



# 10 CONVERSION RATE BLUNDERS

Your site is making and how to correct them now.

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# YOU CAN'T IMPROVE OPT-IN CONVERSION RATES WITH "GUT INSTINCTS."

This is true no matter how experienced, robust or impressive one's gut is.

(We apologize to all guts.)

**Here's What Does Work:**

**Testing Billions Of A/B Impressions And  
Going With The Sure-Fire Winners.**

At Bounce Exchange, we test 24/7 and improve conversion rates for Forbes, Comcast, American Apparel, Gannet and many other great companies through our patented behavioral automation technology. (Yes, it's as cool as it sounds.)

And now, in this guide, we're going to share our sure-fire winners with you, so you can improve your conversion rates.

Plus, here's the really cool news:

*Most of these tips can be implemented today.  
Like, now. So you can do something this week to  
improve your conversion rates. No excuses.*

Humans are weird. Very weird.  
(Exhibit A: Right Said Fred had a #1 hit song.)  
So much of our testing even surprised us.

Headlines we just knew would dominate instead  
died a horrible, fiery death at the hands of people.  
(i.e., no one clicked on them, which sounds much  
less dramatic than fire.)

**So without further ado, here are 10 of the most  
common conversion rate blunders you can avoid.**

**Says who? Says billions of people.**

1.

# HUMANS KILL CONVERSION

Using People in Opt-Ins.

*Humans killed the Dodo Bird,  
the Western Black Rhinoceros  
and now we're killing conversions...*



First, an example:



or



Now, most people guess the ad with the image would win big. It's an old advertising staple: you have to have a compelling image to grab the reader's attention, right?

**Um, wrong.**

**Very wrong, in fact.**

**The offer above without the image had a 20% higher click rate, along with a 10% conversion rate.**

This pattern of “humans killing conversions” is as predictable as the sun rising in the east. Why? Think like the user:

- Who is this girl?
- Would I hang out with this girl?
- I don't like her.
- I wouldn't want to drink beer with her.
- I bet her friends are snooty.
- *Bounce.*



Another example:



This opt-in is targeting men, and most every man wants to be Johnny Depp. That dude is cool.

But, hmm. Again, let's jump into the mind of an Esquire prospect:

- What is up with the hat?
- Did he shower today?
- Does he dress like this in public?
- That Lone Ranger movie stunk.
- *Bounce*



By now, you know what ad won. The test on the left. Proves that even celebrities can't overcome the "humans kill conversions" rule.

#### HOW TO CORRECT THIS BLUNDER

- THE OFFER ALWAYS WINS
- DON'T USE PEOPLE IF YOUR OFFER IS SIMPLE TO UNDERSTAND
- THE LESS DISTRACTIONS, THE BETTER

# 2.

## COMPLIANCE MOMENTUM

You Don't Have a 2-Step Opt-In.

*Two-step opt-ins beat one-step opt-ins every time.*

*Yes, every time.*

*Common sense tells us that a 1-step opt-in would defeat a 2-step opt-in every single time. Because, let's face it, humans are lazy.*

*Who wants to click twice when you only have to click once?*

But the 2-step opt-in — when used correctly — kicks the pants off the 1-step opt-in. This seems counterintuitive until you read the research of Robert Cialdini, author of “Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion.”

The premise is this:

**When you make a small commitment, that small commitment dramatically increases your chances to make another commitment. It's human nature.**

**Scary, huh?**

His best example of the power of reciprocity is the Hare Krishnas, who are known more for their depiction in the movie *Airplane* than their religion. This organization conducted many fund-raising attempts in the 1970s to no avail, until they started giving away gifts in public places (such as a book or a flower).

Suddenly, this simple donation-request procedure delivered record contributions and helped build more than 300 centers in America. People felt like they *had* to give after receiving a free gift.

History lesson, over.

How does that affect your conversions?

**Simple.**

**Implement a 2-step opt-in and test it against your 1-step opt-in.**

**Then watch your conversions climb.**

If you write your first-step's headline like the next example, and you tap into your visitors' true wants and likes, then the power of reciprocity takes over.

Just be sure to tie the headline into your offering or opt-in. (For example, “Do you like cake?” won't cut it unless you're selling cakes.)



One-step:



TOMS

Good things come to those who  
**SIGN UP FOR OUR EMAIL LIST**

---

Select the ~~category~~ that ~~interests~~ you most:

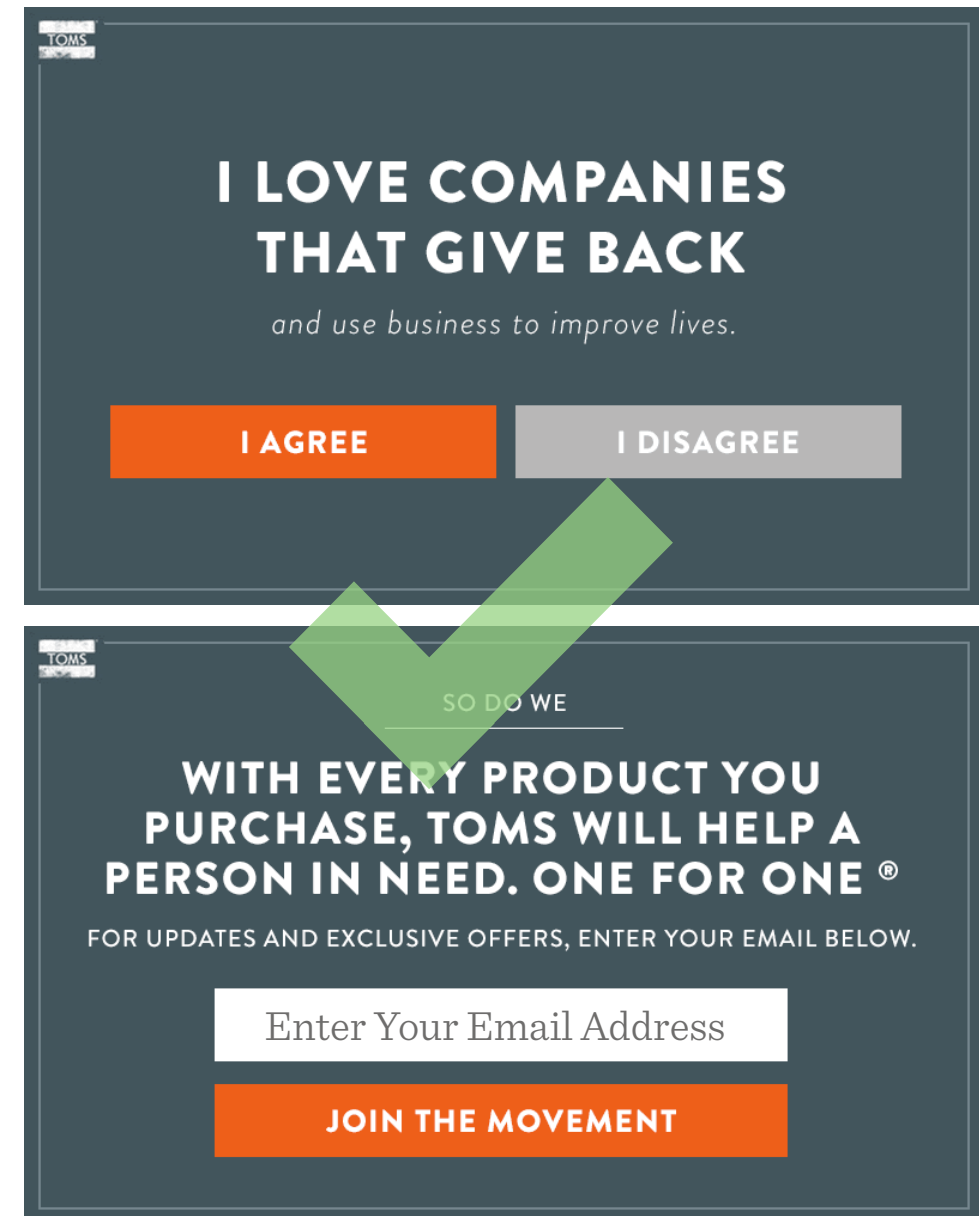
Women Men

Enter Your Email Address

**SIGN ME UP!**

By submitting your email, you agree to our [Terms of Use](#)

Two-Step:



TOMS

**I LOVE COMPANIES  
THAT GIVE BACK**

*and use business to improve lives.*

**I AGREE** **I DISAGREE**

SO DO WE

**WITH EVERY PRODUCT YOU  
PURCHASE, TOMS WILL HELP A  
PERSON IN NEED. ONE FOR ONE®**

FOR UPDATES AND EXCLUSIVE OFFERS, ENTER YOUR EMAIL BELOW.

Enter Your Email Address

**JOIN THE MOVEMENT**

## HOW TO CORRECT THIS BLUNDER

- **CREATE A 2-STEP OPT-IN THAT TAPS INTO THE WANTS OF YOUR VISITORS.**

# 3.

## ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

You Have Too Many Distractions.

*If your graphic designer is paid by the hour, she is not going to like this guide. At all.*

Yes, you want professional, beautifully branded communication pieces at all costs, but if you have too many distractions, the visitor will bounce fast.

89% of North America has (ADD) Attention Deficit Disorder. OK, maybe not 89%, but you get the point. We're in a hurry. We like shiny things, and when we see another shiny thing or we're distracted for one second, poof, we're on to the next big thing.

**Ever heard of KISS?**

**It stands for Keep It Simple, Stupid**

Bounce Exchange testing tells us that simple wins every single time. It's the one rule we can consistently predict before testing. (Sometimes, our graphic designers argue with us so we test their work just to win arguments.)



Here's an example, which is a double opt-in:



The single opt-in seemed to work well, until we brainstormed the double opt-in and took out the runners.

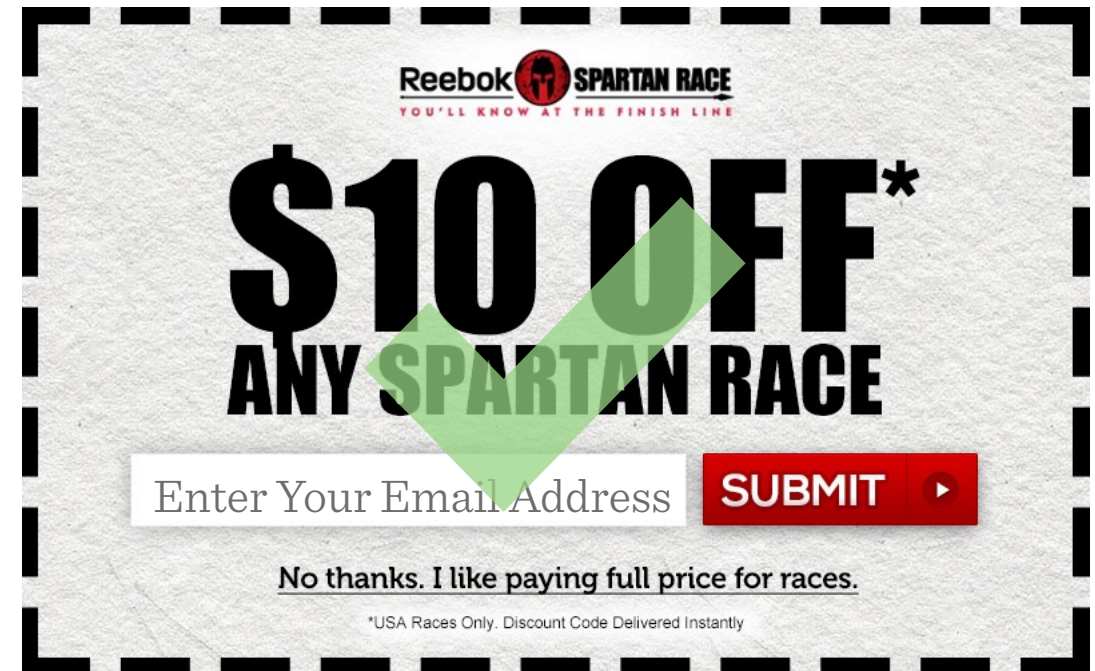
The power of reciprocity + The power of simplicity =

## MAGIC CONVERSION NUMBERS.

Think of your opt-in designs as hyperthermia: When a human body goes into hyperthermia, the body ignores the parts that aren't vital. The fingers (say, the opt-in's subhead, for example) and the toes (the background visual, per se). Your body's core gets all the blood flow.

This is your main offer and call-to-action.

Kill the rest.



## HOW TO CORRECT THIS BLUNDER

- GET TO THE POINT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE
- ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS
- APOLOGIZE TO YOUR GRAPHICS TEAM

# 4.

## DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOUR CUSTOMERS.

How Dumb Do You Think They Are?

*This isn't intentional, of course,  
but even we have been guilty of underestimating our customers in the past.*

Check out this coupon from one of our clients:



We assumed that 57% would at the very least double the conversions of the 25% coupon. But we like to A/B test basically everything, so we gave it a shot.

**Guess what?**

**The 25% offer doubled the 57% offer.  
Yes, you read that right. Double.**

When we received the results, we asked our analytics gurus to test it again. Then they brought back identical results. Then our CEO himself monitored the test to make sure we weren't all going crazy.

We weren't. The 25% offer took down the 57% offer every time.

Why? Because 57% is too good to be true. Humans look for a great deal, but we have an innate ability to sniff out an imposter.

So even though our client's 57% offer was legit, their customers didn't believe it!

*Warning: if your offer sounds too good to be true (think "double your sales!" as well as the "57% offer") then your prospects will click somewhere else. We have the proof.*

#### HOW TO CORRECT THIS BLUNDER

- **DON'T EXAGGERATE. BE HONEST WHILE STILL ENTICING THE PROSPECT**
- **THEIR NOSE IS CONSTANTLY IN THE AIR SNIFFING OUT A TRAP**



# 5. YOU SEND VISITORS TO YOUR HOMEPAGE

Homepage For What?

*More than 25% of Google AdWords advertisers send all PPC traffic to one landing page.*

*1 in 5 small businesses send all PPC traffic to their homepage.*

These statistics help explain why bounce rates are so high in our industry. And there's no easy way around the cure: you need to create unique landing pages for your unique ads, along with different types of traffic.

This takes work. But here's the good news:

**Your competitors most likely aren't doing this.**

**Beat them.**

Let's get in the mind of your prospect.  
Never mind, let's get in the mind of you.

*You click on a banner ad for red boots, and then you're whisked away to the homepage of your dreams... where, oops, you can't find a picture or mention of said red boots. Bounce.*

But say you click on that same banner ad and you're taken to a glorious homepage full of red boots, along with suggestions of other boots that could fit your fancy. Mmm, time to hurt that credit card.

**Be sure to send your prospects to the page they are interested in.**

**Not the page you're interested in.**

Your bounce rates will decrease dramatically, Google will be much happier, and, most importantly, your prospects will become clients.

## HOW TO CORRECT THIS BLUNDER

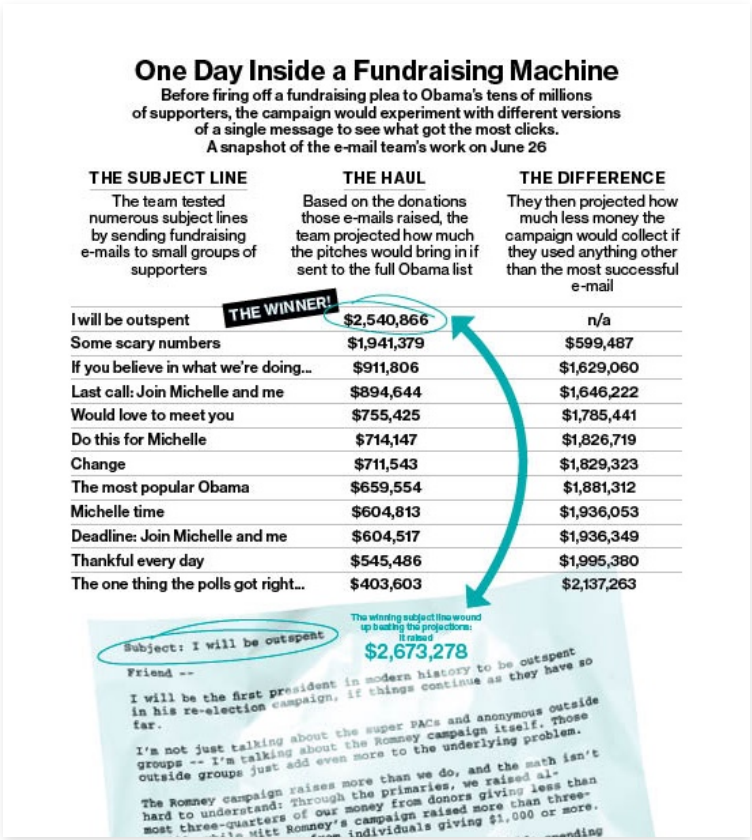
- **CREATE UNIQUE LANDING PAGES FOR SEPARATE PPC CAMPAIGNS AND BANNER ADS, SOCIAL MEDIA, EMAIL BLASTS, ETC.**
- **YOUR BRANDED ADVERTISING CAN TAKE THE VISITOR TO YOUR HOMEPAGE, BUT THINK LIKE A PROSPECT**

# 6. YOU DON'T CONDUCT A/B TESTS

This is not a test.

*During Barack Obama's presidential campaign drive,  
his team tested and retested emails and subject lines to find a golden ticket to fundraising.*





During Barack Obama’s presidential campaign drive, his team tested and retested emails and subject lines to find a golden ticket to fundraising.

They found it:

The subject line: “I will be outspent.”

**That one subject line raised \$2.1 million more than it’s next competitor.**

**This, dear reader, is the power of A/B testing.**

You think you know what will work, but, sorry to be blunt here:

You don’t know.

Bounce Exchange conducts billions (with a “b”) A/B tests and even we predict incorrectly day after day. News flash: we don’t know either — yet.

Here’s another example:

We found that disappointing your mother creates a stronger call-to-action than making her happy. You might want to read that sentence again.

Make Mom Happy, Order Today 05:35:50 | SHOP MOTHER’S DAY ▶

DON'T DISAPPOINT MOM, GET IT THERE IN TIME | Order Today 05:36:33 | SHOP MOTHER’S DAY ▶

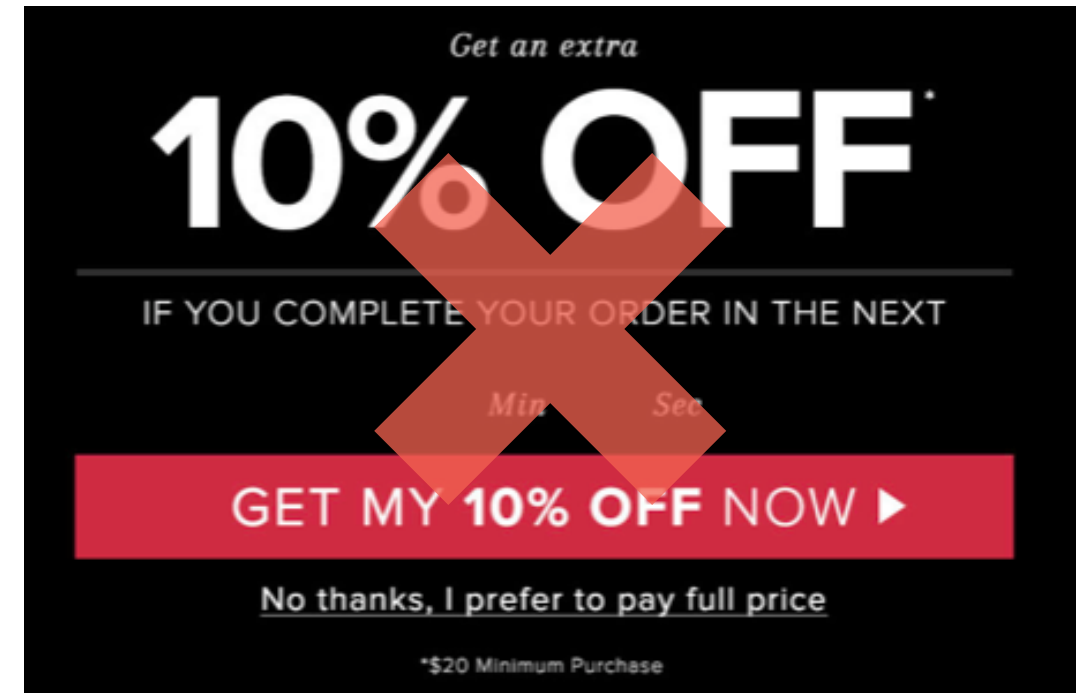
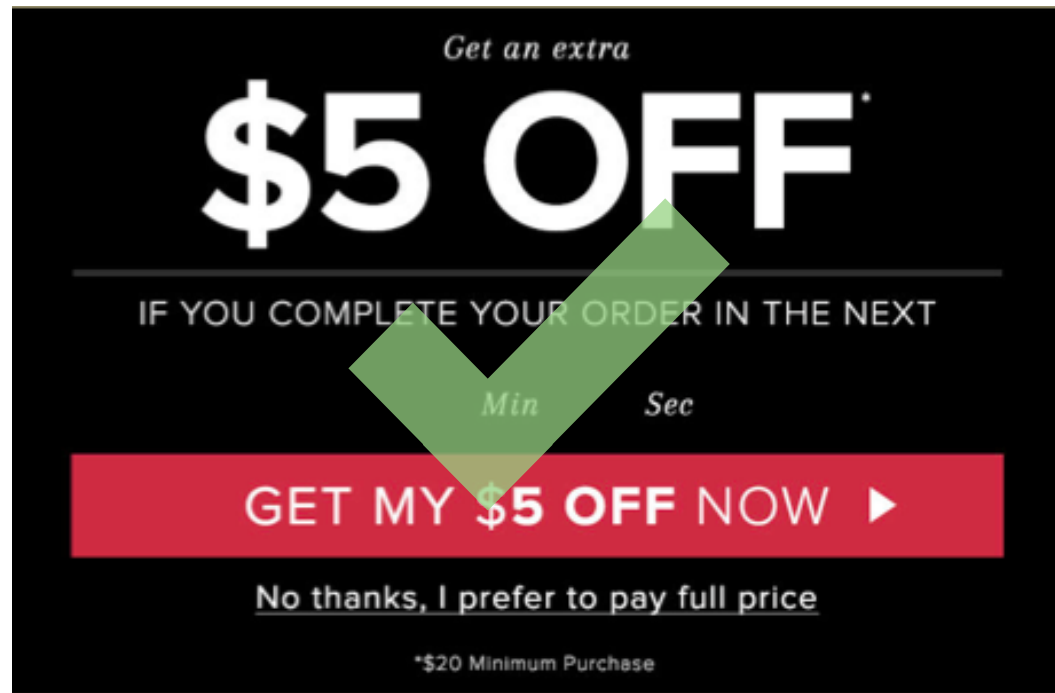
**Proof:**

**The “disappointment” opt-in created a 20% higher click-through-rate and 10% higher conversion rate than “make mom happy.”**

This was tested on hundreds of thousands of visitors to FTD the week before Mother’s Day, so maybe their guilt overcame their love.

Either way, now FTD has a money machine waiting on them every Mother’s Day.

One more example for the road:



We found that cold hard cash beats percentages by a long shot, until you start to creep into the 20% off range.

Please test this yourself, because every business is unique, but cash consistently beats math.

Why?

Math makes people's heads hurt. And to be honest, it makes our heads hurt.

**10% just doesn't seem like a lot.**

If this was the '80s and we had a calculator watch, then maybe we would run the numbers lickety-split, but cold hard cash doesn't take math.

### HOW TO CORRECT THIS BLUNDER

- TEST YOUR PPC ADS.
- TEST YOUR DISPLAY ADS.
- TEST YOUR SUBJECT LINES.
- TEST YOUR LANDING PAGES.
- TEST EVERYTHING YOU CAN.
- THEN, RIDE YOUR WINNERS TO A BEACH HOUSE WITH A CABANA BOY.

# 7.


## YOU AREN'T DIRECTING YOUR PROSPECTS

Alright, Now What?


*Dear graphic designers, do not read this tip.*

Here's an example:

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4 Ways to Get Crazy High Conversion Rates with Psychology

On Demand Webinar 

As a marketer you know how important it is to understand your audience; you also know how impossible it can be to get that right!

In this on-demand webinar, digital marketing pros from WordStream and Bounce Exchange share 4 psychology principles to help you get inside your audiences' heads and gain insights to boost your landing page conversion rates.

**In this webinar you'll learn how to:**

- ✓ Leverage psychology to better understand your audience
- ✓ Use that knowledge to build a better conversion funnel
- ✓ Craft landing pages with crazy high conversion rates

We also share examples of real landing page A/B tests with the reasons behind their results and you'll walk away with testing ideas of your own!

\* First Name:

Maricor

\* Last Name:

Resente

\* Email Address:

maricor@bounceexch

\* Phone Number:

123-456-7890

\* Company Name:

Bounce Exchange

\* Website:

bounceexchange.com


\* Business Type:

Agency


\* Monthly PPC Spend:

I don't have an AdW

View Webinar




Chris McHale has been in the digital marketing world for over 5 years. At WordStream Chris is the landing page and A/B testing expert, always working to build the best possible campaigns with crazy high conversion rates. When he's not testing, you can find him traveling around the globe or playing ice hockey.




Ryan Urban is the CEO of Bounce Exchange, which provides groundbreaking user acquisition and conversion optimization software. Prior to Bounce Exchange, Ryan ran user acquisition for Bonobos. Fun Fact: During Black Friday 2011, despite repeated warnings to their tech team, he managed to crash the site for a week due to record traffic levels.

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We're asking you to take your beautiful, flawless design and then add an arrow to it. The horrors!

*"But Bounce Exchange," you say. "People aren't stupid. They know what a field is and how to fill it in. You're cramping our style!"*

Our response is to look at the images above. Seriously, go look.

We know you hate that arrow.

It burns, doesn't it?

Well, that one evil, intruding arrow improved conversions by 22%.

**The fact is this:**

**Directional arrows work every time.  
Every. Single. Time.**

## HOW TO CORRECT THIS BLUNDER

- **USE DIRECTIONAL CUES ON YOUR OPT-INS AND BANNER ADS.**
  - **IF YOU TRULY DESPISE THEM, TEST THEM. THAT CAN'T HURT, RIGHT?**
  - **JUST TEST THEM AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS.**
- HINT: YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.**

# 8. CTA'S GONE WILD

Your Call-to-Action Buttons Stink.

*Wow, that escalated quickly. Sorry to drop the “stink” on you.*



## Yes, your CTA buttons stink.

However, our tests tell us that the majority of CTA buttons aren't doing the heavy lifting.

Or any lifting at all, really.

*You know "click here" stinks.*

*You know "learn more" won't set the world on fire.*

Clicking isn't exciting. And no one wants to learn more. It's painful. It sounds like you're selling an online practice course to an AP calculus exam. Gross.

Here come the tips:

Before you write your button's content, put yourself in the prospect's mindset (yes, we're going back to this tip again...and it won't be the last time).

What does your prospect want out of this opt-in? What's their logical next step? If you're offering \$5 off, then your button should say "Get \$5 Off."

If you're offering a downloadable PDF, say "Download My PDF." (Fact: "My" usually beats "Your" head-to-head. Again, think like the prospect.)

Many traditional copywriters will say that you need no more than 4 or 5 words in a CTA button. Hogwash! Those same copywriters still have a fax number on their business cards.

Make your CTA button show what's next in a simple, engaging way. This may take 4 words. This may take 8 words.

### Test and see what works.

**Test button size. Test button colors (be sure to implement contrasting colors every time though — red over black, white on green, white on black, white on anything other than fuchsia, really).**

#### HOW TO CORRECT THIS BLUNDER

- THINK ABOUT THE PROSPECT'S IMMEDIATE NEXT STEP
- THEN WRITE THAT NEXT STEP IN A PITHY, ENGAGING WAY

# 9.

# YOUR COMMUNICATIONS ARE SCATTERBRAINED

Be Consistent.

*Scatterbrained. What a great word.*

As a marketer, it's easy to slide into the scatterbrained mentality.

You've got emails, banner ads, PPC ads, home pages, landing pages, you-name-it.

**It's not easy to maintain a consistent message. But if you want to improve conversions, consistency is imperative.**

**You must implement a clear, concise step-by-step guide for the prospect to build their trust. No curve balls. No surprises.**

Your subject line needs to foreshadow the email, which foreshadows the call-to-action, which foreshadows the landing page, which foreshadows the million-dollar idea you have to sell.

The largest breakdowns we've seen from clients are retargeting ads that lead to the homepage (see Tip #5) instead of a specific landing page that answers the problem the ad promised to fix in the first place. Surprise!

*Your prospects don't have the the time or inclination to figure it out themselves. Plus, your competitors are whispering in your prospect's other ear anyway.*

## HOW TO CORRECT THIS BLUNDER

- CHECK AND RE-CHECK EVERY STEP OF YOUR SALES FUNNEL.
- MAKE SURE THERE'S A CLEAR, CONCISE PROGRESSION FOR THE PROSPECT.
- MAKE SURE THAT YOUR BRAND VOICE IS CONSISTENT
- IF YOU UTILIZE HUMOR, DON'T SUDDENLY ABANDON THAT HUMOR FOR A MILITARY-LIKE SALES MESSAGE ON YOUR LANDING PAGE.

# 10. YOU'RE NOT USING TESTIMONIALS PROPERLY

Fighting Natural Disbelief.

*"88% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations."*

*— Search Engine Land, 2014*

“88% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations.”  
— *Search Engine Land, 2014*

Uh oh.

Earning the trust of a prospect takes more than your promise. After all, you have skin in the game.

Earning trust takes social proof. Prospects want to hear from your customers, your success stories and your history. Not your empty promises.

Look at the this image above of an example of using social proof successfully.

Wordstream could have spent five paragraphs outlining their PPC optimization prowess. But geez, they're Wordstream, of course they think they're awesome. Instead, they dropped a hammer of a stat:

**50,000 advertisers trust Wordstream.**

**Social. Freaking. Proof.**

# 50,000

ADVERTISERS TRUST WORDSTREAM

“ I'm thrilled with WordStream's [20 Minute PPC Work Week!](#) It was beyond easy to use and took all the heavy lifting out of analyzing and optimizing our company's campaigns. ”

**John Rose**, Marketing Director, FGD Glass

Now, you may not have 50,000 happy customers.

But I bet you have one or two. Or 50.

If they have a recognizable logo, ask for their permission to use it with their testimonial. And be sure to lead them to what you'd like them to say. Heck, why not write the testimonial and send it to them for approval?

Offer to do all the hard work yourself. All they have to do is say “yes.” (Do you really think *New York Times* best-selling authors sit around all day writing testimonials? Of course not. Their public relation guru or personal assistant/lackey takes care of that and forwards it to them for approval.)

## HOW TO CORRECT THIS BLUNDER

- **CONTACT YOUR THREE BEST CUSTOMERS TODAY. ASK IF THEY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN DOING A TESTIMONIAL.**
- **TELL THEM HOW PAINLESS IT WILL BE. (YOU'LL DO ALL THE WORK!)**



# IN CONCLUSION

These are our favorite  
10 sure-fire winners for  
improving conversions.

Most of these can be  
implemented today.

Again, these are not guesses or predictions or  
hopes and dreams. These are facts, proven by  
billions of tests on real people.

(As opposed to fake people.)

Start with #1 today.

Then #2 tomorrow.

And so on.

Narrow your focus and start thinking like your  
prospects. This is the most important lesson of this  
entire conversion guide.

**Think like your prospects. It works every time.**

- **Now go ignore your gut**
- **Pay attention to your prospects**
- **Start converting like never before.**

 **bounceexchange**

Enterprise Behavioral Automation

Want to learn more?

Contact [profit@bounceexchange.com](mailto:profit@bounceexchange.com) for more information.