

Rapid Conversion Landing Page Optimization Guidelines

Eight Simple Steps for Creating High Performance Rapid Conversion Landing Pages that Maximize Email Conversion Rates

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A Best Practice for Mequoda Publishers:

Build a valuable database by using your website to offer free reports that convert casual visitors into email subscribers

The essence of online marketing is building a database of potential customers and marketing to them, both on your website, and with editorial and advertising email messages.

Email can account for up to 60 percent of online revenue. In fact, some Mequoda publishers tell us that every name and email address in their database is worth an average of as much as \$70 annually.

Job #1 for an effective website is building your database — adding names and email addresses to your list. This is true for both B2B and B2C publishers, both ad-driven and product-driven.

The Rapid Conversion Landing Page initiates an online relationship. It always requests an email address from the user in exchange for permission to send additional offers. You may also know it as a squeeze page or a name capture page.

The power of a free-with-free offer

The most effective technique for quickly building a large opt-in email list is called "free on free." It's a takeoff on the department store cosmetics counter offer known as "free gift with purchase." Only in this case, it's a free gift for agreeing to accept a free email newsletter or free email tips.

As an incentive to subscribe to the free email newsletter, you also offer a free gift — usually an instantly downloadable PDF book or report on the same subject. Thus the name, "free on free." It's a second incentive for the user to give up her email address.

Studies have shown that leading with the free-with-free offer usually gets a higher response than leading with the free email newsletter offer.

Frankly, how many users really want to subscribe to another free email newsletter? Your response is more likely to increase when you entice the user to accept the free downloadable report while simultaneously and somewhat surreptitiously obtaining her agreement to receive "free email updates."

Write the RCLP and a Free Downloadable Report with Precision

What is the best practice for creating an effective Rapid Conversion Landing Page that builds email circulation?

Let's assume you are the copywriter. Here's the step-by-step process:

#1. Research and pick the topic.

In the new service journalism, every writer is responsible for both creating and marketing her work product. Writing an RCLP and a free downloadable report is an exercise in accountability.

Picking the topic begins with keyword analysis. This activity precedes copywriting and requires a different skill set from the usual wordsmithing.

You'll probably want to begin by talking with your publisher, audience development manager, keyword analyst or consultant — anyone who is familiar with your publication's keyword universe.

In preparation for writing the RCLP, open your Google Visibility Report and determine your target keyword phrases. Alternatively, you could meet with colleagues who can suggest keyword phrases to be researched as part of preparing the Google Visibility Report.

Start by using the Keyword Competitive Index to determine phrases where demand exceeds supply. Determine the phrases with the minimum number of searches that you will target. Generally, you won't want to target phrases with less than 500 searches per month.

You'll probably want keyword phrases with a KCI of above 1.0. You're looking for easy targets — search terms for which there is high demand and low supply. Pick the low-hanging fruit first.

This is an exercise in figuring out the interests of your target audience. More specifically, the Google Keyword Competitive Index tells you what your audience

The *Google Visibility Report* (GVR) tracks the volume and competition of each keyword phrase, and monitors the website's rank on each.

The *Keyword Competitive Index* (KCI) reveals the relationship of demand to competition. The KCI is your estimated annual search impressions (monthly average searches taken from the [Google Keyword Tool](#) times 12 months) divided by the number of exact match search engine results (the competition) at a point in time.

is interested in, that other websites are not providing. The KCI reveals where demand for information exceeds supply and creates opportunity.

Additionally, you'll want keyword phrases that appeal to the report author (if that's you) or the subject matter expert (if someone else is writing the free report). Ideally, these phrases should be discreet topics about which you could create a report, using the keyword phrase as part of the title. The best search terms are keyword phrases that relate to either existing editorial content, or to new content that can be researched and created easily.

#2. Write the title of the report.

Surprisingly, this is not the place to be succinct. Long report titles are good because they aid in organic search. The Mequoda Best Practice is to write report titles where a colon separates the keyword phrase from a description, or a definition, or a desired result that contains the same or another targeted keyword phrase.

Choose a one-word, two-word or three-word phrase from the Google Visibility Report Topic Cluster as the Report Title Anchor ("Team Building Strategies" for example) and choose one or two addition phrases as the Report Title Extension that will follow the report title anchor, separated by a colon, to create an eight to 12 word title.

Examples:

Team-Building Strategies: **Building a Winning Team** for Your Organization

Canadian **Stock Market Basics:** **How to Trade Stocks** and Make **Good Investments** in Canada

The Case for **Corporate Wellness Programs:** How to Increase Workplace Productivity and Reduce Costs with **Worksite Wellness Incentives**

Decoding **Stock Option Trading Information**: Recognizing What's Really Valuable for **Successful Option Trading**

Asynchronous Learning Trends: Making **Collaborative Learning** Work in the **Online Classroom**

Stock-Option Investment Essentials: Why Your **Long-Term Investment Plan** Needs Options

In addition to targeting more than one keyword phrase, titles such as these are search engine friendly because the Google algorithm rewards proximity. It tries to determine if there are other phrases around the primary keyword phrase that “ought” to be there based on its analysis of all the other webpages that use the same phrase. When it does, you are rewarded with a higher ranking.

3. Use the report title as the main headline.

The HTML tags of the finished Rapid Conversion Landing Page are no longer solely the responsibility of the website designer. The copywriter should label the report title with the H1 tag, making it clear to the designer or content loader, and to the Google spider, that the title contains the targeted keyword phrase.

4. Write a subtitle.

The subtitle is a call to action that explains the offer. It generally that starts with “Claim your free copy of,” adding the full report title and the publishing house, and finally, the publication or author responsible for the free report (whatever is the most powerful brand), and the tag H2.

5. Write the meta title.

Start with “FREE” followed by the brand, followed by the report title.

6. Write the meta description.

Reuse the subtitle here.

7. Write the meta keywords and keyword tags.

Start with the topic cluster, add phrases from the title, and add other phrases chosen from your Google Visibility Report for targeting in this report — phrases that are present in the body copy.

8. Write the Rapid Conversion Landing Page URL.

Write out the full report title minus the original punctuation, using hyphens as separators.

Bonus: Create an RCLP metatags template

The following RCLP metatags template can serve as a helpful reminder of the elements required for a Mequoda Best Practice Rapid Conversion Landing Page.

Keyword: This can be a single word or a keyword phrase.

<H3>Optional pre-headline: Attention grabber. This works best when the headline reads into it, as if it follows a colon.

<H1>Main headline: The name of report must appear here, because some users will eventually search for the report by title.

<H2>Sub headline: This should explain the free offer or state the call to action.

Meta title: This should focus on the product name. Often the meta title is identical to the main headline.

Meta description: This must focus on the product offer and name. Usually the meta description is also the subtitle of the report.

Meta keywords and metatags: Start with keyword phrases from title, then add other keyword phrases that are present in the body copy.

URL: Write out the full report title sans the original punctuation, with hyphens used as separators between the words.

The following is the Rapid Conversion Landing Page header information, optimized for search, and ready for the designer or web page content loader:

Topic Cluster: business negotiation (6,205 searches, 236,000 listings, .03 KCI) 6/500 x 2 = 2.4% KDI

Keyword 1 (4380 Searches, 11,000 listings, .40 KCI): team building strategies 9/500 x 3 = 5.4% KDI

Keyword 2 (2,555 searches, 32,700 listings, .08 KCI): building a winning team 7/500 x 4 = 5.6% KDI

Keyword 3 (193,815 5 searches, 11.4M listings, .02 KCI): team building 10/500 x 2 = 4.0% KDI

Report Title: Team-Building Strategies: Building a Winning Team for Your Organization

Main Headline: Team-Building Strategies: Building a Winning Team for Your Organization

Sub Headline: Claim your free copy of Team-Building Strategies: Building a Winning Team for Your Organization from the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School.

Meta Title: FREE Harvard Law School Report: Team-Building Strategies

Meta Description: Claim your free copy of Team-Building Strategies: Building a Winning Team for Your Organization from the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School.

Meta Keywords: negotiation, negotiations, business negotiation, business negotiations, team building, team-building strategies, building a winning team

URL: pon.harvard.edu/reports/Business-Negotiation-Team-Building-Strategies-Building-A-Winning-Team-for-Your-Organization

Titling and Outlining Your Report

In some cases, there may be an existing white paper that has been selected as the free report. If so, it probably has a title that can't be changed easily.

Other times, the copywriter or subject matter expert can craft a new, custom report around an ideal, search-engine-friendly title that contains the targeted keyword phrases.

In the above example, the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law had an existing report entitled, "Team-Building Strategies and Your Organization." For the purpose of the Rapid Conversion Landing Page, it was renamed "Team-Building Strategies: Building a Winning Team for Your Organization from the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School," which enabled the use of additional keyword phrases.

If you are writing your free report from scratch, or assembling it from previously publishing editorial content, you have greater flexibility to address the keyword phrase/search engine objectives.

Many experienced copywriters prefer to prepare a detailed outline a report before beginning writing. If you're a "big picture" thinker and highly disciplined writer, you're probably able to write the sub-headlines or section headings before filling in the supporting text.

If not, don't feel like The Lone Ranger. Not everybody achieves copywriting greatness using the exact same creative process.

Each copywriter has his own method of creating a report. Some simply begin writing everything they know about a topic, as quickly as they can get it out, without regard to the order.

Then they cut and paste the individual paragraphs it into a "logical" order. They shuffle and sort, and eventually, they edit the manuscript and add subtitles and section headings, as appropriate.

Others think through the entire topic, create a detailed outline of the report first, then write it in sections that conform to the outline.

Still other copywriters begin by doing online research and compiling extensive notes. This is called secondary research, because it is based on the published work of other writers.

When the copywriter has enough data and source material, he begins to assemble it into a document with an introduction and a conclusion. He may write the conclusion first, or last.

Despite all the lessons we got from our junior high school composition instructors, it turns out that no one size fits all. How you create an informative, interesting, fast-reading report is dependent on how you absorb and sort information. Writing is a mental process, and no two minds work precisely the same way.

An Easy Recipe for a Quick-Reading Report

One of the easiest formulas for writing a quick-reading report is to create an expanded list.

Readers love list reports because the lists comprise convenient summaries. Note that the document you are currently reading is a list of instructions for writing reports and Rapid Conversion Landing Pages.

The list archetype for writing a report works hand-in-hand with creating the Rapid Conversion Landing Page that offers the report. That's because it enables the copywriter to legitimately repeat the targeted keyword phrase throughout the RCLP, without upsetting Mother Google's sense of propriety.

Here's an excerpt from the RCLP offering a free Mequoda report in which the targeted keyword phrase is "email newsletter design."

Email Newsletter Design Best Practice #1

Delivery

If your email newsletter doesn't get delivered to the recipient's inbox, the chance of it being read greatly decreases.

Getting through Internet Service Provider (ISP) filters requires a mix of technology and relationships; most email service providers (ESP) provide what you need. Harder is getting through filters that reside on the recipient's desktop, like those offered by Microsoft Outlook, McAfee and Cloudmark.

The timing of your delivery can also make or break your ability to reach readers. The email newsletter should be sent at regular intervals and delivered at an appropriate day/time (weekdays during business hours for B2B, weekends or evenings for B2C).

Email Newsletter Design Best Practice #2

From Line

The from line of an email newsletter should clearly identify the sender and be quickly recognizable to the recipient. Studies have shown that when viewing their inbox, readers start by looking at the from line; engaging readers here has been shown to increase open rates.

Each email should actually have two entries in the from line—the display or friendly from address and the actual from address.

Email Newsletter Design Best Practice #3

Subject Line

Can you guess the title of the free Mequoda report, which is being described above?

It's "**10 Email Newsletter Design Best Practices: Create Impressive Email Newsletters with 40 Email Newsletter Tips on 10 Design Best Practices!**"

Whatever your creative process for writing a report, the final product should be a manuscript whose title is richly seeded with the keyword phrases you are targeting for organic search.

The essential symmetry of the free report and the RCLP

Some of the best Mequoda System copywriters write the Rapid Conversion Landing Page *before* the white paper or free report has been created. Often the same copywriter crafts both documents.

When you write the RCLP, you have effectively outlined the free report. (Long-time freelance writers will see the analogy between the RCLP and the query letter to a magazine editor. The query letter is written first, to outline and propose the magazine article.)

Of course, the RCLP and the free report must be coordinated. You can't make a promise in the RCLP unless you deliver on that promise in the free report.

Be Prepared for Your Report to “Go Viral”

Wouldn't it be wonderful if your report was so informative and well written that everybody who downloaded it also shared it with three or four friends via email?

Well, yes and no.

It would be great to have created such a smash hit. But if other people are giving it away, without your capturing their email addresses, you haven't advanced your goal of growing your database.

What to do?

Set up a section of your website that's devoted solely to all your free downloadable reports. Of course, that assumes you have several valuable free reports, and each has its own Rapid Conversion Landing Page.

Add a link to this download section at the end of every report. It will help drive readers who receive your report from a friend back to your website for another free report. This time, you'll capture their email address.

How We Increased Conversion Rate By More Than 30%

This radical change to our rapid conversion landing page format has increased conversion rate consistently over the past three months

We occasionally run organic marketing tests at the Mequoda Daily and enjoy sharing the results with our community.

The latest test we ran has resulted in a 32% increase in overall net conversion rate on our rapid conversion landing pages, all thanks to a radical change to the template.

We have always taken a hardcore direct response approach to the design of the RCLP. Meaning, there were no distractions on the page. Visitors couldn't navigate to other areas of the site, they couldn't leave a comment - the only thing a visitor could do was provide their email address in order to access the report.

In May, we decided to change the format of the RCLPs and have the RCLP look and function much more like a post. Comments are now enabled, helping facilitate conversations about our free reports and encourage inbound links. Also, logged-in users are now able to read the full contents of each RCLP. In the old format, links to RCLPs for logged-in users would redirect to the Thank You Download page.

COMMENTS (13)



Amanda MacArthur says:

June 3rd, 2011 at 11:00 am [edit](#)



As co-author on this report, I'm a little biased, but I have to say that this is one of the most information-packed white papers that Mequoda offers. The bonus HTML landing pages you'll get will make following all the best practices of this white paper quick and easy.



Patrick Hughes says:

June 3rd, 2011 at 11:03 am [edit](#)



Great content here. The guidelines are beyond thorough, and the case studies back up every best practice. Downloadable landing page templates don't hurt either.



» Blog Archive » New Landing Page Templates White Paper says:

June 3rd, 2011 at 11:12 am [edit](#)



[...] for years, but I don't think I've been as big a fan of a final product as I am of their new Million Dollar Landing Page Templates white paper. Considering that it's totally free, I'd say that it's worth every [...]



Alex says:

June 3rd, 2011 at 12:21 pm [edit](#)



Really interesting content. The two free landing page templates let you take what you learn and put it into practice immediately!

The idea for this test came from data released by SEOmoz earlier in the year, discussing how Google's algorithm appears to be rewarding sites with [social signals](#), which include comments from audience members.

Conclusions of the test

After adding the comments section to all our rapid conversion landing pages we've seen a 32% increase in overall net conversion rate across all our RCLPs. This data compares the overall net conversion rate of all RCLPs from February through April (pre change) with the overall net conversion rate on all RCLPs from May through July (post change).

Why comments are valuable on RCLPs

The interaction on RCLPs keeps the page freshly updated, which is something Google rewards with higher page rankings in relevant search results. Higher results often mean more searchers seeing your page, depending on its search result position.

Positive comments are great testimonials, which other visitors will see. The more you receive from your audience, the better chance at converting you'll have.

If you have the capabilities of allowing comments on your rapid conversion landing pages, we'd recommend giving it a try. Monitor the conversion rate over a span of several months and see how it performs. Also, make sure your landing page template is set up so comments can be entered by logged-out members too.

In the spirit of this new data, we'd like to invite you to [leave comments](#) on our RCLPs after you've read the associated free report. Let us know what you think of the content. If you have any questions after reading the free report, please don't hesitate to ask in the comments section.

Mequoda Best Practice Examples of Rapid Conversion Landing Pages

Rapid Conversion Landing Pages build circulation for free email newsletters. The more value they create — and *deliver* — the more effective they are at growing the database.

A Rapid Conversion Landing Page can be long or relatively short. It can tell an entertaining story, as does the RCLP for the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law (link below).

Or it can be very direct, with a simple, seductive offer, such as the RCLP for Knitting Daily (link below) that offers six free downloadable sock patterns.

The RCLP strategy works equally well for B2B and B2C websites, and for large publications as well as small publications. That's because of the power of the word "free" and the value of reliable information in a report with an irresistible title.

The following are links to some Mequoda Best Practice Rapid Conversion Landing Pages. **Full disclosure:** Some of these RCLPs are offered on the websites of Mequoda Consulting Services clients.

Baby Knitting Patterns from Knitting Daily:

<http://www.knittingdaily.com/7-Free-Baby-Knitting-Patterns/>

The Case for Corporate Wellness Programs from *Corporate Wellness Advisor*:

<http://corporatewellnessadvisor.com/freemium/workplace-health-statistics-corporate-wellness-programs-health-and-wellness-in-the-workplace-worksite-wellness-incentives/>

11 Strategies for Managing Your Online Courses from *Faculty Focus*:

<http://www.facultyfocus.com/free-report/11-strategies-for-managing-your-online-courses/>

Team-Building Strategies: Building a Winning Team for Your Organization from *the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law*:

<http://www.pon.harvard.edu/free-reports/team-building-strategies-and-your-organization/>

Computer-Aided Detection in Mammography: Five Key Breast Imaging Questions and Answers from *Radiology Daily*:

<http://radiologydaily.com/free-reports/computer-aided-detection-in-mammography-five-key-breast-imaging-questions-and-answers/>

Canadian Stock Market Basics: How to Trade Stocks and Make Good Investments in Canada from *TSI Network*:

<http://www.tsinetwork.ca/free-reports/canadian-stock-market-basics-how-to-trade-stocks-and-make-good-investments-in-canada/>

For additional information on the Mequoda best practices for writing a free report or white paper, be sure to download **How to Write a White Paper That Sells: Five Best Practice Guidelines for Selling Online White Papers, Special Reports and Handbooks:**

<http://www.mequoda.com/free-reports/how-to-write-a-white-paper-that-sells/>

For more free white papers, visit:

<http://www.MequodaFree.com>