



MICROGUIDES

WEBSITE CONVERSION

Proven methods to take your team's
performance to the next level

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INTRODUCTION

The MicroGuides are your shortcut to staying current on the world's top Business, Leadership, and Personal Development books. They are used by individuals looking to better themselves, as well as by teams and organizations looking to create and foster cultures of continuous learning and development.

The MicroGuides are meant to serve as your starting point for identifying your goals and the obstacles that are standing in your way of achieving them. In addition to participation in regular ActionClasses, we urge leaders to use the content in these guides as inspiration for developing your own unique ActionPlan to make your ideal state a reality.



WEBSITE CONVERSION

At the end of the day, the primary goal of any business's website is to convert visitors into leads and eventually customers. That being said, to continually get the most out of your website marketing budget, taking a structured approach to optimizing website conversions should be a no-brainer. For most companies, it isn't that simple though. Some of the questions you may be asking are: How do I track website conversions? What am I doing wrong that my website isn't converting visitors into leads? What in the world is a split test?

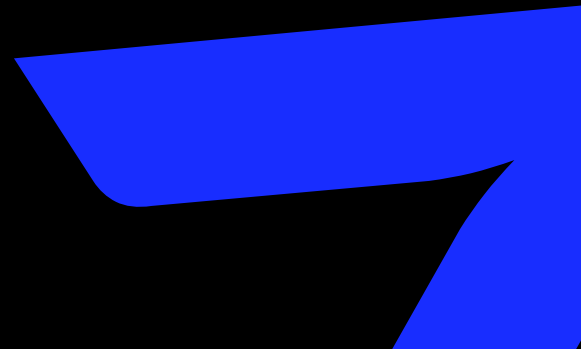
Whether you are in the early stages of formulating a strategy for website conversion optimization, or you're just looking for new tips to tweak your existing strategy, this MicroGuide is your starting point. Keep reading to learn more about how to steadily increase your website conversion rate and improve your top line.



01

Neuromarketing

by Christopher Morin
and Patrick Renvoise



01

Neuromarketing

Understanding the "Buy Buttons" in Your Customer's Brain

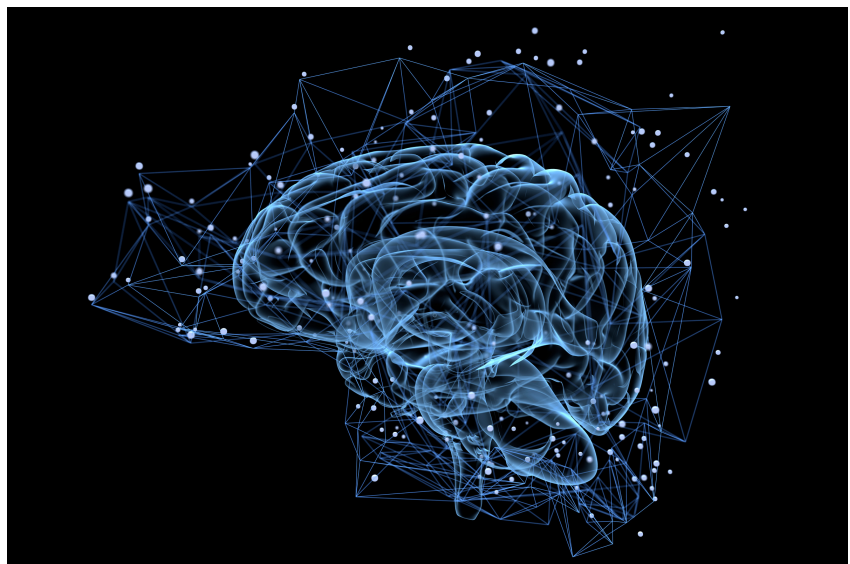
by Christopher Morin and Patrick Renvoise

What weighs 6 kilograms, contains over 100 billion living cells and one million kilometers of inter-connecting fiber?

Your brain.

It's the most fascinating and the most evolved object known to mankind. And every single decision to purchase your products and services is made by one.

Luckily for us, Morin and Renvoise have found that each and every one of them has a huge buy button.





In ten minutes or less, we're going to figure out how to find it.

As it turns out you have three brains. Well, not really three brains, but three distinct parts that operate separate organs with different instructions. Each of them has a separate purpose and understanding which one does which is the key to finding the buy button.

The new brain thinks, the middle brain feels, and the old brain decides. The old brain is our fight or flight brain, and according to leading Neuroscientist Robert Ornstein it is concerned solely with our survival and has been doing so for millions of years.

If you've ever been in a sales situation where you were certain that you had the best solution for your prospect and then they went somewhere else, here's the formula for making sure that never happens again.

Selling probability equals pain, times claim, times gain, times old brain cubed.

Step #1 - Pain

Step number one is to diagnose the pain. Is there a doctor in the house? Diagnosing a prospect's pain isn't a new technique. However, what other courses might have not taught you is that there are some very necessary conditions - four of them to be exact - to assessing whether or not a pain will lead to a sale.

First, you need to identify the pain. It's either going to be financial pain, strategic pain, or personal pain. Any of those three will do. This is where, however, mere mortals stop. You, on the other hand are an amazing sales machine and you're going to go all the way.

Second, you're going to figure out the intensity of the pain. The more intense the pain, the greater the chance of the sale.

Third, you need to know how urgent the need to alleviate the pain is. If there are other fires your prospect has to put out before she even considers your product or service, there isn't going to be much urgency there.

Lastly, you need to know that your prospect acknowledges the pain. It isn't enough for you to see that he should be in pain, they have to acknowledge it. If you don't have all four of these conditions, you don't have real pain.

Step #2 - Differentiate your claims

Coco Chanel once said that in order to be irreplaceable one must always be different. If there is ever a recipe for success, it is this.

The authors tell us we should find one or several unique attributes about our solutions, so we can strongly assert our claims. However, here's how you move to the front of the class.

Make claims that eliminates the strongest principle pain that your prospect has. That's what will motivate them to buy from you.

Adaptive reflection question: How does the product and/or service you are selling address a specific customer pain point?

Step #3 - Demonstrate the gain.

Simply put, highlighting your value proposition isn't enough. You have to prove it. Why? The old brain, as researchers found, is especially resistant to adopting new ideas or behaviors.

Especially buying from you. So how do you get over this resistance? Through tangible hard evidence. Here the four ways you can do that.

First, you could provide a vision. Steve Jobs was a master of this. People line up around the block to watch him unveil the latest and greatest from Apple computers. This could be very persuasive if done right. But it certainly sits at the bottom of the gain totem pole.

Second, you can provide data to back up your claims. Consider this demonstration of gain - our product will save you an average of five cents per transaction. Since you average ten thousand transactions a day, you will save five hundred dollars a day. Or a hundred and seventy five thousand dollars a year. That's getting better.



Third you can provide a demo of your product or service. You don't necessarily have to go through all of the features or functionality, but providing your prospect with an inside look of how you actually get rid of their pain is very reassuring.

Lastly, you can go with the ultimate proof - a customer story. Nobody wants to be the first to try something. Seeing that you have other customers who have had their pains removed is a huge deal. There are no assumptions or visions necessary because, as they say, the proof is in the pudding.

Step #4 - Delivering to the old brain

This is by far the most important factor in the equation. So, if you're going to remember anything from these ten minutes, make it this step.

There are six message building blocks and seven impact boosters. I'm going to focus on the ones that I think will help you the most just by reading them - you're going to have to go buy the book to find the rest.

Building block number one is the grabber. If you've ever started a presentation with who you are and what your background is or an overview of your company, do not pass go and do not collect two hundred dollars. As David Ogilvy once said, if you're selling fire extinguishers, start with the fire.

Building block number two is the big picture. The visual nerve carries information forty times faster than the auditory nerve. So, use big picture to tap into the old brain. But let's get something very clear here, a PowerPoint slide with bullet points and text is not a visual aid.

Impact booster number one is wording with "you." Human beings listen better when people talk to us rather than at us. Why? Because nobody gives a crap about you, they care about themselves. In fact, a study done at Yale University has shown the most powerful combinations of the words in the English language to be, thank you, would you please, what do you think and I am proud of you. Enough said.

Adaptive reflection

question: How could you make your demos/sales pitches more customer-centric?



Impact booster number five is learning styles. There are three different ways in which people learn, auditory, kinesthetic, and visual.

Most people strongly lean toward one of these styles. So, especially in situations where you can determine the learning style of the people you're talking to, talk to them in the way in which they learn. For instance, as the author states "do you see what I mean" works great for a visual person. "I hear you" works better for an auditory person. And "it feels good doesn't it?" is effective for kinesthetic learners.

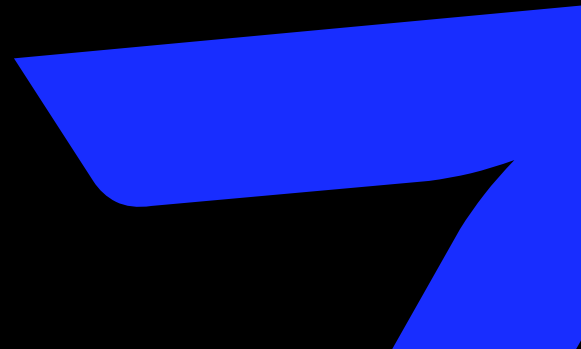
Impact booster number seven is "less is more." As George Washington once said, let your discourse with men of business be short and comprehensive. Notice that he said short and comprehensive. Average men, are either short, or comprehensive. You on the other hand, a neuromarketing superstar, will be both at the same time.

Adaptive reflection question: How can you modify your sales pitches to make them both shorter and more comprehensive?

02

Buyology

by Martin Lindstrom



02

Buyology

Truth and Lies About Why We Buy by Martin Lindstrom

We are thinking, learning animals. Our brains are constantly busy collecting and filtering information. Some information will make it into long-term storage (our memory), but others are mere noise.

If marketers could uncover what is going on in our brains that makes us choose one brand over another – how we filter information and what sticks – then they would have identified the secret to success.

Adaptive reflection question: Make a quick concept map of your current marketing strategy. Which segments convert the most? Why do you think that is?





This is what Martin Lindstrom calls our Buyology: the subconscious thoughts, feelings, and desires that drive the purchasing decisions we make each and every day. And he believes the future of marketing is to truly and completely understand the thoughts, feelings, motivations, needs, and desires of consumers. Join us for the next ten minutes to explore further.

I am Irrational and Emotional - I'm Human.

As human beings, we think of ourselves as a rational species. We like to think we are more Spock-like. Unfortunately all of us engage in behavior for which we have no logical or clear-cut explanation. The more stress we're under, the more uncertain we feel, the more irrationally we tend to behave.

Our true reactions and emotions are more likely to be found in the nanosecond lapse before thinking is translated into words. Lindstrom points out that if marketers want the truth - unplugged and uncensored - about what causes us to buy, they have to get inside our brains.

Because emotions are the way in which our brains encode things of value, a brand that engages us emotionally will win every single time.

Marketing to the brain, or neuromarketing, isn't about implanting ideas in our brains, or forcing us to buy what we don't want to buy; it's about uncovering what's already inside our heads: the emotional and irrational associations we make with products.

Take American Idol. The three judges all keep cups of Coke in front of them, and both the judges and the contestants sit on chairs or couches with rounded contours specifically designed to look like a bottle of Coca-Cola.

Whether through semi-subtle imagery or traditional advertising spots, Coca-Cola is visually present approximately for 60% of the time on the show.

Now think of the Ford Motor company. Also a major sponsor. They invested \$26 million in yearly sponsorship, and actually lost market share. Why? Coke was integrated fully into the narrative while Ford wasn't at all. According to Lindstrom, Ford doesn't play a role in the show. He reveals that we have no memory of brands that don't play an integral part in the storyline of a program. They become white noise and are easily, instantaneously forgotten.

Your product has to make sense within the show's emotional narrative. Want to be high-flying and adored? Coke can help. Want to have the world swooning at your feet? Drink a Coke. By merely sipping the drink onstage, the three judges forged a powerful association between the drink and the emotions provoked by the show. I'm successful and drink Coke. So can you.

Immersive experience

Ever sit and watch an American football game and feel yourself reacting to the tackles or take a sharp intake of breath before the hit? Why does this happen? Why do we mimic how others interact with objects? According to Lindstrom, we can put it down to mirror neurons.

Adaptive reflection question: What is your product or service's story? How does it fit into the customer's story?

When we watch someone do something, whether it's scoring a penalty kick or playing a perfect melody on a grand piano, our brains react as if we were actually performing these activities ourselves. In short, it's as though seeing and doing are one and the same. Mirror neurons are responsible for why we often unwittingly imitate other people's behavior. Interestingly, mirror neurons are also at work when the opposite takes place – on those occasions when we actually take pleasure in others' bad luck.

Lindstrom suggests mirror neurons not only help us imitate other people, they're responsible for human empathy. They send signals to the emotional region of our brains so we can experience what it's like to walk in another person's shoes.

But mirror neurons don't work alone. Often, they work in tandem with dopamine, one of the brain's pleasure chemicals. Dopamine is one of the most addictive substances known to science—and purchasing decisions are driven in some part by its seductive effects. Here is how Lindstrom suggests the combination works.

As you pass by a store with desirable goods on display, your mirror neurons fire up. You can imagine yourself being a proud owner of the goods: popular, desired, at the centre of it all.



You approach the counter with what you've just picked out. As you're getting ready to blow your bank account, your dopamine level soars into the heavens. As the clerk rings up and bags your purchases in that beautifully branded bag, you're feeling cool and one of "the in-crowd."

Dopamine subtly flushes your brain with pleasure and before you know it, you've signed the credit card receipt. A few minutes later, as you exit the store, bag in hand, the euphoric feelings caused by the dopamine recede, and all of a sudden you wonder whether you'll really ever use that camera or wear those shoes. Sound familiar?

As he states, between your mirror neurons making you feel sexy and attractive, and your dopamine creating that near-orgasmic anticipation of reward, your rational mind doesn't stand a chance. As marketers begin to learn more about how mirror neurons drive our behavior, they'll find more and more ways to play upon them to get us to buy. Buyers beware.

It's a kind of magic

Lindstrom suggests that the more unpredictable the world becomes, the more we grope for a sense of control over our lives. And the more anxiety and uncertainty we feel, the more we adopt superstitious behavior and rituals to help shepherd us through.

So what do rituals have to do with what we think about when we buy? A lot. For one thing, products and brands that have rituals or superstitions associated with them are much "stickier" than those that don't. Once we find a ritual or brand we like, isn't there a lot of comfort in having a particular blend of coffee to brew every morning, a signature shampoo with a familiar smell, or a favorite make of running sneaker we buy year after year?

Lindstrom suggests brand obsession has a lot in common with rituals and superstitious behavior—both involve habitual, repeated actions that have little or no logical basis, and both stem from the need for a sense of control in an overwhelming and complex world.



When we are stressed out, or when life feels random and out-of-control, we often seek out comfort in familiar products or objects. We want to have solid, consistent patterns in our lives, and in our brands. We need shortcuts.

Why did I choose you?

These are subconscious conversations going on in our heads every time we choose one product over another. If asked to describe how you came to your decision, you'd probably shrug and reply "Instinct," or "No reason," or "I just did." But the real rationale behind your choices was in fact built on a lifetime of associations—some positive, others negative—that you weren't consciously aware of. Lindstrom gives us a name for these brain shortcuts: a somatic marker.

Sown by past experiences of reward and punishment, these markers serve to connect an experience or emotion with a specific, required reaction. These same cognitive shortcuts are what underlie most of our buying decisions. Every day, we manufacture new ones, adding them to our decision portfolio. Whether for necessities or for pleasures, somatic markers help us with every buying decision we're able to make.

So how do these markers form? And do companies and advertisers work to deliberately create these in our brains? Lindstrom suggests it's easy and inexpensive to create a somatic marker in consumers' brains. It's all about the unexpected.

Sony created an ingenious somatic marker in the weeks before the release of Spiderman 3, using men's rooms in selected theaters. A guy would stroll in and see a conventional line of urinals and stalls. Nothing out of the ordinary. That is, until he would happen to gaze upward and see a single stand-alone plastic urinal seven feet above his head. Next to it: the words Spiderman 3 . . . Coming Soon.

Others create somatic markers in consumers' minds using humor. Fear too can create some of the most powerful somatic markers, and many advertisers are all too happy to take advantage of our stressed-out, insecure, increasingly vulnerable natures.

Selling to Our Senses

According to Lindstrom, visual images are far more effective, and more memorable, when they are coupled with another sense—like touch, sound or smell.

When we see and smell something we like at the same time—like Johnson & Johnson's Baby Powder combined with its signature vanilla-y scent—various regions of our brains light up together. When a pleasant fragrance matches up with an equally appealing and congruous visual image, we not only perceive it as more pleasant, we're also more likely to remember it, but if the two are incongruous, forget about it. Literally.

Of all our senses, smell is the most primal, the most deeply rooted. Touch is another sensory sales technique. We like to stroke, rub, caress, and run our fingers through the garments we're considering before we commit to buying them— kind of like a sensory test run. Why else do you think those tables of clothing at the Gap and Banana Republic are positioned where they are? To be looked at? Of course not. They're there awaiting your fingers.

As for sound? The sound of a can of Pringles potato chips opening is largely engineered to make you associate the product with lip-smacking freshness.

According to Lindstrom, tomorrow's retail world will have the distinct smell of cantaloupe, lemongrass, tangerine. It won't be black and white, but in vivid colour. It will chirp, waltz, holler, infuse you, and leave you humming. And this assault on your senses will be more effective in winning your mind, your loyalty, and your dollars than you ever thought possible.

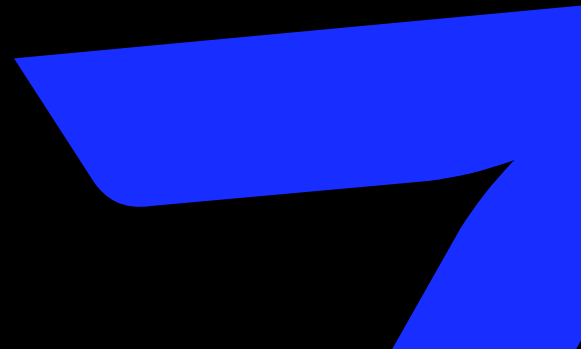
Adaptive reflection question: How can your marketing efforts make use of somatic markers?



03

Convert Every Click

by Benji Rabhan



03

Convert Every Click

Make More Money Online With Holistic Conversion Rate Optimization

by Benji Rabhan

We all know that website optimization is critical. It helps us deliver on our objectives: better sales, better reference, better awareness.

The problem is, these optimization exercises generally focus on one page at a time. Benji Rabhan believes this is where many companies go wrong. He suggests we need to take a holistic approach and consider optimization of the sum of the parts. No single component works in isolation. Everything affects something else. Our websites are a reflection of an eco-system. When we tinker with one part, are we able to understand the impact that might have on other parts? Rabhan suggests not.

Adaptive reflection question: What are your goals for your company's web presence? What obstacles are standing in the way?





Holistic Conversion Rate Optimization (HCRO) considers this ecosystem. While we may look at individual pages and metrics, HCRO considers the big picture. What happens when people hit the website is equally important as to what happens after they leave.

In “Convert every Click,” Rabhan takes us through a step by step process to apply HCRO principles effectively. Unfortunately ten minutes is not enough to go through each step so we’ve focussed on a few areas where we feel immediate benefit through the use of Rabhan’s advice can be achieved. But before we cover these areas, here’s a sound piece of advice from the author.

Change, Test, Assess, Consolidate.

As mentioned, the underlying model of HCRO is that of an ecosystem. A website is a series of co-dependent components that work together. It is this fact that influences Rabhan’s persistence within the book that whatever we do we do so with deliberate measurement.

First we identify what we intend to change. The rule for success here is to make it measurable. By doing so we can more easily measure success or failure and that’s what the second step focuses on.

Like any good statistician, we need to form and evaluate a hypothesis. We are changing component X because we believe it will result in better Y. We need to test this hypothesis: measure before attainment, make the change, leave for an appropriate period and then measure the new outcome. Does it align with expectations? Yes? Good, but we don't stop there. We need to progress to step three – Assess.

In the assess stage we are looking at consequential actions. By changing X and improving Y did we affect Z? Was that effect positive or negative? Obviously if we find a positive outcome we can go ahead to step four and consolidate the change: make it permanent. But if we turn up negative outcomes we need to rethink our strategy.

With the above evaluation principle applied to every iterative change, we can gain the benefits of HCRO in a sustainable and understandable way. Now let's focus on a few areas where immediate impact might arise.

The Fold

Let's consider "the fold." The term comes from traditional newspaper printing where the broadsheet was folded in half for ease of delivery and shelf space. Consequently, the top half of the front page of the newspaper became important and where the "scoops" were placed. In the context of a web page, above the fold is the area we can see before we need to scroll.

In some cases, online marketers have polarized the idea by saying that everything should fit above the fold if we want to convert someone. Others now conclude that people have learned to scroll more, which supports designer's ability to be more creative.

Adaptive reflection question: What methods do you currently have in place to test website efficacy?

Relevance and Design

It's all about meeting the expectations of the RIGHT customer. Let's think about graphic design. It generally focusses on the ideals of beauty and other elements, such as branding. Applying these principles to our web site may give us a pretty site. Although these things are important, they are just one small factor from a conversion rate optimization perspective. According to Rabhan, making it pretty and stylish is important but a secondary consideration. His first consideration is the belief that visitors evaluate a web page in a fraction of a second.

According to Rabhan, there are three psychological conversion checkpoints our brain goes through in a fraction of a second before the conscious mind even sees a web page: Is this page relevant? Is it credible? Is what they're offering a good enough value to get the conversion?

The ultimate goal is to make our prospect's lizard brain happy by providing a web page design that passes these checkpoints with flying colors.



Adaptive reflection question:

Ask yourself these questions about your own web page. Where are your weaknesses?

Rabhan suggests we take an objective look at the page and ask ourselves:

- Is it relevant to our audience?
- Does it have a credible feel to the target visitors?
- Does it look professional enough to trust?
- Is the offer a good value?
- Does it come close to visitors' true desire?
- Is the offer clear enough to be understood in the amount of time they are visiting?

If our answer is no to any of these questions, then we've found a good place to start revising - and testing of course.

Color, Contrast and the Eye-Blur Test

Rabhan points out the way that we color our page and the concentration of colors on certain spots on a page can subconsciously affect the users and significantly affect the way that they interact with it.

For example if we have an entire page that's mostly black and white, and we use one bright red element in the bottom right corner, visitors' eyes are going to be drawn to the bright red element because it stands out from the rest of the page. While that may seem obvious, the same logic is true when the difference is more subtle. In other words, contrast makes one object stand out and be more visible when viewed against something, such as a background or another object on the page.

In addition to contrast, colors have certain associations in the brain. Maybe you associate green as serene like a grassy field, and red as intense like fire. Or maybe you think green means "go" and red means "stop." Just be aware of the audience and what colors might mean to them and don't forget that colors have different associations in different cultures, too.

Rabhan gives us a quick test to identify the impact of color and contrast - the Eye-Blur Test.



The idea is to look at the screen and squint our eyes until our vision is unfocused and the screen is blurry. Small text on the page should fade away, and lower contrast elements, such as gray text on a white background, will fade away so much that we won't even see them. Other brighter or high-contrast elements or colors will stand out. You'll instantly see how the page is weighted for the user based on the colors and contrasts.

A Call (or two) to Action.

Turning back to "the fold" one way to optimize above and below might be adding a call to action for each part. This can increase conversions by making our offer once per screen, instead of once for the entire page.

According to Rabhan, not only does adding a call to action on each screen give people more opportunities to convert, but it also gives us the opportunity to target different types of people.

For example, people who scroll down below the first fold tend to be the people who are research minded and want to learn every detail about the product, so opt-in offers, such as educational guides, lengthy tutorials, and demos tend to work better below the fold.

Spontaneous or quick-decision personalities will act on their impulses above the fold, so a call to action in the form of a button, link, or short capture web form would be good to put above the fold.

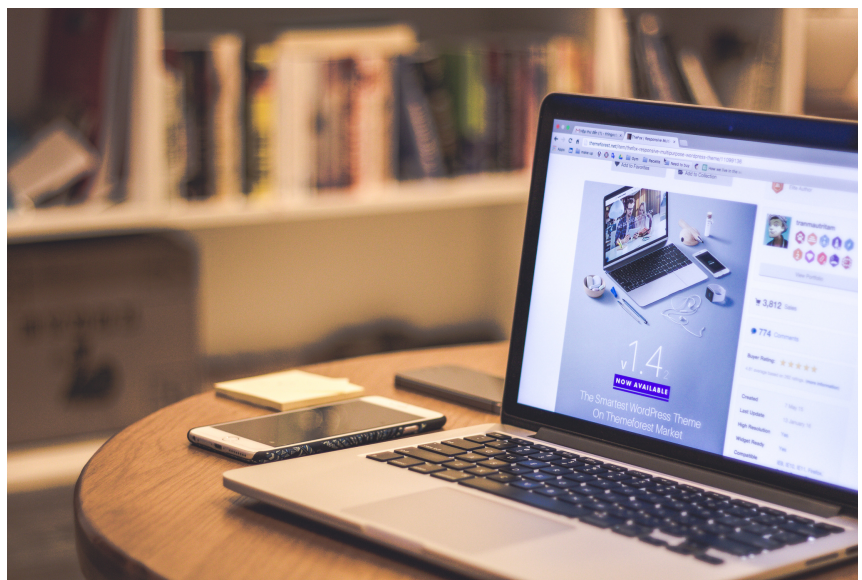
Copy? What's in it for me?

Copy is all the text that makes up our headlines, offers, value proposition, product descriptions, pay-per-click ads, and e-mails—any writing involved in our marketing and sales.

Copy contributes to the value side of the checklist by conveying the offer or the message in persuasive terms. People need to know what they're getting and how it's valuable to them. Copy can contribute to credibility by talking about guarantees, achievements, awards or media appearances, or by giving testimonials and endorsements.

Human beings are, at the most basic level, inherently concerned about themselves when making decisions. "What's in it for me?". Make sure that the copy on your website is not company-centric, otherwise the prospect will have to translate it to what that means for them, which can serve as another step preventing them from converting.

Adaptive reflection question: Read through all the copy on your website. How much of it is customer-centric and how much of it is company-centric?





The Get Principle

Rabhan points out that people want to get something: they want to get information, a product, a service, self-esteem. They want to get confirmation that they were right about something.

Whatever they want, give it to them. But don't tell them what we're going to give them, tell them what they're going to get. GET not GIVE. When in doubt, we need to use the word 'get' to focus our brain thinking in the right direction. In addition, using the word get in our buttons and links will almost always increase conversions over words such as 'submit' or 'find out more'.

People don't want to submit; they want to get, so remind them of their side of the exchange, not ours.

Make me an offer I can't refuse!

To finish, let's look at Rabhan's eight key steps to writing an enticing offer.

Adaptive reflection question: Look back at one of your recent web offerings. How many of these techniques does it utilize? What is it missing?

1. **Base our offer on prospects' true desire.** The closer we get to what they truly desire, the more they'll be willing to give in terms of money, information, time, and so on.
2. **Write a persuasive headline.** It should contain some mention of the problem the visitor is trying to solve and our solution.
3. **Prove it!** Every claim we make could benefit from some sort of proof behind it, whether that's graphs, screenshots, or testimonials.
4. **List benefits, not just features.** Features are what we're giving, and benefits are what they are getting.
5. **Include several calls to action** (use buttons, links, and images). Put at least one call to action above the fold.
6. **Give bonuses.** People love getting stuff for free.
7. **Make it easy.** Whether they admit it or not, people like things to be easy.
8. **Use numbers.** Numbers make things tangible, and they can be a big help in our copy.

ABOUT ACTIONCLASS

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