HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER

7 TIPS FOR A KILLER CALL-TO-ACTION

WordStream

GUIDE

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Read to the end of this guide to receive $1 million!

Oh, if only that were true. You'd probably read through more than once. However, now that you're thinking about the proper way to motivate someone, it's time to explore some tips on how to craft a clear and engaging call-to-action (CTA) for your marketing campaigns.

WHAT IS A CALL-TO-ACTION IN MARKETING?

Your call-to-action is the part of your advertisement that tells your target audience what they should be doing once they click on your PPC ad and hit your website or landing page. The simplest example of a call-to-action is "Buy now!" The more information you can provide your potential customers with your CTA, the better it will be for all parties involved. You can let your audience know what to expect when they click on your ad, and you can help dissuade the wrong users from clicking by means of a clear and direct message.

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While it is also important to understand what industry-specific phrasings or messaging your potential customers would respond well to, the CTA tips below are equally valuable.

Image via Boris Lechaftois

1. USE A STRONG COMMAND VERB TO START YOUR CTA

It's all about being clear and concise with your CTA. You don't have a ton of space in your ad to get your point across, with the character limit set at 35 characters per description line, so it is important to get straight to the point. **Let your audience know exactly what you want them to do, and don't dilly dally** — start the CTA with the desired action.

- Run an e-commerce website? Start your CTA with words like "buy," "shop," or "order"

- Promoting a newsletter or white paper? Start your CTA with words like "download" or "subscribe"

- Want someone to request more information? Try "fill out a form for…" or "find out how…"

Let's go back to that white paper example. If you're a marketing agency promoting your latest tips and insights, you want to be sure to that your audience understands exactly how to access that white paper. If your CTA read something like "Our latest white paper is available" you may not get a great click-through rate, as folks might not be sure where or when they can expect to get their hands on it. A call-to-action such as "download our white paper today!" is much more direct and informative, which should help improve CTR.

2. USE WORDS THAT PROVOKE EMOTION OR ENTHUSIASM

You want to be able to elicit a strong response from your audience as a result of their enthusiasm. If your CTA is enthusiastic, then your audience will be enthusiastic too. Take a CTA like "buy now and get 50% off!" — not only are you providing them with a massive benefit, but who wouldn't be thrilled to get their order for half off?

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For someone looking to book a trip with their family, a CTA such as "plan your dream vacation today!" will excite them about the notion of a family trip and make them eager to click on your ad. **A small, yet effective element here is adding an exclamation point to the end of your CTA** in order to provoke that enthusiasm. It makes your CTA pop, and gives it a little extra kick.

Look how much more exciting exclamation points make everything!

3. GIVE YOUR AUDIENCE A REASON WHY THEY SHOULD TAKE THE DESIRED ACTION

In other words, what's in it for them? Will it help them do their jobs better, lose weight, or save money? This will tie in heavily with your value proposition, or unique selling point (USP). Your USP is arguably one of the most important pieces of acquiring new leads, so **creating a nice USP/CTA mash-up is a great way to increase clicks**. A good example of this would be something like "call today to schedule your free consultation!" Not only have you stated the action you want the user to take (call today), but you have also provided them with a reason why they should take that action (a free consultation).

4. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FOMO

Fear of missing out, otherwise known as FOMO, is an extremely effective motivator. When people think they might lose out on an opportunity that might not come around again, they'll be mighty quick to hop on the bandwagon. **One of the best uses of FOMO in your CTA is to mention a sale or promotion** that your company is holding, which won't last forever. You probably get emails with this sort of messaging all the time. These emails typically include messaging like "Shop today! Sale ends on Monday," perhaps during a three-day weekend. Or even "buy now while supplies last!" during the holiday season. It's tough to ignore a prompt like that,

Provoking fear of missing out in your CTA is sure to get you some additional clicks.

especially during a time-sensitive, under-the-gun type of situation (e.g. the holiday season). Similar to provoking enthusiasm as we discussed earlier, provoking fear of missing out in your CTA is sure to get you some additional clicks.
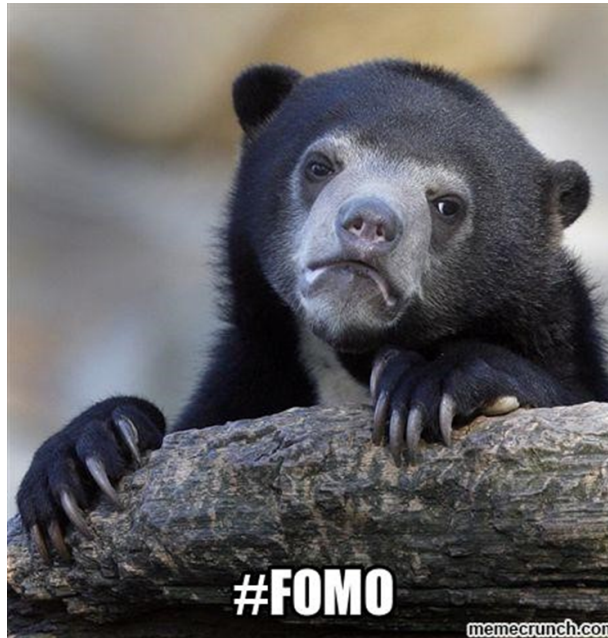
One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do.

5. KNOW YOUR DEVICES

Creating a killer call-to-action is important, that's no secret, but also consider customizing your CTA based on the device being used by your audience. Google considers desktop and tablet as the same device, as the screen sizes are roughly the same, and people use them for search in similar scenarios. An example of this would be a person sitting on the couch at night, who sees an ad on TV for a product they're interested in. The next thing they'll probably do is grab their laptop or tablet and search for more information on it.

However, mobile devices tend to have different user behavior and search intent than desktop/tablets, making it prudent to tailor your CTA based on device. Users who search for something on their desktop or tablet are typically still doing their research, and are not quite ready to commit. But **users searching for something on their mobile phone are often looking for "instant gratification" or fast results**. Someone could be walking down the street when they see an ad on a moving bus, and whip out their phone and quickly search for what they saw before it leaves their brain. Their search will also likely result in a phone call to complete the desired action, rather
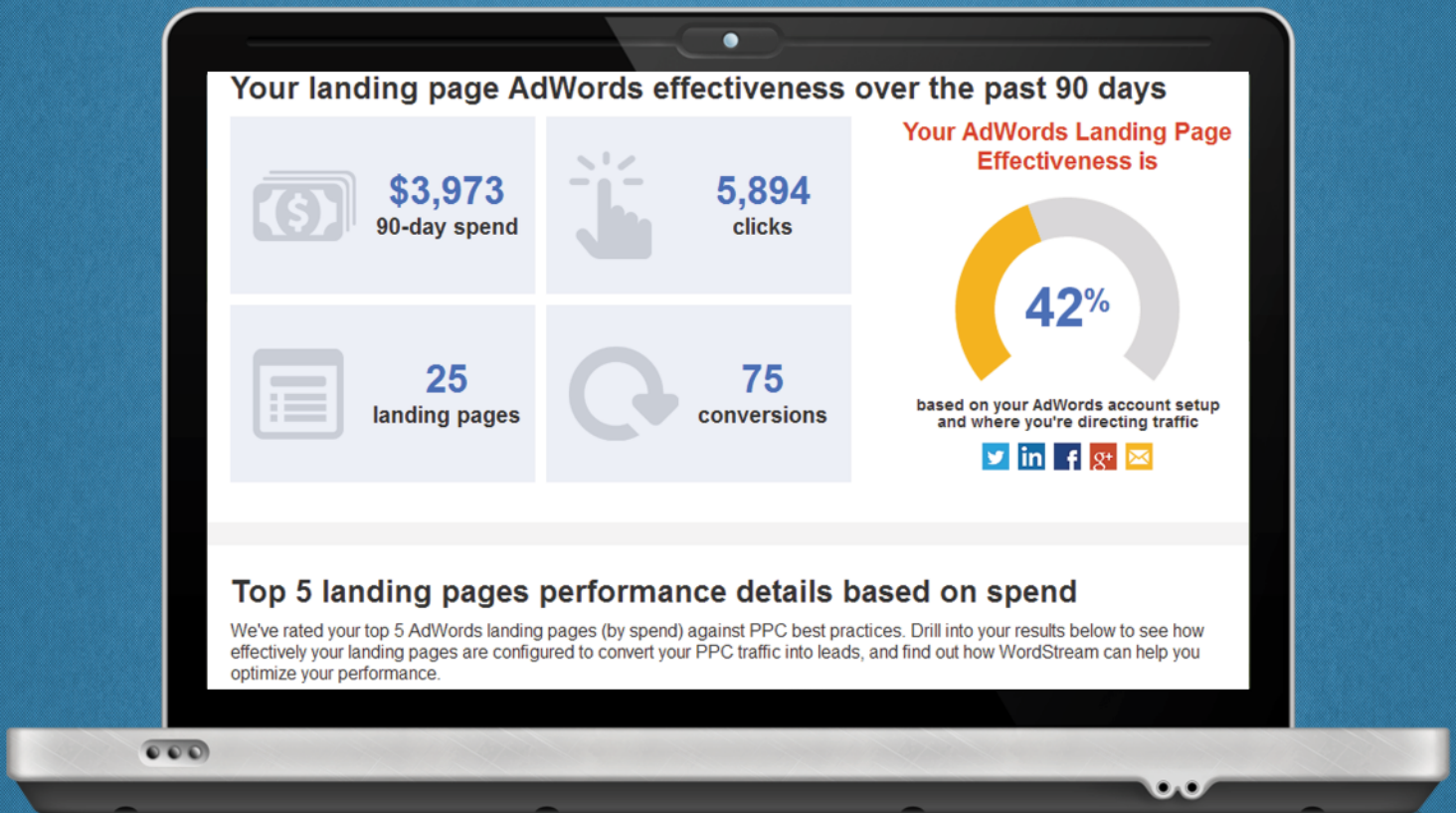
Mobile devices tend to have different user behavior and search intent than desktop/tablets, making it prudent to tailor your CTA based on device.

than browsing a website. Create a more phone call-centric CTA for your ads that appear on mobile devices. You could try something like "call now to get started" or "call us today for more information," and that should help guide your target audience to take the action you want them to take.

There are two ways you can make this tactic even more effective:

- **Google gives you the ability to set a mobile preference for your ads**, which allows you to designate certain ads to only appear for searches completed on mobile devices. With this option, you can focus your CTA on generating more phone calls.

- **You can also enable call extensions**, which allow you to display your phone number alongside your ads. This option is available for all devices, but Google automatically adjusts the way your call extensions are displayed on mobile searches. Instead of your number appearing, a small "Call" button will be displayed, allowing for one-touch dialing. This is what is known as Google's "Click-to-Call" function.
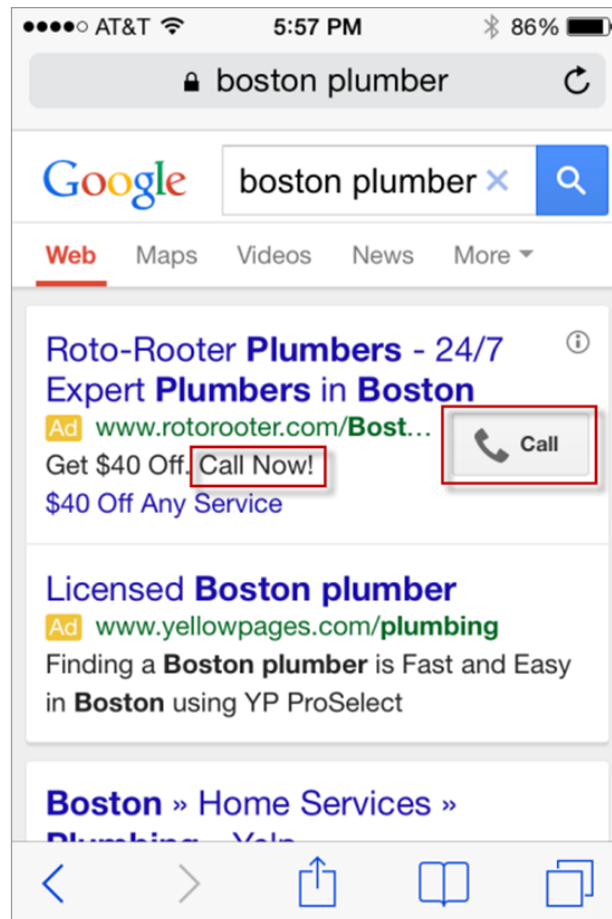
Google's Click-to-Call button appears on mobile searches.

6. DON'T BE AFRAID TO GET A LITTLE CREATIVE

It's important that you keep your CTAs fresh, much like you should with your ad copy in general. A good, old-fashioned A/B test is a great way to identify which CTAs bring you clicks, and which CTAs bring you frowns. While your tried and true calls-to-action like the ones we've already discussed are always good to use, you really never know how they'll perform in your account until you actually use them.

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PPC is definitely a game of trial and error (which is why it can be frustrating!), and your calls-to-action are no exception to the rule. Something could look great on paper, or may sound great when a colleague recommends it to you, but **the only way you'll absolutely know for sure if something will work for your account is if you test it out**. Your target audience may not respond well to what could be considered a "surefire CTA," which is enough to make you pull your hair out. Not only should you be testing different CTAs, but being creative with them too. If your target audience isn't responding well to your ads, you might as well try to think outside the box a bit!

Instead of ...	Spice it up with ...
Check out today's deals!	Tons of deals right at your fingertips! (ideal for mobile)
Fill out a form to get started	A healthier life starts now!
Call today for more information	Don't miss out! We're just a phone call away

Elisa Gabbert, Content Marketing Manager, shared some examples of creative CTAs in a blog post if you are looking for some additional inspiration, while Dan Shewan, Web Content Specialist, examined what makes some call-to-action examples effective in a separate post, so do your research!

7. USE NUMBERS WHEN POSSIBLE

Consumers respond well to seeing numbers such as pricing, discounts, promotions, incentives, etc. It helps to determine whether or not it's worth splurging on items they desperately want, but probably aren't essential to everyday life. So when the opportunity arises, why not appeal to your target audience that way? **If a user sees your pricing information in your ad, and decides to click through to your site, then you know they are still interested in the product or service you are offering.** Now you know you have yourself a valuable click, and an increased chance at generating a conversion. But, if you don't include your pricing information in your ads, someone may click through to your site, excited about your products/services, but then get scared off by your prices; now you have yourself a less than desirable situation. This leads to the dreaded wasted spend in your account, and who wants to deal with that?

Try experimenting with your pricing information in your CTA, as well as any other applicable numerical information. A CTA such as "Shop today for TVs under $300!" not only shows a user how little they will pay for a TV, but it also hits on the FOMO element as well (pretty sneaky huh?). If you are running a special promotion for shipping, you could try something like "order by Sunday for 1-day shipping." Maybe you are an auto body shop looking to incentivize your audience with a discount; your CTA might look something like "Book today! 15% off your next visit."

Try experimenting with your pricing information in your CTA, as well as any other applicable numerical information.

HONORABLE MENTION: USE CRAPPY LANGUAGE

This doesn't make the top 7, as it can be a little risky, but it can also be pretty effective in catching someone's eye. It can be tough to pull off, but sometimes using negative words can motivate a person to change something they are self-conscious about. For example, if a user was on Google looking to lose weight and saw a call-to-action such as "end your crappy diet today," they might just want to click. Sure, it's a bit brash, which is why you might want to use this technique sparingly, but it definitely commands attention.

Another example might be if a user was looking to fix the brown patches in their lawn. If they were perusing Google and saw an ad with a CTA like "your yard sucks, let us fix it," not only would they probably chuckle, but they would also probably click — just to see exactly what that lawn company could do for me. You're walking a fine line with this technique, but it can pay off.

ABOUT WORDSTREAM

WordStream Inc. provides search marketing software and services to small and medium-sized businesses that want better results from paid search. WordStream's easy-to-use PPC Advisor software facilitates more effective PPC campaigns by providing a customized workflow, the 20-Minute PPC Work Week, to help advertisers increase relevance across Google, Bing, and Yahoo and get expert-level results in a fraction of the time. Whether you're new to search marketing or are an experienced PPC manager, WordStream's PPC management software and services can provide the boost you need to grow your business and drive better results.

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