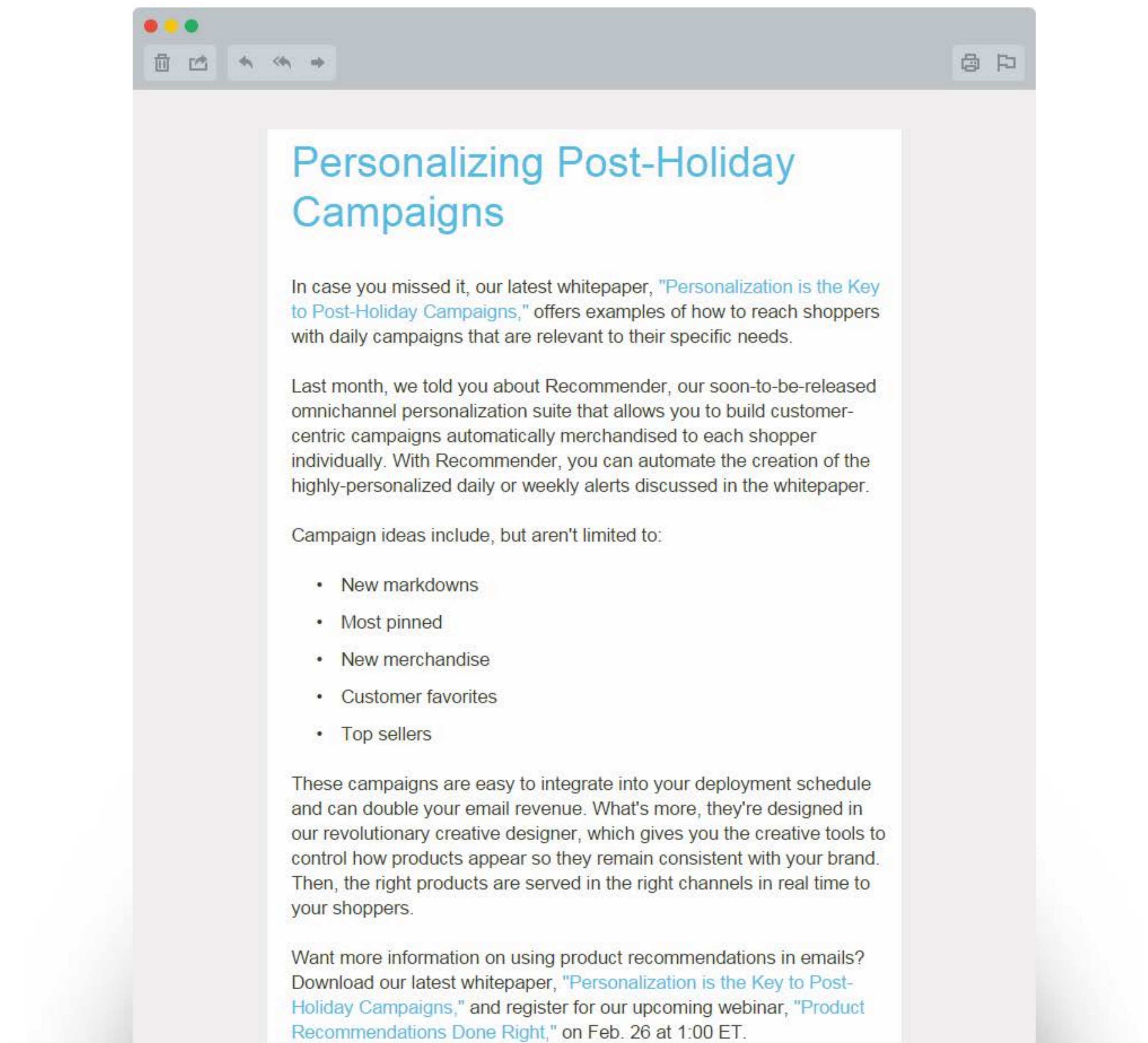
So here's what I'd write in the hero section:

MM	How to lose weight fast
USP	The "ideal protein" protocol combined with professional weight loss coaching (this appears to be what's uniquely desirable about Outshine)

This could result in a landing page with the following MMUSP:



In another example, check out the following email from Listrak:



If I click the call to action "Personalization is the Key to Post-Holiday Campaigns," I should expect to land on a page where I see:

MM	Personalization is the key to post-holiday campaigns
USP	A highly desirable outcome, offer or solution related to the MM

Here's what I actually see on the landing page:



Message matching is great... but the headline and intro copy are failing to express the whitepaper's USP. Here's what the visitor needs to see, at minimum:

MM

Personalization is the key to post-holiday campaigns

USP

We have data that no one else has, and if you get access to that data - which you can do by downloading this whitepaper - you can use it to keep making money after the holidays have ended

That could result in the following landing page with MMUSP:



Match the expectations your visitor brings to the page, by specifically stating what fantastic, high-value X they're going to get from you. And then enhance their experience and make them want to stick around so you can engage them.

"...BUT MY OPT-IN BAIT DOESN'T HAVE A VALUE PROPOSITION"

Your brand, your solutions and everything you offer – from your newsletter to your Twitter account – should have a USP. Everything in marketing exists to bring value to your customer.

What will people get – that they want – by signing up for a consultation or for your newsletter?

If you don't know what's uniquely desirable about your newsletter, how could your prospect know?



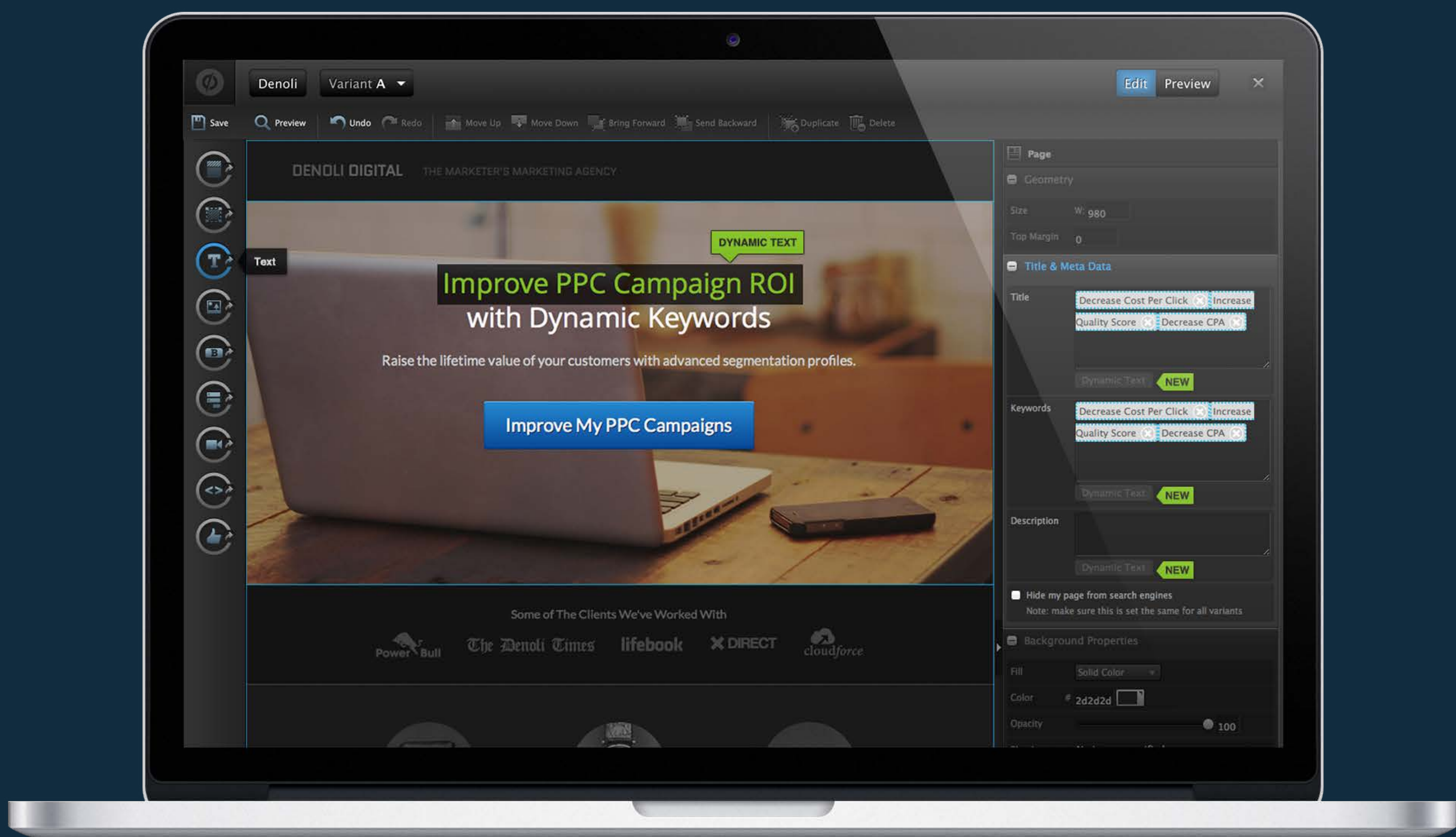
PRO TIP

A powerful phrase to try in your headline is "even if." For example, "We'll help you settle with the IRS out of court even if you owe thousands of dollars and are too worried to sleep." That's far more compelling than, "We'll help you settle with the IRS out of court."

DO IT IN UNBOUNCE

THE KEY TO PERFECT MESSAGE MATCH

Improve PPC Campaign ROI



Poor message match is what makes the vast majority of paid marketing campaigns a colossal waste of money.

Unbounce is the only landing page builder with Dynamic Text Replacement, which automatically changes the copy on your landing page to match your ad or keyword.

This will lead to:

- *Increased conversion rates*
- *Improved campaign ROI*
- *More relevant landing pages with perfect message match.*

START A 30-DAY FREE TRIAL OF UNBOUNCE

3. THE MOST POWERFUL BENEFITS, RESULTS AND/OR OUTCOMES

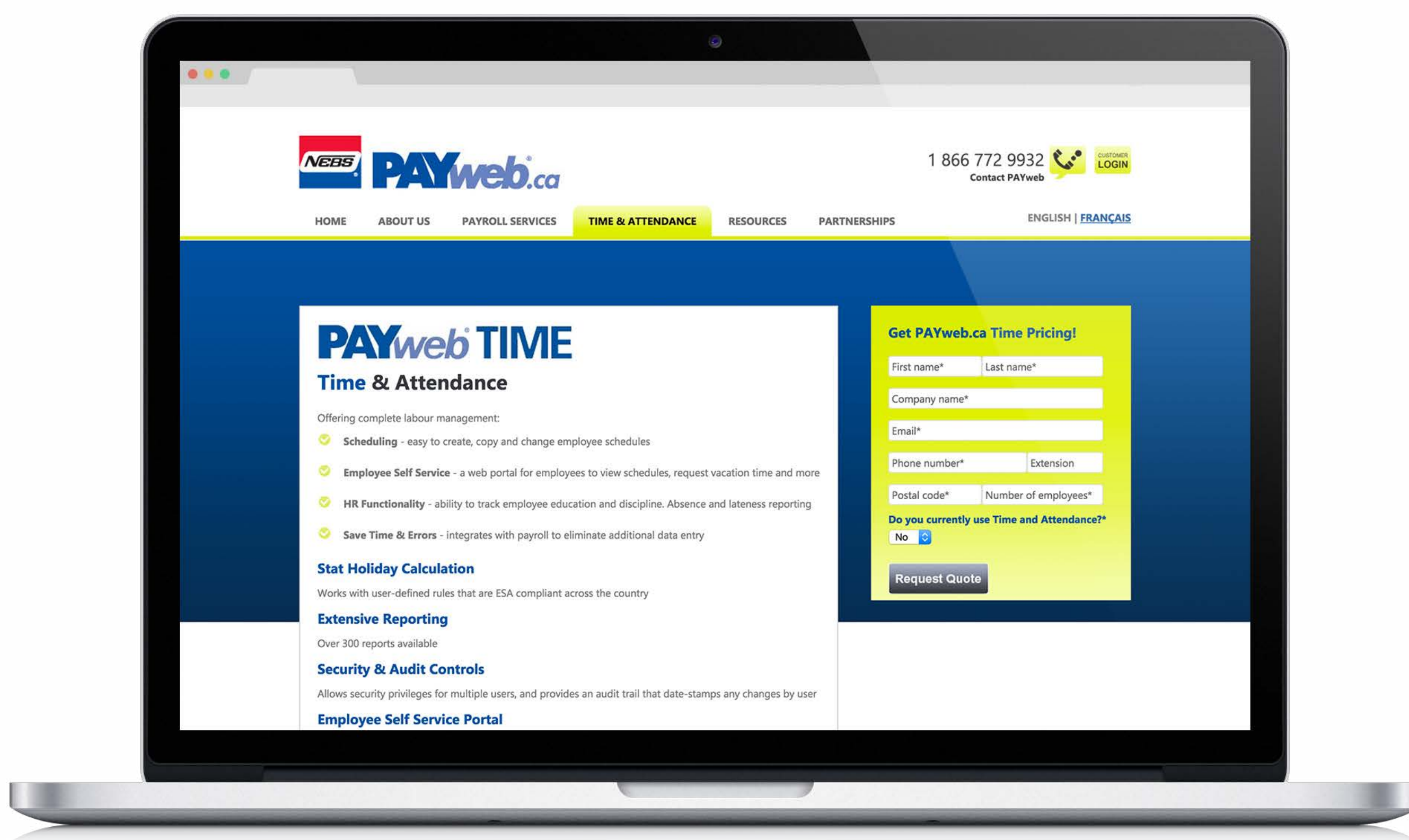
Benefits, results and outcomes are the foundation of your landing page's body copy. But because remarkably little guidance exists online to help marketers write body copy, we often see pages that are packed full of every benefit a prospect could possibly want (with a whole lotta feature love added to the mix).

As a result, a ton of landing pages suffer from TMI, like this one:



PRO TIP

*The most-clicked buttons are not necessarily orange. Rather, they're a color that is in direct **contrast** to the rest of the page.*



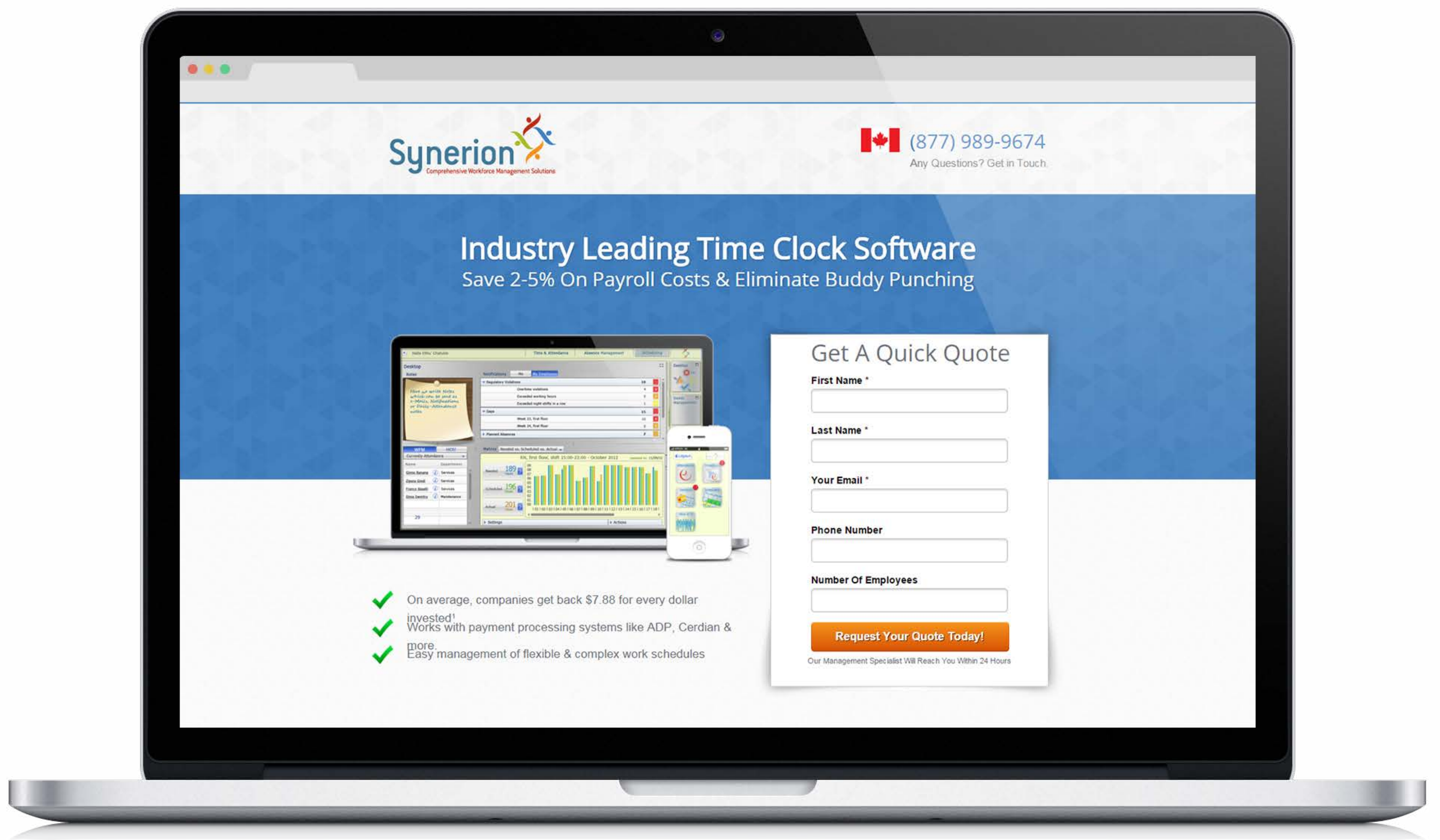
The above reads like a checklist... without the benefit of actually being a checklist a user might use to make a decision.

To write your body copy, let's go back to two of the foundational principles from the first chapter:

1. *Awareness dictates page length.*
2. *Start with your goal and work backward.*

So you only need as many benefits, outcomes and/or results as are necessary to move the visitor - in her current state of awareness - toward the call to action on the page.

Synerion.ca does a great job of listing out the most powerful benefits and results associated with using their software:



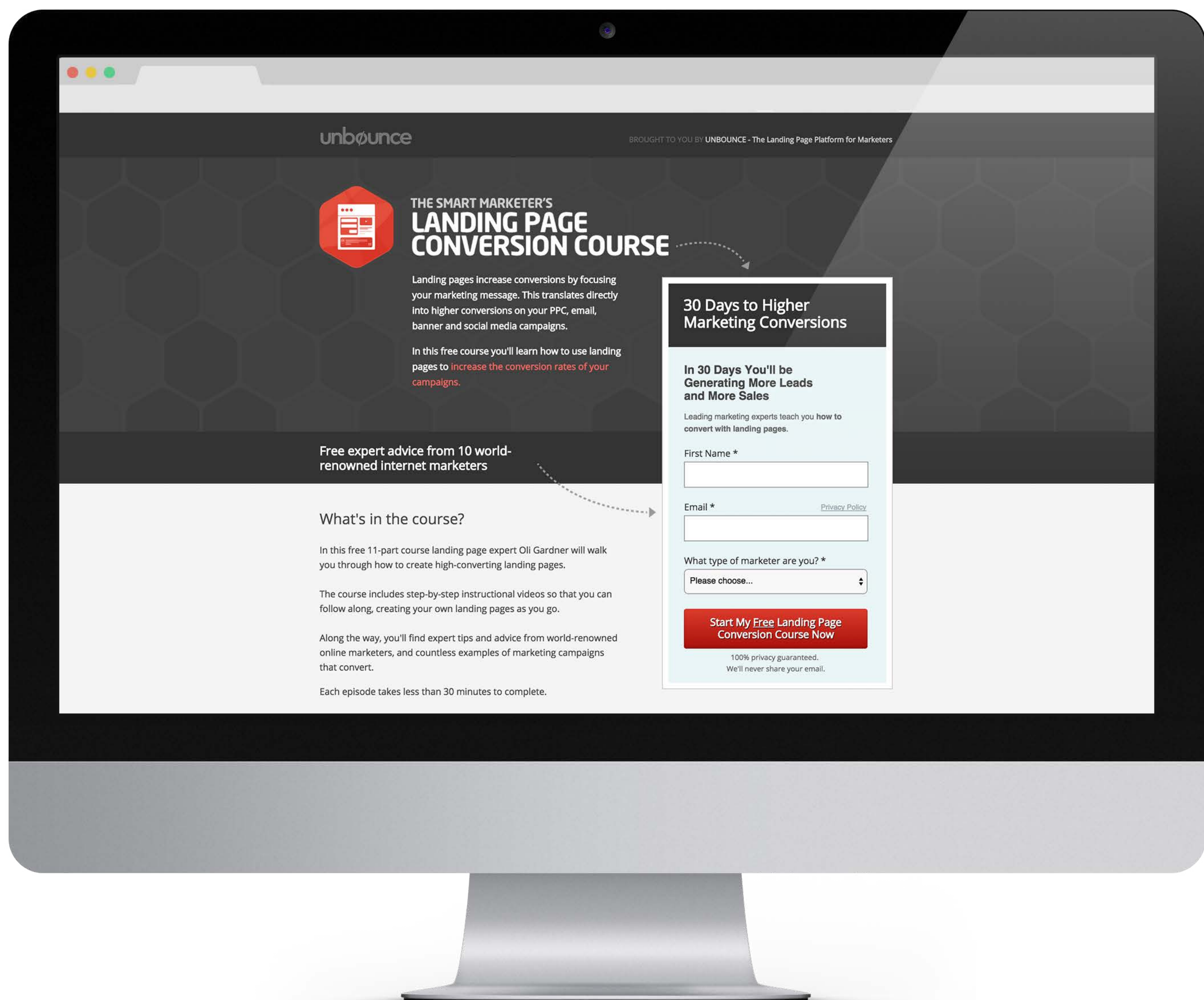
Because the benefits are powerful - with the **ROI** of Synerion being particularly intriguing - visitors to Synerion's page are more likely to be willing to request a free demo.

4. YE OLDE OFFER

The introduction of your offer is the beginning of the close. This is the part of the page where you start pulling out all the copywriter tricks to close the sale.

Remember: Even with a free offering, you're still "selling" your visitor on exchanging something they value (like access to their inbox) with something they must value more (like your free consultation).

The more you want people to give you, the better your offer needs to be. Let's take a look at a page that presents the offer very well, and I'll list out everything it's doing right from a copy perspective.



1. *The offer's headline isn't just an action to take – the benefit is messaged clearly.*
2. *The subhead clarifies the offer, packing highly desirable outcomes into it.*
3. *The perception of value for a free course is enhanced by messaging the “ingredients” of the offer – that is, the “leading marketing experts” teaching the course.*
4. *With just two fields and a dropdown to complete, Unbounce has not only followed the old sales rule of making it easy but also done so without compromising on collecting good lead info.*
5. *The button copy isn't afraid to use more than three words in order to reiterate the offer and create a sense of immediacy.*
6. *Supporting microcopy (e.g., privacy policy) is visually muted, reducing the risk that it will introduce anxieties and stop the conversion.*
7. *No captcha (Those pesky tests used to determine if you're human).*

To get even more eyes on the offer, **directional cues** (in this case, arrows) point at it. And it stands out on the page like the focal point it ought to be.

My one and only quibble with this page is that the offer appears so early on the page, and quite a lot of the messaging that ought to precede the offer follows it.

***“ The more you want people to give you,
the better your offer needs to be.”***

 TWEET THIS QUOTE

5. SOCIAL PROOF THAT ACTUALLY PROVES SOMETHING GOOD

If you've read Robert Cialdini's excellent *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, you'll recall that he opens the chapter titled "Social Proof" with a discussion of the effectiveness of canned laughter on TV shows. That we laugh more at less funny stuff when a laugh-track is running expresses the idea behind **social proof**: "One means we use to determine what is correct is to find out what other people think is correct" (Cialdini).

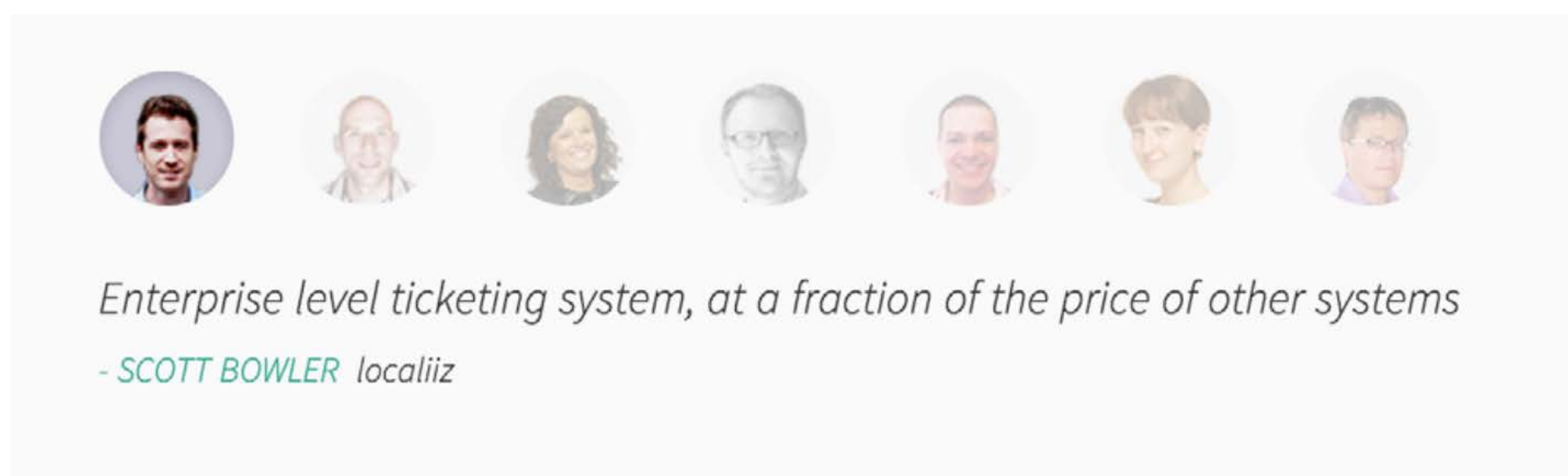
Customer testimonials, influencer testimonials, embedded tweets, Facebook likes, short case studies and data about users all **nudge your landing page visitors closer to converting**. Or, at least, they ought to.

The problem is that a lot of would-be social proof is not really pushing people toward the page goal. It's tapping into herd behavior - or the idea that people will move in the direction of the crowd - more than it's tapping into the persuasive power of social proof.

What do I mean by that? Simply that many marketers are putting "testimonials" on their page as if to tick the *Include Testimonials* checkbox instead of the *Persuade with Social Proof* checkbox.

GREAT TESTIMONIALS REPLACE COPY

Here's an illustrative example from a Freshdesk ([2014](#)) landing page:



That testimonial is a marketing message – but it’s **far more powerful than regular marketing copy because you’re not the one saying it.** Your customer is. Your customer with a face and a name and a business.

Additionally, to ensure credibility, testimonials need to be phrased in believable and natural language, unlike this one:

“The ease of use, wealth of features and off-the-shelf approach are the building blocks of what makes SysAid better than other products”

Dragan Tomas, Sr. IT Associate, Holladay Properties

Now, “natural language” doesn’t mean informal language, necessarily. It means natural language for the speaker and audience. So if you’re using a testimonial from the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, that language is likely to sound slightly contrived and jargon-y, but that’s good for authenticity.

Because effective social proof is so rare, we’ve decided to end this chapter by asking two copywriting experts to explain what they look for in convincing testimonials.



EXPERT INSIGHT

DEMIAN FARNWORTH

Chief Copywriter, Copyblogger Media

THE 3 ELEMENTS THAT MAKE TESTIMONIALS SO CONVINCING

Persuasive testimonials do at least three things. First, they mention a specific benefit your product offers. Second, they substantiate a claim you've made. Third, they favorably compare your product to a competitor.

Now, you don't have to find a testimonial that does all three. If you do, great. More than likely what you will find is half a dozen testimonials that each mention a specific (but different) benefit, a handful that each substantiate one of your meaningful claims, and one or two that compare your product to a competitor.

This motley catalog of testimonials not only builds credibility, but allows you to tap into the widest audience possible.

— Demian



EXPERT INSIGHTS

KATHRYN ARAGON

Editor, The Daily Egg | Publisher, C4 Report | Award-winning Copywriter & Consultant

SOCIAL PROOF AND HUMAN NATURE

Social proof, at its core, leverages people's desire to belong. People start in a state of disbelief. They want to see proof that your claims are true. But when they see testimonials from industry leaders, a Facebook app with likes from their friends, and a line that says two million people already use the product, suddenly their skepticism disappears. After all, **they don't want to be the only person not using it.**

Combined with sales copy that effectively overcomes objections, a strong testimonial can easily be the tipping point that moves people to action.

— Kathryn

PART 3

LANDING PAGES
TEARDOWNS

If you're familiar with Unbounce you might have seen an episode of *Page Fights*, where conversion experts tear apart the landing pages of brave marketers in front of a live online audience. In that spirit, we decided to include a few copy-oriented landing page critiques.

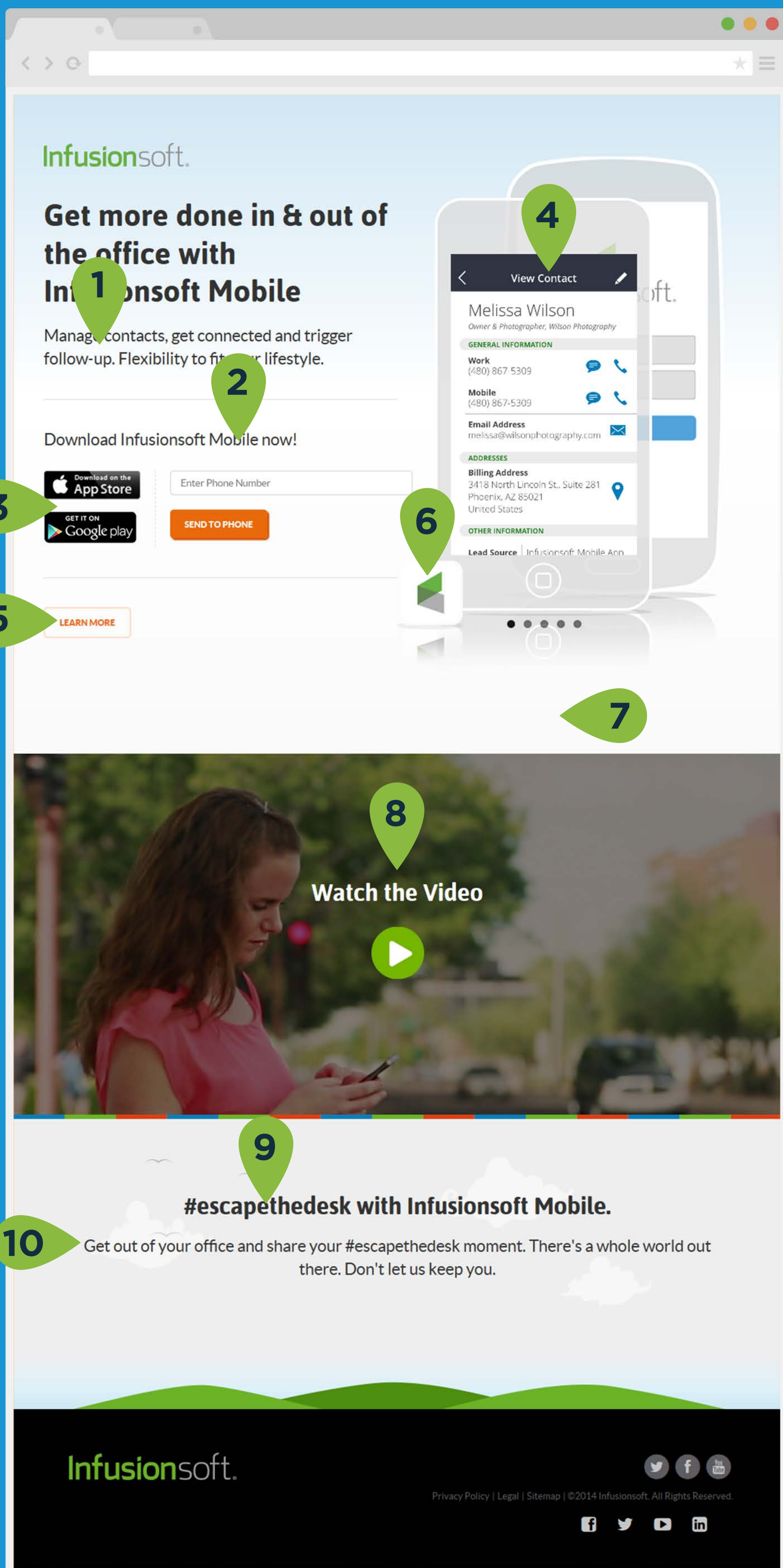
In this chapter, I'll take a close look at three real-life landing pages and note the top 10 things I would immediately test on each page. Please keep in mind that these teardowns are done with love - with the goal of making us all better copywriters and smarter marketers.

Now, let's get ready to rumble...



Email Landing Page: Infusionsoft

1. Are you paying for each word you write? Is there a reward internally for the person who uses the fewest words to express the value of a solution? Take the time to explain to your prospect what exactly “get connected” and “trigger follow-up” looks like. This copy is far too vague and abstracted to promote conversion.
2. Tell me why! Even for those who are Product Aware, you need to say more to create the desire to take action.
3. This call to action – though very smart in many ways – appears prematurely. It’s not clear if a person needs to be using the full app to get something out of the mobile version, if it’s necessary to pay for real functionality, and why I should choose the mobile app instead of viewing the web app in my device’s browser.
4. Add captions! Why is this screen worth sharing? If it’s just that it looks nice, caption this with something about design – unless your prospects don’t care about design, in which case you’d better have a different caption up your sleeve.
5. No. Secondary. Links.
6. What on earth is that? The icon I’m supposed to look for on my phone? What’s it doing here, scrunched up in the corner like this?
7. This is where a meaningful benefit and anxiety reducer ought to go. Even better? Insert a testimonial expressing the benefit, and use your great rating in the App Store as credible social proof.
8. Seriously? That’s the best call to action you’ve got for this video? A girl on her phone in a park-like setting... with “Watch the Video”? There are feature films starring Will Ferrell I haven’t seen yet – hilarious movies waiting for me on my phone or computer – so, if I’m going to hit play on something, why should it be your video? (Hint: The answer is not, “Because it’s only 2 minutes.”)
9. This is not going to become a trending hashtag. #marketingwakeupcall
10. This copy comes off as very condescending. Props to you for trying to show a little personality, but the tone and the underlying message is off-putting. Plus, if there’s a whole world out there, why the hell should I waste my time on my phone with your app?



PPC Landing Page: SysAid

1. These vertical lines look totally nuts. And there's nothing "friendly" about this headline. Write this, and everything, in human language - because even IT people speak like humans. Oh, and how about a single benefit, not just whatever random tagline you thought you'd throw down? This isn't spaghetti; you can't throw everything at your visitor and hope it sticks.
2. Don't lead with your brand name. Lead with the benefit of the solution. Obviously.
3. Move these anxiety-reducers closer to the CTA, where they might actually do some good work.
4. Do you really need these fields? You're going to chase a good number of prospects away. Only include fields like this if you're doing so to ensure quality leads.
5. Nobody wants to start a free trial! What's the best, most tangible outcome of using your solution? Make that your button copy, and then mirror it in the subhead above this form.
6. What on earth is this link doing here? You were doing so well with the lack of distractions. But now - right near the call to action - you wanna drive people away to learn about pricing? They haven't even tried your product yet! Do you want them to try it or see how much it costs? Decide and write accordingly.
7. Just about the world's worst testimonial. Needs a photo. Needs to not sound like a junior copywriter thought it up and added a "realistic sounding" name to it.
8. Introduce these logos with a crosshead that explains why your visitor should care. This is good social proof gone bad. If you've got major influencers using your solution, write a crosshead that says so, dammit!
9. "Everything I need" to do what? Everything I need is water, shelter, food, heat. Do those come standard with this solution?
10. What the hell am I looking at? Looks like an Excel spreadsheet minus the familiarity. Caption it and tell visitors what's awesome about it - because it's way too hard to tell at a glance.

The image shows a screenshot of the SysAid landing page with 10 numbered annotations in green callouts:

- 1. Points to the headline: "IT Help Desk: Friendly | Effective | Affordable!"
- 2. Points to the sub-headline: "SysAid integrates all the essential IT software. Manage incidents and assets, communicate with your end users through an End-User Portal. Save time with the SysAid knowledge base, monitor and prioritize all your IT tasks and much more. Try SysAid now for 30 days - FREE! - and see for yourself."
- 3. Points to two checkmarks: "No Commitments" and "No credit card required".
- 4. Points to the "First Name" and "Last Name" input fields.
- 5. Points to the "START FREE TRIAL" button.
- 6. Points to a link: "Learn About Plans and Prices".
- 7. Points to a testimonial box: "The ease of use, wealth of features and off-the-shelf approach are the building blocks of what makes SysAid better than other products".
- 8. Points to a row of logos: Coca-Cola, Panasonic, Adobe, LG, and IKEA.
- 9. Points to the section header: "Everything You Need".
- 10. Points to a screenshot of the SysAid software interface.

The landing page content includes:

- Header: SysAid logo.
- Form: "Try SysAid for 30 Days FREE!" with options for CLOUD or ON-PREMISE, and fields for First Name, Last Name, Email, Company, Phone including country code, and account type.
- CTA: "START FREE TRIAL" button.
- Text: "By submitting this form you agree to the Service Agreement".
- Checkmarks: "No Commitments" and "No credit card required".
- Link: "Learn About Plans and Prices".
- Testimonial: "The ease of use, wealth of features and off-the-shelf approach are the building blocks of what makes SysAid better than other products" by Dragan Tomas, Sr. IT Associate, Holladay Properties.
- Logos: Coca-Cola, Panasonic, Adobe, LG, and IKEA.
- Section: "Everything You Need" with icons and descriptions for Ticket Management, Asset Inventory, ITIL Package, Self-Service Portal, Customization, and Reports.
- Footer: "Try SysAid FREE for 30 days! No credit card. No commitment." and "START FREE TRIAL" button.
- Page-Footer: SysAid logo, contact info (Toll Free US: 1-800-686-7047, US: (617)231-0124, info@sysaid.com), logos for PinkVERIFY, ITIL, and CLOUD AWARDS, and copyright info (Copyright © 2002-2014. All rights reserved to SysAid Technologies Ltd. Privacy Policy).

Email Landing Page: Master of Malt

1. No navigation on a landing page
2. No breadcrumb on a landing page. I mean, this is an email landing page – so it’s un-bloody-likely that I’ve visited any of those pages. If you’re just trying to give me more things to click on this page, see the next point.
3. No unnecessarily links! Come on. This email campaign cannot be going well with an unfocused “landing page” like this. If you wanted your subscribers to go wherever they felt like on your site, why did you even send out an email driving to this page?
4. I’m beginning to notice a trend here. You have no idea what people coming to your site want, do you? Perhaps consider a landing page that is just a big ol’ search field. After all, you’re leaving your visitors’ success entirely up to them anyway. At least be honest about it.
5. So would you like me to pre-order this product... or leave a review? Or, wait, I forgot – you have no clue what you want me to do. When I say, “page goal,” does it sound like I’m speaking another language?
6. Oh, brother. I’m not even going to comment on yet another set of distracting targets.
7. Why should I pre-order? Are there limited quantities? Is that the only way to guarantee I’ll get this in time for the holiday season? Do they sell out every year? Use button copy and “click triggers” to spike your visitor’s interest at this critical point of conversion.
8. Create meaning for your visitor here. What does that mean for them? That they can expect to receive their order before November’s up? The despatch date is not nearly as important as ensuring that your shopper knows she’ll get this item in time for the event at which she’d like to share them.
9. Outside of the exterior shot of the item, the possible contents of this ‘mystery’ gift are likely to be high on your visitor’s list of must-see before ordering. This is a place where images trump copy: don’t tell me what’s inside; show me. Yes, showing will take up more room, but if you pull all of those extraneous links off, you’ll have plenty o’ room!
10. This is all great stuff, but it’s lost at the bottom of the page. Why not put it closer to the button?





GET YOUR LANDING PAGE TORN

APART BY 3 CONVERSION RATE PROS

or watch it happen to someone else from the safety of your desk

JOIN THE PAGE FIGHTS



FINAL THOUGHTS ON BETTER COPYWRITING

Chances are extraordinarily good that if your pages aren't performing optimally right now, it's because you're making one of the following mistakes with your copy:

1. *You're saying too much or too little*
2. *You're saying nothing whatsoever*
3. *You're talking to the wrong people*
4. *You're talking about yourself*

Marketers have a tendency to try to abstract their messages to the point that everything can be said in two to six commonly used words, which somehow gives us the comforting sense that we've created a polished marketing message. As if that's the goal.

Let me leave you with this: polish doesn't convert.

If you want prospects to land on your pages, absorb your messages and act the way you'd like them to, **you need to try to say something different in memorable ways.** Say what your competitors wouldn't dare say. Unbounce makes it incredibly easy to split-test copy across your landing pages, so give it a shot.

No matter how many tactics, techniques and principles you read, if you say too much or too little, say nothing at all, talk to the wrong people or talk about yourself, your copy will fail, and your conversion rate will tank.

On the flipside, if you listen to your prospects, write in *their* language, write toward the page goal - making it their goal - and let a little love into your copy, you could see incredible conversion lift... using only your words. Which just so happen to be free and unlimited.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOANNA WIEBE

Joanna Wiebe is the original conversion copywriter and the creator of Copy Hackers, where startups learn to convert like mofos.

You've likely read her copy on the landing pages or in the emails of MetaLab, Crazy Egg, Neil Patel, Indochino, Tesco, Invision, Intuit and MadMimi, among others, and her popular copywriting ebook series may be on your Kindle at this very moment. (So go read it!)

Oh, and to throw in a little more social proof - in case you think she's a weird little hermit - here are some of the conferences she's been invited to speak at: Inbound, Copyblogger's Authority Intensive, Problogger Event, HeroConf... and Unbounce's very own Call to Action Conference.

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Joanna lives in Victoria, BC with her cat Lily and partner in life and crime Lance.

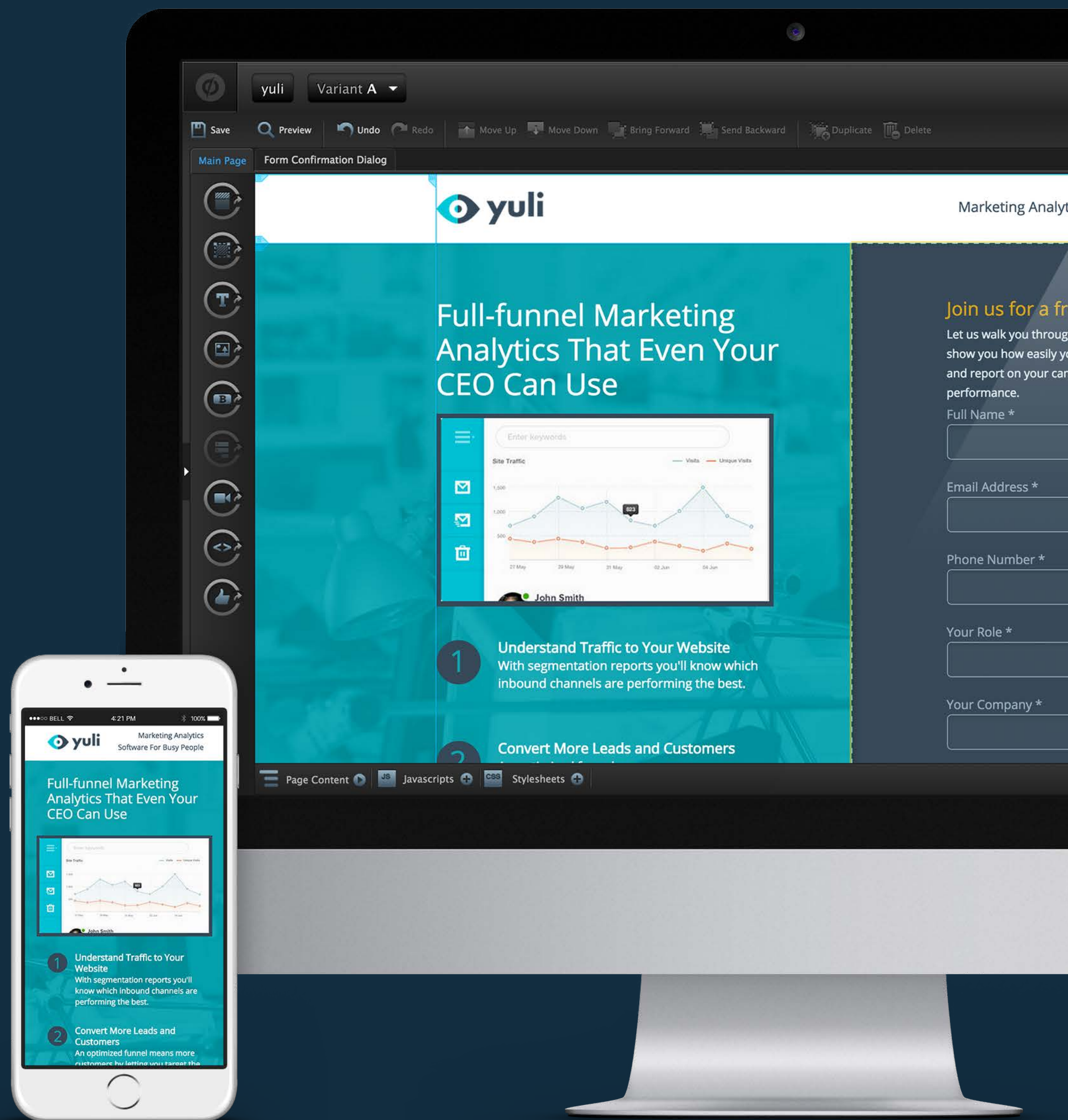
DO IT IN UNBOUNCE

START WRITING (AND TESTING) LANDING PAGE COPY THAT CONVERTS

Now that you know how to write smart, relevant, delightful, convert-like-crazy copy, it's time to get to work.

Sign up for a free 30-day trial of Unbounce so you can:

- *Build and publish an unlimited number of landing pages quickly and easily.*
- *Test different variations of your headline, body and CTA copy.*
- *Optimize your pages for mobile visitors and different stages of awareness.*
- *Watch your conversion rates soar.*



**BUILD A HIGH-CONVERTING
LANDING PAGE NOW**