B2B Social and Display Advertising:

The 2022 guide to improving advertising performance

bombora

Welcome to the new digital battleground

Between lockdowns and the rise of remote and hybrid work, everyone is spending more time online than ever before.

In fact, a full 31% of U.S. adults say they're online "almost constantly" (up 10% from less than a decade ago), and 85% of adults say they're online at least daily.

Social media use has also exploded, with engagement increasing 61% over average usage rates during the first wave of the pandemic alone.

And don't think this doesn't apply to your prospects.

A study by NordVPN found that remote and hybrid workers put in two additional hours of work per day compared to when they were in the office (and most of this time is spent online).

And, before you ask how your prospects sitting in Zoom meetings for ten hours a day helps your business, remember that almost 90% of them are multitasking during their sessions (with nearly 20% of them scrolling social media while they should be paying attention).

Active usership on all of the major social media platforms continues to rise. There's no end in sight, and if you think this behavior has gone unnoticed by the marketing community, think again.

Global spending on digital and alternative media is estimated to rise by a staggering 12.6% this year as marketers around the globe scramble to build up their online presence.

…but is throwing more money at digital advertising really the best solution?

Maybe not.

Today we're bombarded by ads, with the latest estimates claiming that we can see up to 10,000 ads per day (up from an estimated 5,000 ads per day in 2007). And, if this number seems too high to you, it may be because we're getting good at tuning them out.

Think about it—when's the last time you consciously noticed a banner ad?

A study by Infolinks found that 86% of users experience 'banner blindness,' which Hubspot defines as "a form of selective attention, in which web visitors ignore information presented in banners. This can be either conscious or unconscious and is usually done to avoid interacting with ads that may disrupt the user experience."
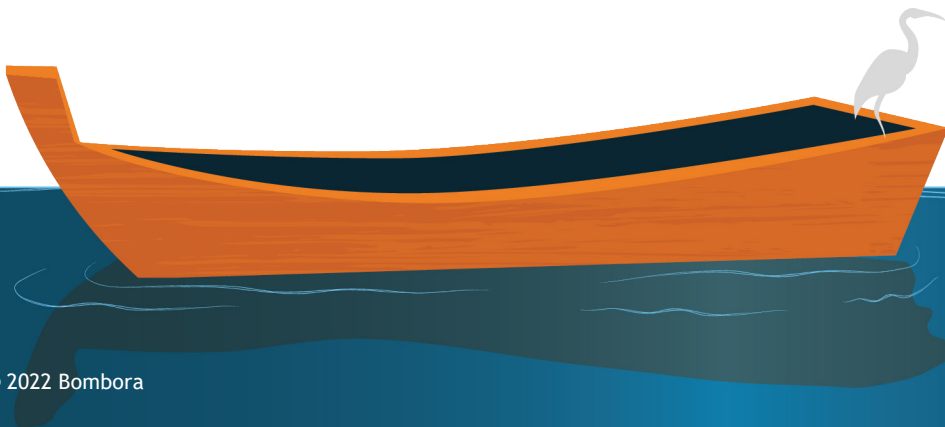
If that wasn't bad enough, an older, still relevant experiment from 2012 found that intentionally left blank ads achieved a 60% higher CTR than the average Facebook ad.

It's clear that the answer isn't to throw more ads at people. We need to figure out how to make our advertising more *effective.*

And that's what *B2B Social and Display Advertising: The 2022 guide to improving advertising performance* is here to do.

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The impact of increasing ad performance vs. spend

Is our ultimate goal to increase conversions or to spend our already tight marketing budgets?

(Serious question.)

Whatever the answer, we need to make sure our actions line up with our intentions.

Yes, if all else is held constant, increasing ad spend to get more impressions will very likely cause an increase in conversions, but this isn't scalable, and it certainly isn't the most efficient or effective way to achieve your goals.

Let's look at an example of an ad campaign vs. the same campaign, but with a 10% increase in budget:

Metric	Original campaign	Campaign + 10% budget	Notes
Spend	$10,000	$11,000	10% increase in spend
Clicks	1,000	1,100	10% increase in clicks (assuming constant CPC)
Conversions	100	110	10% increase in conversions (assuming equal return on conversions)
Conversion rate	10%	10%	0% increase in conversion rate!

That's right. Assuming everything is held constant, as in the example above, you still paid $100 per lead in each scenario. Sure, you got more total leads, but your CPL (and your ROI) stayed the same. And that means the 'conversions for money' game comes to an end pretty quickly when you run out of budget.

Now, let's look at the same scenario, but, instead of increasing our spend by 10%, let's run this simulation assuming we doubled down on Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) and increased our clicks and conversions by 10%:

Metric	Original campaign	Campaign + 10% conversion rate	Notes
Spend	$10,000	$11,000	0% increase in spend
Clicks	1,000	1,100	10% increase in clicks (lower CPC!)
Conversions	100	120	20% increase in conversions (additional 10% vs. an increased budget)
Conversion rate	10%	11%	10% increase in conversion rate!

While increasing your conversion rate from 10% to 11% might seem insignificant at first, it's important to look at the details:

If you look at the data, we reduced our CPC by $17 (From $100 to $83.33) and increased our number of conversions by 20% with no additional spend.

And don't forget that all of this scales with volume and time.

We also shouldn't neglect customer Lifetime Value (LTV)—one additional conversion could mean thousands or even hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue for your business.

Running better campaigns means a better ROI, more efficiency with your current budget, a better perception of your brand in-market to establish your expertise and thought leadership, and better brand recall for when prospects are actually in-market (Did you know that approximately 85% of your total addressable market aren't ready to buy?).

Now that we covered the *why*, let's dive into the *how*.

How to optimize your social and display advertising for conversion

Ok, put down Photoshop for a second. We need to talk about something way more important than color schemes.

This guide will help you boost your display advertising performance by nailing these four things in the proper order:

I. **Define your marketing goals**

II. **Meet your customers where they are**

III. **Design creative that compels**

IV. **Build landing pages that convert**

I. Define your marketing goals

Your goals mean everything to your approach, so we need to start with them in mind. Here are a few options—which are you trying to accomplish with your campaign?

- Lead generation?

- Increasing website traffic?

- Boosting brand awareness?

- Establishing thought leadership?

- Activity against target accounts?

- Education on your business, product, or industry?

- *Something else?*

Realistically, there are many more possibilities than just what we've listed here, and you might even be trying to accomplish more than one of these goals at once.

(Also, your goals will likely change over time. For example, a short-term goal might be to drive demo requests, whereas a longer-term goal could be building up, educating, and establishing your brand in-market.)

Are there specific business KPIs you will focus on? And how will you measure them? Understanding your goals will help drive decision-making around what you want to advertise, and who should see them.

Here are a few examples:

Goal	Content
Thought leadership	Reasearch report
Product education	Guides, eBooks, webinars
Brand conversion	Free trial offer, product demo, customer testimonial

Once you've settled on your goal and offer type(s), it's time to focus on your audience.

Obviously, you need to make sure your campaigns are in front of the right prospects, but it's important to remember that only about 15% of the prospects meeting your Ideal Customer Profile (ICP) are actually currently in-market for your solution. This means if you have a goal that's more focused on the bottom of the funnel (e.g., demo requests), you could potentially be throwing a lot of money at people who aren't currently ready to buy.

Luckily, there are two methods to help target prospects who are most likely to convert:

1. **Use your first-party data to build audiences that match your ICP or existing customers**

2. **Use third-party Intent data, like Company Surge® from Bombora, to target customers who are actively looking for your solution**

    Intent data can identify which accounts are currently showing increased interest and activity in the areas your solution addresses—and even if they're looking into your competitors.

If you're running a nurture campaign or trying to re-engage accounts and prospects who've shown interest before, fall back on your lead scoring model to help build even more segmented audiences who you know are demonstrating buying intent. Serve these audiences additional content related to the topics you know they're interested in.

> ### What?! You don't have a lead scoring model?
>
> No worries! We've got you covered.
>
> To learn how to build your first lead scoring model (or to optimize your current one), check out our Intentional Lead Scoring Workbook here.

Throughout this process, stay mindful of how big your audience is with respect to your budget:

Remember the old "Rule of 7" adage—a prospect needs to see your message at least seven times before they'll take action.

With the increased volume and competition of digital advertising, and the shrinking of consumers' attention spans, this number has no doubt increased, so if your budget is spread too thin over too broad of an audience, they won't see your message enough to make an impact.

Don't be afraid of repeating yourself—repetition can help build up the familiarity of your brand and even make your message feel more trustworthy.

"A diamond is forever" has constantly been running since 1947...you can run the same campaign for more than a month.

II. Meet your customers where they are

Ok, so we narrowed down the customers we'd like to target and we have our offer figured out.

How do we connect the two?

We need to meet our prospects where they live.

Let's first take a look at the two big gorillas in the room—Meta (formerly Facebook) and LinkedIn.

1. Facebook

While LinkedIn boasts some pretty impressive stats (like a 3x higher visitor-to-lead conversion rate than both Twitter and Facebook), Facebook still has some incredible value that shouldn't be overlooked.

At 2.91 billion users, Facebook is the largest social platform, and you can tap into this vast audience at an average CPC of $0.64 (over 6x cheaper than LinkedIn's CPC of $3.49).

Where Facebook really shines is less expensive/higher volume campaigns aimed at awareness and obtaining net-new prospects. It's also an excellent platform for experimenting with new ideas (you can even build and target lookalike models seeded off some of your first-party data).

Don't forget that the Facebook advertising suite (now known as Meta for Business) also gives you broad access to mobile users and the 500 million users who are on Instagram every single day—which is a pretty big perk.

Quick tips for designing Facebook ads:

- **Give Carousel ads a spin**
  - Carousel ads boast a 10x improvement in CTR, 30-50% lower cost-per-conversion, and 20-30% lower cost-per-click than single image link ads

- **Use multiple ad formats**
  - Don't forget about video, mobile, and the other formats that work well on Instagram!

- **Use honest, conversational copy**
  - Detail what your offer includes, use action-oriented verbs, and be sure to appeal to emotions, not just logic

2. LinkedIn

Again, when it comes to conversion rate, LinkedIn is king.

But, it can also get quite expensive if you don't have a solid strategy in mind.

Be smart when advertising on LinkedIn—don't focus on cold, net-new prospect acquisition to start. Instead, start by remarketing to your website's visitors first so you know you're starting with a warmer audience, and you'll get more bang for your buck.

As with Facebook ads, try to use multiple ad formats and clear, relatable copy—*and don't neglect carousels!* They do incredibly well on LinkedIn too.

Quick tip for success with LinkedIn ads:

Again, LinkedIn can get pricey—but when it comes to conversions, it's one of the best tools available. Use the right strategy and you'll make every dollar count.

Remember, just because someone meets the right demographic profile doesn't necessarily mean they're at the right stage of their buying journey.

A great way to make sure you're reaching the right audience at the right time with the right messaging is to integrate Bombora's third-party Intent data. Bombora's LinkedIn integration plugs directly into LinkedIn Campaign Manager, helping you automatically uncover the most interested accounts and segment more effectively based on account-level Intent data in real time.

> "An Intent-based segmentation strategy on LinkedIn allowed us to target and engage different personas and accounts with content based on topics they showed interest in. Intent-based LinkedIn campaigns demonstrated 9.4% more impressions than the next highest LinkedIn campaigns, and we lowered our average CPM by 32% for all campaigns combined."

Kelly Justice
Director of Demand Generation and
Marketing Operations at Outreach

3. Other social channels

LinkedIn and Facebook typically get all the attention when it comes to B2B advertising, but they're certainly not the only options.

Here are a couple others to keep in mind:

Reddit

Reddit is full of passionate users arranged in highly engaged communities. If you find a community that compliments your products, brand, or mission, it can be a great place to maintain your brand presence and generate insightful conversations.

Be more open to experimentation with messaging on Reddit. The traditional messaging you use on LinkedIn likely won't be received the same on this platform.

Keep it light, have fun, and don't be afraid to be a little clever with this audience. You will get some negative feedback, and that's OK. How you respond can make all the difference.

Quora

Quora is a question-and-answer platform where users can go to ask questions and get information. It's a great place to show off your knowledge and expertise and offer helpful advice.

As far as advertising on Quora goes, remarketing to website visitors can be an effective strategy. You can also explore and test their targeting options to see if they make sense for your business.

4. Test, test, test!

Regardless of which platform(s) you pick, be sure to continue testing and evolving your campaigns based on what's working.

If you're taking an account-based marketing (ABM) approach and going after the same accounts and prospects consistently, it's even more important to experiment on a wide variety of channels, no matter how non-traditional they are.

Meet your audience anywhere and everywhere you can.

5. Display advertising

Display advertising is great because you can access millions of sites with relatively little effort, but with so much less real estate to work with, you really have to make every pixel count (more on that in the next section!).

Despite the extended reach, you'll likely see lower conversion rates than other advertising methods, but there are actions you can take to increase your ad effectiveness:

1. Remarket to your website visitors

If someone's been to your website but didn't convert, there's a reasonably good probability that they're interested in you, or the products or services you offer. Maybe the timing just isn't right yet.

Display ads are a great way to keep your visitors up to date on your newest guides, reports, eBooks, videos, and blogs.

They were interested enough to visit your site already, so keep them engaged by consistently offering value in new ways to keep them coming back and build a good reputation for your brand in their minds.

Time is on your side.

Temporal events like webinars make an especially good topic for display ads because they automatically keep your content fresh and help prevent your audience from seeing the same offers in rotation.

If you have a webinar coming up, launch a display campaign to your remarketing audience two weeks before it goes live to help boost registrations.

2. Use third-party Intent data

It goes without saying that your advertising will perform better if it's targeted to buyers who are currently interested in the solution you offer. So use third-party Intent data to get in front of those buyers who are actively researching your product or service, competitors, or topics related to your business to get higher engagement.

Third-party Intent data can also help you determine the appropriate buying cycle, so you can meet your prospects where they are—from awareness to conversion.

- Offer ungated, top-of-funnel content to audiences segmented based on relevant Bombora topic clusters to establish your position in the market as an expert

- Establish and reinforce your competitive differentiation with your display creative, and use a CTA that can speak to the benefit of your differentiation

- Connect to your CRM with an ABM platform like RollWorks, and put display ads in front of target accounts at scale to deliver even more relevant and personalized experiences

See how Salesforce saw a 271% ROI on their digital display and paid social using Bombora's Intent data to identify target accounts.

It's coming together! So far, we've covered your goals, offer, audience, and channels.

Now let's make your ads pop.
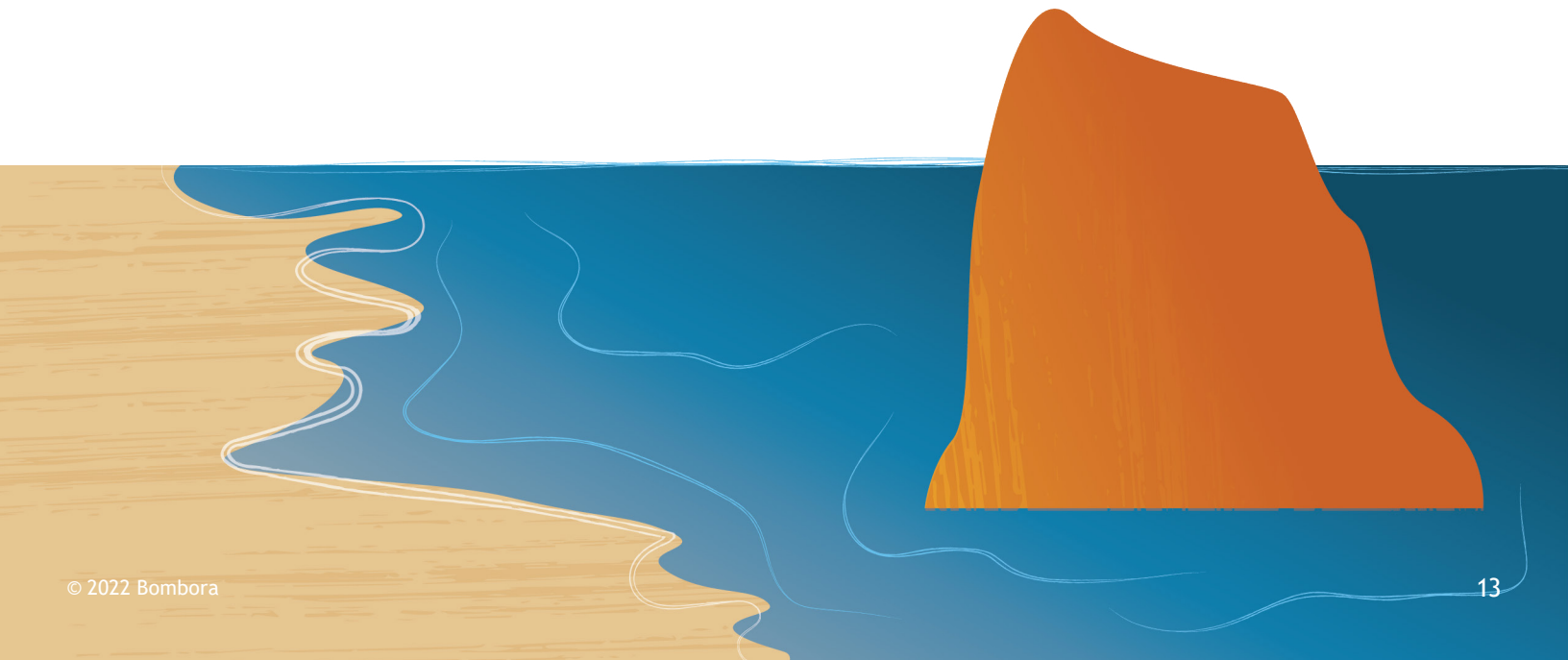
III. Design creative that compels

Let the battle begin!

Remember those 10,000 ads your prospect was seeing every day? Now they're all directly competing against you for your prospect's attention.

Your ad isn't the only thing on the page—every platform and website where your advertising will appear will also have its own share of distractions. You'll be fighting gifs, videos, pictures, and even the page's own content for your prospect's eyes.

Looking for inspiration?

Check out Moat.com!

Moat lets you search the most recent banner ads by brand, which can help give you a good jumping off point.

But make sure not to fall into the trap of looking just like everyone else!

A good creative is one that's **designed for conversion.**

Some creatives are visually incredible, but they miss the elements necessary to drive action, while others are so focused on driving action that they completely lack any and all attention-grabbing appeal.

To ensure you're grabbing attention and getting results, pay attention to these four fundamental elements:

1. **Use color effectively**
2. **Put your offer in the creative**
3. **Pick effective CTA copy**
4. **(BONUS! Don't forget carousel ads!)**

1. Use color effectively

In addition to using color creatively to make your ad stand out from the page, make sure your prospect can easily find your CTA button by making it a contrasting color to your creative background.

Here are some examples of contrasting CTA button colors done right:
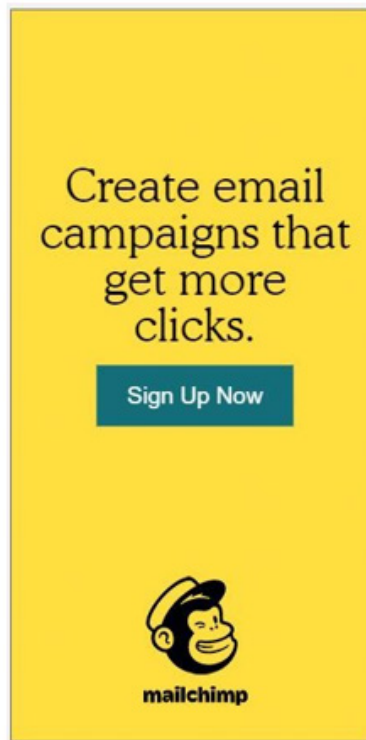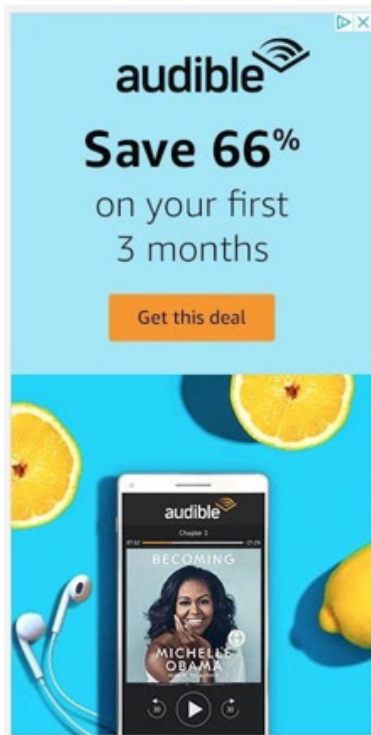
2. Put your offer in the creative

If you have a tangible product or offer, feature it in your creative to help make it more concrete in your prospect's mind.
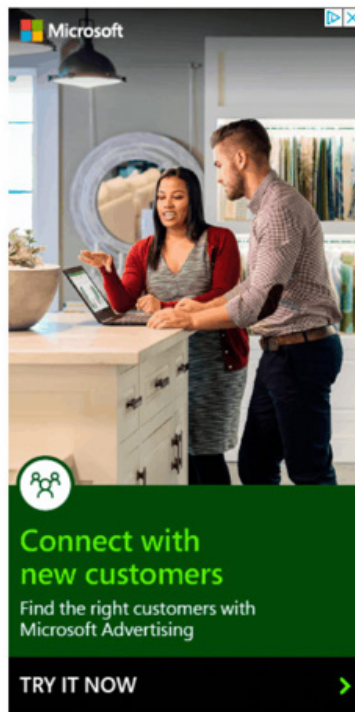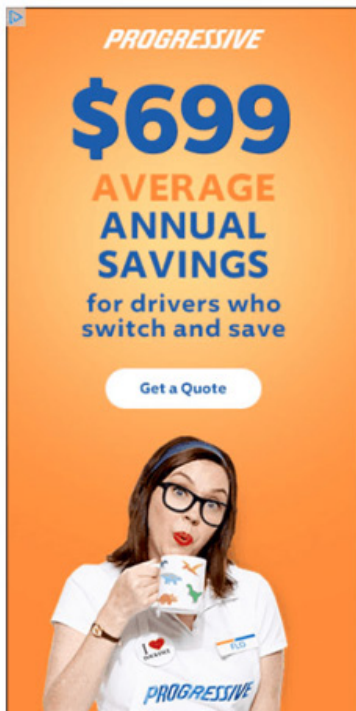

Whatever the user will actually get from clicking through should be on your creative wherever possible—it both clarifies what you actually have to offer and helps grab your reader's attention.
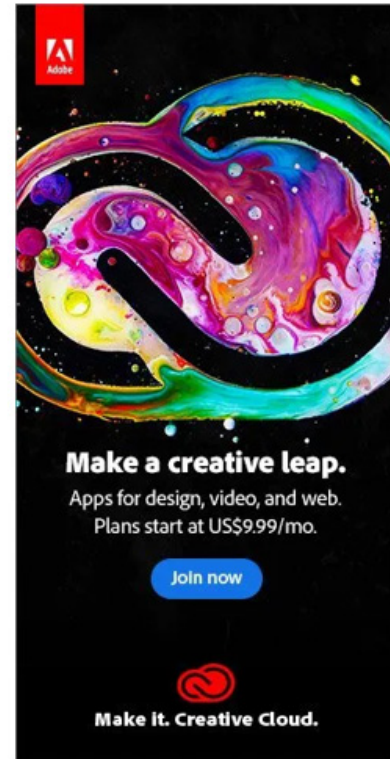
3. Pick effective CTA copy

The most effective CTA copy is clear and concise.

A good rule of thumb is to finish the statement, "I want to _____," from the user's perspective:

Don't forget to A/B test elements of your creative.

For example, if you're going to use a pronoun in your CTA, try using first-person (e.g. "Start **My** Free Trial" instead of "Start **Your** Free Trial"). Unbounce recently ran this very test and the first-person copy produced a 90% lift in CTR.

A quick note on ad copy:

Make sure your copy doesn't just push your product or offer as an end to itself. Rather, be sure your ad addresses the problems that your customer is facing and offers a solution.

Appealing to emotions rather than features is also especially effective in categories that are commoditized or mature where many different products could seemingly offer the same features, capabilities, and outcomes.

B2B marketing doesn't have to be boring. Don't be afraid to give it some personality.

4. (BONUS!) Don't forget the carousel ads!

Most of these examples have focused on the purest form of single image ads, but don't forget about the effectiveness of carousel ads!

To make it more tempting for your viewer to swipe, make sure to incorporate arrows or elements of the design that run from slide to slide:
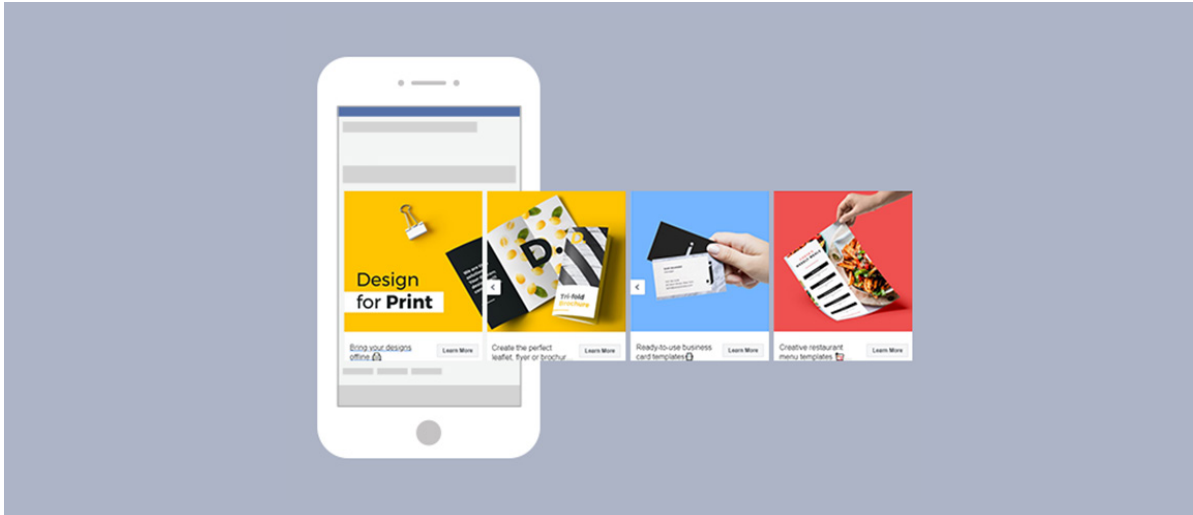
(Example from creatopy.com)

(Example from hellodigital.marketing)

Following all these tips and examples will help make sure you get the click.

Now we need to drive for conversion.

IV. Build landing pages that convert

Congrats! You got a click!

Now that we've gone through the effort to capture our prospect's attention and earn that click, we need to ensure we're making it easy for our readers to convert.

Here are six critical elements that make up an effective landing page:

1. **The hero image**
2. **The copy**
3. **The visual of your offer**
4. **Social proof**
5. **The form (if applicable)**
6. **Ease**

Let's dive in to each one in more detail:
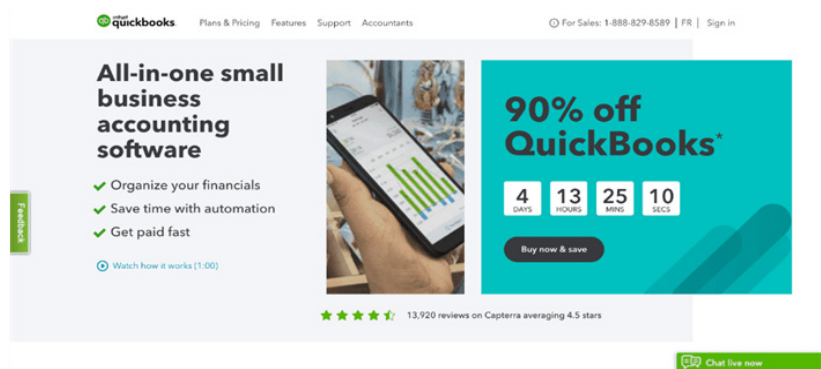
1. The hero image

The hero image is the first thing the user sees when they click into the ad (before they scroll), and the absolute best thing you can do is make it match the ad it came from.

Check out this example from QuickBooks.

The ad:	The landing page:

Notice how the visual experience between the display ad and the landing page is nearly continuous?

This is known as ad scent, and it's maximized by creating as much consistency as possible between your ad and its associated landing page to reduce friction.

> More broadly, ad scent is related to ad relevancy, and it's one of the biggest factors that will affect how platforms rate the effectiveness of your ad campaign during the learning phase.

If your ad and landing page designs are too different, it can unnecessarily jar your user—they might wonder if they clicked something else by accident or if the ad took them somewhere other than where they thought it would—which will ultimately hurt your conversion rate.

Having a strong ad scent will help users immediately recall your landing page and the ad they originally clicked through, increasing the likelihood of continuing on their journey.

2. The copy

Take a look back at the QuickBooks ad in the last section—did you notice anything about the copy?

They used the exact same copy on the landing page and in the ad ("90% off QuickBooks"), and it's likely not due to a lack of creativity:

Using the same copy between the ad and the landing page is a great way to increase the continuity and ad scent we discussed in the last section, so make sure the landing page copy effectively mirrors the ad copy.

For maximum effectiveness, don't lead with your product features. Instead, structure the rest of your copy like this:

- Describe your users' problem or situation from their perspective—show that you understand the struggles they experience before your product or solution

- Then move on to describe your offering

- Finally, show the benefits and how life is better after your product or solution is bought or implemented

By the way, did you notice how easy it was to read that last paragraph?

It's because we used bullets.

Bullets are secret weapons for your landing page—people naturally gravitate to bulleted or numbered lists, and succinctly summing up your offer in 3-5 clear and descriptive bullet points will give your user experience (and your conversion rates) a huge boost.

(If you need more inspiration, there's an awesome template featured in theClikk.)

Remember—always aim for clarity over creativity in your copy.

Bonus copy tip:

To make your landing page copy extra effective, make sure to design for 'scannability.'

People are often in a rush and scan instead of reading pages, so be sure to use headlines and bullet points creatively to break up walls of text and make your copy easier to digest and understand.

3. The visual of your offer

The final piece that will help increase your ad scent is including a visual of your offer in the ad and the landing page.

If your landing page is a wall of text or doesn't have relevant images, your prospect might forget what it is or why they had this tab open in the first place.

Some simple ideas for relevant images that work well include:

- A thumbnail of the cover of the asset

- A screenshot, gif, or small video of your UI or platform

- A picture of someone interacting with your product, reading your eBook, etc.

Again, if your prospect gets distracted or comes back to your page at a later date, including a relevant graphic will help your prospect remember why they were interested and continue on their journey of conversion.

4. Social proof

Is social proof ever a bad thing?

Showing how your product or solution has helped other people in your prospect's same situation will only help increase your conversion rate.

A great place to put your social proof is below your primary copy in a different-colored block or section of its own, so it stands out. Any friction created by doubting the offer or your business can be dispelled by social proof related to your business or offering.

If you're struggling to get some sound social proof, reach out to your best customers and ask them for a recommendation!

Bonus social proof tip:

You shouldn't be afraid to write your social proof on your customer's behalf, and then ask your customer for approval to use it and quote them.

While it seems like this is "leading the witness," your customer will often find this helpful (because they don't have to come up with a quote from scratch), and you're more likely to get a usable quote.

5. The form

You may have heard that "forms are dead," but this couldn't be further from the truth: forms are alive and well, and people still fill them out every day.

That said, one of the most significant offenses that marketers commit is claiming to offer "free" content when using a form.

We need to be clear that, when we have a prospect fill out a form, this is an exchange of value, and we need to treat it like one—a prospect is giving up their time and personal information, and they expect something at least of equal value as what they've invested. Don't take this exchange lightly. Treat it with respect. Mistreating people's personal information will damage your brand trust and hurt your future campaigns.

When it comes to the form itself, be sure to keep the form fields tidy and limit the number of fields to reduce further friction. For example, do you need to ask for a company name in addition to the email address when you can typically pull the company name from the email address?

Since we want to limit the total number of fields, be sure to replace potentially less valuable fields with more valuable ones—e.g., a "How did you hear about us?" field can do great things to help your attribution.

Keep the fields lean and essential, don't overburden them.

Finally, make sure the CTA button at the end of your form echos the CTA from the ad (again, check out that QuickBooks example)—and the color should match too.

Form conversion rate optimization tip

If you have a form on your landing page, A/B test its position.

Research shows that people scan web pages in an F-shaped pattern (reading left to right, then down again from left to right, etc.), so putting the form on the left can help increase the conversion rate of your landing pages. Give it a shot!
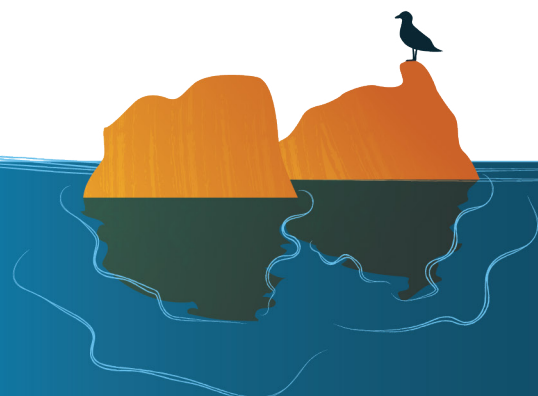
6. Ease

Never forget—the ultimate goal of your landing page is conversion, so you should remove absolutely everything that could get in the way of that goal.

This means cutting anything that may be distracting or taking someone off the page.

Some everyday things that could distract or cause your prospect to leave are hyperlinks that go to other pages (don't forget the hyperlink in your logo!), super long or complicated forms, and/or long videos that the prospect might not watch to the end.

7 steps to increase your digital ad effectiveness

1. **Focus on your goals** and let them guide all of your decisions

2. **Build the right offer** that helps your prospect in their buying stage

3. **Know your audience,** including their current stage in the buying journey

4. **Meet your audience where they are** and advertise there

5. **Budget appropriately** and focus on optimizing CRO first—too little budget means not enough impressions if your audience is too big

6. **Design your creative for conversion** with colors that pop, a clear offer, and copy that converts

7. **Make your landing page flow** right from the ad to the CTA

V. Bring it all together

Whew!

We covered a lot in this eBook, from why we need to optimize our digital advertising campaigns to how to do it. Still, there's ultimately only one thing that separates a successful campaign from a mediocre one. It's the critical piece that pulls everything together and underscores everything we've covered in these pages, and if you get this right, everything else will fall into place.

Perspective

If we design our digital ad and landing page from our perspective, with only our desires and goals in mind, we're destined to create an underwhelming campaign.

The key to making a campaign that's truly successful is to keep your prospect's perspective front and center. At every stage, be sure to ask yourself questions like:

- "What type of content would my prospect want to see right now?"

- "What is my prospect thinking at this stage of the experience?"

- "What would they expect to see next?"

(Remember: Intent data is an incredibly effective tool to make sure your ads are meeting your buyer at the right stage of their buying journey.)

If you can look through your customers' lens at every stage of their journey—from ad creative through conversion—you're bound to make your customers feel seen and spoken to, and create an ad that stands out from the crowd.

Yeah, there's a lot of competition in the digital ad space today, but great ads are still few and far between.

Want to learn more about Intent data?

Check out our Intent data guide. (At the very least, check out our landing page!)

**Set up a personal demo to learn what Intent data can do
for you!**

About Bombora

Bombora tells businesses which accounts are researching their products and services. With this understanding, sales and marketing teams can be more relevant and consistent and improve performance across all activities. This intent-driven approach revolutionizes the way businesses market and sell to other businesses through transparent data built on an ecosystem of quality, collaboration, and innovation. With direct integrations with dozens of leading data and media-buying platforms, Bombora is building a world in which business buyers value sales and marketing for its relevance, timeliness, and accuracy.

To learn more, visit bombora.com.

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