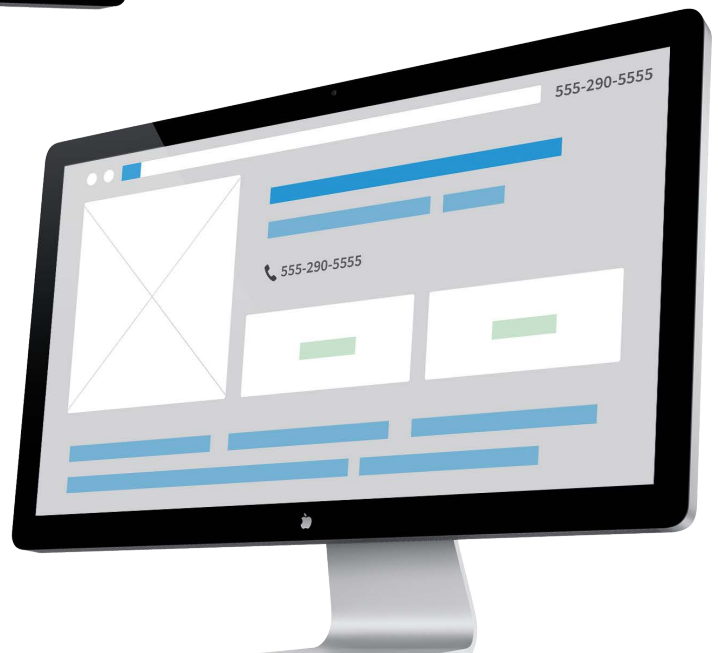
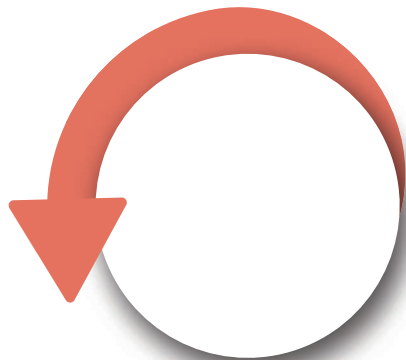
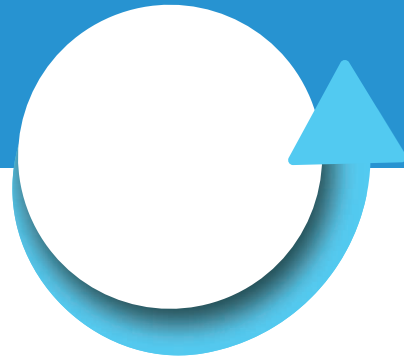


A/B Testing Best Practices for Marketing Professionals



Summary

As a marketer, you know that measuring and analyzing data is important. Without data, you have no way to gauge whether or not your efforts are paying off for your business.

A/B testing is a simple yet effective tool you can (and should) use to determine which campaigns are the most effective at driving conversions. In this white paper, we'll discuss:

- What A/B testing is
- How A/B testing can help you better optimize your campaigns
- How to set up your A/B test
- What you should A/B test
- How to analyze the data gathered from your A/B test
- What tools you can use to enhance your A/B tests

We hope that after you finish reading this white paper, you'll have a better understanding of how to maximize your A/B split testing abilities to drive conversions for your business.

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What is A/B Testing?

A/B testing allows you to test two versions of your marketing asset — whether it’s an ad, an email campaign, or a landing page — to see which version outperforms the other and effectively drives conversions. This is a simple yet powerful tool that marketers can utilize to optimize their efforts and ultimately improve conversion rates.

A/B testing isn’t a “one-and-done” process; rather, it’s a practice that should be used on an ongoing basis to continuously evaluate and tweak your campaigns. You should always be striving for improvement in your campaigns to stay successful in the long run.



How to Run an A/B Test

To begin A/B testing, you need to determine a few different things:

- **Control group and treatment.** Your control group is the standard version of your “test subject” that you would normally use. Your treatment is your variation of the control group.
- **How long you need to run your test.** This will vary on a case by case basis, but it will depend on:
 - Your current conversion rate
 - How much of a difference in conversion rate you need to detect
 - Your current Web traffic

You’ll want to make sure you give your customers enough time to “solve” your test in order to get an accurate picture of your data. Some tests may require more time than others; for example, testing two different subject lines of an email may require a shorter waiting period than testing two different versions of a paid ad.

- **How many visitors to test.** Again, this will vary depending on what you’re testing, but you should test enough visitors to detect a noticeable difference in results so that you can make a decision.

Once you've established the foundations of your A/B split test, it's time to begin testing. Here are some basic A/B testing best practices to keep in mind while running your test.

- 1. Think big.** When you first begin testing, test two different versions of your landing page, PPC ad or other digital deliverable to quickly see which variation yields the higher conversion rate.
- 2. Then, focus on details.** After you understand the big picture of what works better, you can start fine tuning. However, be cautious and only test one variable at a time — changing too many things at once can muddle the results. Test small changes, such as form placement on a landing page or two different versions of a CTA, to get an accurate idea of what resonates with your customers. Then, continue making adjustments as necessary.
- 3. Don't sweat the small stuff.** Use your judgement when A/B testing. For example, making a miniscule change like “Buy our book of 29 organizing best practices” to “Order our book of 29 organizing best practices” will probably have little impact on the overall success of your campaign. However, testing a landing page with an image of the book against a version without an image may yield a more accurate representation of your audience's behavior.

A/B Test Example

Here is an example of an A/B test in action:

Let's say you have a landing page you want to test and the objective of the landing page is to get website visitors to fill out a form to sign up for your e-newsletter.

To test the landing page, you'll first want to create two different versions of the same page. Make them different enough to distinguish the results of your test — you can move the location of the form on the page, change the page's title and even change the body copy entirely. But you should only change one thing at a time. Version A (or your existing landing page) will be your control, while version B will be your treatment.

Next, you'll want to determine your audience and how long you want to run your test. Again, make sure you have enough time and a large enough audience to accurately determine your A/B test significance.

Once you determine the scope of your test and create two different versions of your landing page to be tested, you're ready to launch your test. Make sure your landing page is getting enough traffic to collect sufficient data — a page that receives little to no traffic isn't worth testing!

After you've gathered significant data to determine a winning page, don't stop there. Continue testing different elements of the page to improve your conversion rate — your call-to-action, different colors of buttons, etc. Be sure to make gradual changes to the page and only test one element at a time to get an accurate picture of what caused the results to change — for example, first change and test the form placement, then the CTA, and so on.



What to A/B Test

Now that you have an idea of how to properly run an A/B test, your head is probably running wild with all the possibilities ... or perhaps you're overwhelmed and unsure of where to begin. If you're wondering what exactly to A/B test, the sky's the limit. Test everything — nothing is too perfect to not be tested. Some examples of what you can (and should) A/B test include:

- **Email subject lines** – Test two different subject lines against each other to increase your open rates.
- **CTA** – Testing two calls-to-action will help you determine which version boosts conversions.
- **Layouts** – Making aesthetic changes to your landing pages, emails or display ads can have a huge impact on conversions.
- **Colors and fonts** – These may seem like minute details, but changing the colors and fonts you use on your page can help (or hurt) your conversion rate.
- **Navigation** – Test different types of navigation to determine how users prefer to interact with your website.
- **Images** – Images can have a direct impact on the way users feel. Testing two completely different images speaking to different emotions could help you determine which image type resonates best with your audience.

- **Content Length** – Sometimes an email that is short and to the point will get users to take the action you are wanting them to take. If your email is lengthy and full of too much content, users may be overwhelmed and close the email without finding the CTA. On the other hand, sometimes more content is necessary and helpful to users. Testing the length of your email could help determine if a short and sweet email will get better results, or a longer email with detailed information will be more successful.

Keep in mind that A/B testing doesn't have to be limited to online marketing campaigns. Test different versions of your **offline campaigns**, including but not limited to:

- **Direct mailings** – Whether it's a flyer for an exclusive deal, a newsletter or even a holiday card, testing which mailings drive more leads to a website landing page or phone calls to your business will help you determine how to best reach your audience.
- **Billboards** – While these may be perceived as somewhat old-school, billboards aren't something to be ignored. Test different versions of your billboards against each other to find out which one works best for your business.
- **TV commercials** – Air two different commercials and track which version drives more leads for your business.
- **Radio spots** – Airing radio spots is a great way to build local awareness of your brand. Test two different radio spots against each other and you'll know which version drives more phone calls to your business.

- **Business cards** – Handing out business cards is a simple yet effective way to build your brand, but it's important to make sure they stand out. Test two business card designs to see which one performs best.

Note: Be mindful of the ROI you will gain from testing. If you're setting up a test that will be very difficult to analyze, it may not be worth the effort and you might be better off improving other aspects of your marketing campaign to prove ROI.

Tools to Help with A/B Testing

While you can measure the results of A/B tests on your own, there are some very helpful tools on the market that can better assist you with the testing and analysis processes.

- **Call tracking.** **Call tracking** enables you to get a more accurate representation of your A/B tests two ways. First, call tracking allows you to assign a phone number to each campaign. When someone calls your business, the number they used to reach you will be fed into your analytics to view. This lets you see firsthand which campaigns are driving phone calls. Whether you want to test your **PPC landing pages**, your email marketing campaigns, or your print ads, you'll know exactly what's working in terms of phone calls.

Call tracking can be immensely helpful in tracking the success of offline marketing efforts and account for offline conversions that would otherwise be lost in translation. By placing two different tracking numbers on different versions of your offline deliverables, you'll know exactly which billboard, flyer or commercial led to a phone call.

Second, call tracking imports phone calls and text messages as conversions into **Optimizely** to give you a clear picture of which efforts are yielding results. By tracking which campaigns are driving conversions, you'll have a better idea of which tests are resulting in the greatest ROI.

Call tracking also offers a host of other benefits, including the ability to **record phone conversations** for quality assurance purposes, determine **which keywords are driving calls**, and **track your customer's entire journey** to better understand how

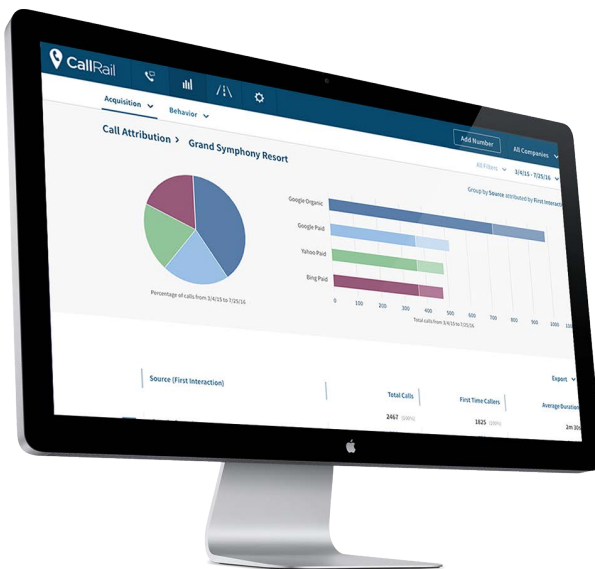
customers interact with your brand.

- A/B testing software. Software such as **Optimizely** and HubSpot have built-in A/B testing capabilities to help you easily create variations of landing pages and emails to test against one another. You'll also be able to determine how long to run your tests for and who should be included in your tests, all from one central, easy-to-use location. After publishing, you can view the data in your interface in real time, making it easy for you to pick a winning test.

Conclusion

A/B testing is crucial for anyone who not only wants to accurately measure their marketing efforts, but also improve their campaigns for increased conversions. If you're looking to enhance the power of your A/B testing, you may want to consider adding call tracking to your analytics arsenal. By knowing exactly which campaigns are driving phone calls to your business, you'll be able to better your campaigns — and ultimately, your conversion rate.

To see for yourself how call tracking can boost your A/B tests and improve your marketing campaigns, [request a demo](http://www.callrail.com/request-a-demo/) of CallRail's call tracking software today.



Need a guided tour?
<http://www.callrail.com/request-a-demo/>

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