

# What is A/B Testing?

Learn How A/B Testing Increases Your Campaign's ROI





# What is A/B Testing?

# Why should you read this guide?

- Learn how to take the guesswork out of landing page conversion optimization.
- Find out the correct way to conduct A/B tests by fulfilling some prerequisites. Discover what those are, and perform your tests the right way.
- Understand the complete A/B testing process with the help of actual landing page case studies, and see how you can increase conversions.
- Realize that not all A/B testing tools are created equal. Find out which testing method suits your marketing needs the best.

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The success of your A/B tests depends on the tool you are using. This chapter discusses different A/B testing tools you can use, screenshots of a testing analytics dashboard, and how to interpret the data.

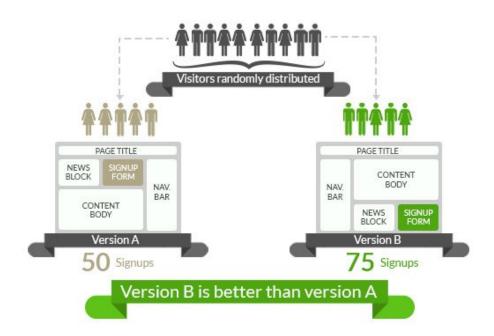
# What is A/B Testing?

# **Chapter 1: What is A/B Testing?**

A/B testing allows you to compare two different versions of a page to see which one performs better. The tests help you determine which version of the page engages your reader most based on data.

To run an A/B test, you choose which elements of a page you'd like to test (e.g. the button color or a headline) and change that element in one version of the page. Then, you send equal traffic to both versions of the page, and when your test reaches an endpoint (a concluding point you set before you begin the testing process), you find out which version converted the most.

Here's a visual that explains the idea:





# Why Should You A/B Test?

A/B testing helps you get the most ROI for your advertising buck and all landing page traffic efforts. While you may be spending money to generate traffic (like with a PPC campaign), it can be very cost effective to conduct A/B tests. Instapage lets you run A/B tests on your landing pages without any additional cost.

However, paid traffic may not always get you conversions if your landing page isn't optimized accordingly. The right A/B tests will do the trick every time, helping you identify the elements your audience responds to most.

Before you select which elements to A/B test, make sure you have the right foundation to begin testing. To get you started, Chapter two identifies six crucial things to do before you run your first A/B test.

# Chapter 2: What are the Prerequisites of A/B Testing?

Before you create variations for your A/B tests, here are some prerequisites to take care of:



#### 1. Imagine you have amnesia



To stop yourself from making any assumptions about your landing page, pretend you have amnesia. Start with a blank slate.

You know better than to make assumptions about your audience, so why would you make assumptions about what page elements they will respond to most? If you want the maximum conversions, you must be data-driven. Test everything — not just the elements you think your audience will focus on most.

#### 2. Set an endpoint

Marketers can sometimes be in a hurry to do A/B tests, because the sooner they run a test, the sooner they get feedback, and the sooner they can optimize their pages.

However, to run successful trials, it's important to establish an end date *before* you begin. Doing this helps you make sure you're getting accurate results.

#### 3. Don't rely on best practices

Get inspiration from <u>current trends and best practices</u>, but don't just duplicate what other marketers have done previously. Experiment! It's called A/B *testing*, after all.

Just because "Marketer A" increased conversions for his ecommerce site by changing his button to red doesn't mean a red CTA is going to work for your real estate landing page. Test a button color yourself.

The landing page industry is still pretty new. Who knows? Maybe your next page will set the trend for the next big wave of them.

#### 4. Don't split your focus

Test one element at a time. That way you don't split your focus, and your results are clear and easy to interpret.

If you changed your CTA button size and your headline in one variation, how do you know which one increased conversions? You don't. Take the time you need to create different variations to guarantee you're making the right changes.

#### 5. Understand basic statistics



Think back to your college statistics class for a moment... Do you remember the concept of "statistical significance?" No? Well, it's a simple concept imperative to figuring out how reliable your A/B test is.

While an A/B test will show you which variation is the winner, <u>statistical significance</u> lets you know whether you can rely on that A/B test.

To confirm statistical significance, you need to make sure your sample size isn't too small. For example, if you saw a lift in conversions by testing a long-versus-short form and your sample size was only six people, you can't guarantee those results.

Even if the results confirmed the short form as the winner, it means that four or five out of the six people preferred the short form. This limited data would not be enough to generalize results. Don't change your form based on such little data. Test a bigger sample size and extend your endpoint if needed.

#### 6. Define your success metric

Your success metric depends on the type of landing page you're testing. Are you aiming for more social shares or more clickthroughs? More sales or more sign-ups?

You can't be successful without knowing what success looks like. Establish your success metric before you begin testing.

# **CHAPTER 3: What is the A/B Testing Process?**

A/B testing allows you first to create — and then measure — two variations of your marketing message. So, it's easy for you to determine which message is winning you more conversions with your visitors.

The winning variation is calculated with the help of data and statistics, helping validate changes you've made on your website or your landing pages and takes the guesswork out of conversion optimization.

A/B testing can work for all marketing materials. You can test your website, marketing emails, and your landing pages easily with the help of A/B testing.

#### The A/B testing process



All A/B tests begin with the <u>original version of your landing page (also referred to as the "control variation")</u>. There are four general steps to A/B testing:

#### Step 1: Set conversion goals

Your conversion goal depends on the purpose of your landing page. Your goal could be anything from ebook downloads to email signups to free consultation requests. Goals are what determine the success of one variation over the other.

#### **Step 2: Create variations**

Variations are changes to the original landing page you make to see which change your visitors respond to the most. The process of creating variations varies depending on the testing software you choose.

#### Step 3: Start testing

When you begin your test, visitors are randomly sent to one of the two variations created. The conversion goal is measured every time a visitor lands on each variation. Some testing tools, like Instapage, give you the opportunity to <u>duplicate</u>, <u>pause</u>, <u>transfer</u>, <u>or delete any variation</u> at any time.

#### Step 4: Analyze results

Once your test reaches statistical confidence, it's time to <u>analyze your results</u>. Instapage, for example, offers users an easy to understand testing analytics dashboard complete with four primary metrics: visitors, conversions, conversion rate, and improvement.

Optimization Results					
Variation	Visitors	Conversions	Conversion Rate	Improvement	
Α	5	1	20%	-	II I
В	5	5	100%	0%	II
С	5	0	0%	0%	

Suppose you're A/B testing your landing page CTA's button color from orange to red...

In this particular case, the control variation will be the landing page with the orange CTA button. Next, you'll create variation B of your landing page, with a red CTA button.

After you create both variations and start the test, the traffic coming to your landing page is divided evenly amongst the two variations. As soon as the end point is reached, one variation



will "win" having scored the most conversions or received the most email sign-ups (or whatever else your testing goal is).

# **Chapter 4: A/B Testing Best Practices**

#### 1. Test everything

What's trending? Will it work on your page? Does it convert, or is it a total flop like <u>image</u> sliders?

If you haven't personally tested it on your landing page, you don't know if it's going to be a success or failure. What works for other marketers may not work for you, vice versa. So test away!

Short form versus long form pages. Big button vs. little button. Headline "A" versus headline "B." Your landing pages should always be competing to see which variation is victorious. Remember... There can only be one.

#### 2. No, really everything

Do you need that extra information you're requesting? Do you need more than a user's email? Test it and see.

What if you tried using a different image? What if you cut the image entirely? What's going to perform better?

Make no assumptions. Ask questions. Fail faster so you can find success faster. There is no substitute for the data you'll get out of this process.

#### 3. Start over, and test it again

One A/B test is not sufficient to achieve maximum results. We'll say it again: One test does not optimize a landing page. Two tests won't either. If you want to reach peak optimization, you'll need to experiment. And once it stops working?

You'll need to do it all over again. And again. And again.

This is why having <u>software that makes it fast and easy to create landing pages</u> is imperative to the success of any data-driven marketer.



The best part about A/B testing is that your failures, your bad tests, are just as valuable as the successful ones. Keep track of this information users are providing you.

If you want to master conversion rate optimization, you must have a complete understanding of what can go wrong with a test so you know whether or not your data is reliable.

#### The 6 Major Mistakes Marketers Make When A/B Testing

#### 1. Letting success (or others' success) go to your head

A/B testing winners are all over the place. We've used A/B testing case studies to prove our points throughout the guide. What you're not seeing is the vast majority of experiments that *fail*.

You hear about the big, exciting discovery. You don't really read about the thousands of failures on the way there. <u>Start with your MVP</u>, and then proceed from there. You'll find more success in the long run.

#### 2. Assuming huge wins are the norm

It's easy to think 20% or 50% increases in conversions are just what happens when you've seen those hyper-successful campaigns. These percentages are not normal.

Your test is just as likely to come back as a failed experiment, or even with results that are not outstanding. This is a *good* thing and will provide you just as much insight as a successful experiment (we'll cover more on that later).

#### 3. Reading neutral results incorrectly

Getting a neutral result is... normal. When it comes to achieving statistical significance, getting a <u>null hypothesis</u> (a hypothesis that results due to chance alone and not due to a concrete cause) is just part of A/B testing.

#### 4. Only testing obvious elements

We can't emphasize enough there is more to a page than the CTA button and the headline. They are important, but small, subtle elements on the page can be as effective or even more so in persuading your audience to convert.

Have you <u>tested different testimonials</u>? Do you have a full understanding of <u>what convinces a</u> <u>reader to become a user</u>?



#### 5. Not being patient

Set your testing window up in advance so you don't pull the trigger too early based on incomplete results. MailChimp's A/B testing software for headlines allows you to set up a test with two headlines on a given percentage of your list. Then, it will automatically send the winning headline to the rest of your list.

#### 6. Forgetting about mobile A/B testing

Mobile responsive landing pages are the newest trend and are here to stay. If you want to stay ahead of your competition, you need to think about mobile AB testing. Create variations for your mobile A/B tests keeping in mind your visitors' mobile experience.

Make a realistic estimate of the traffic you expect to receive, determine your end point, and set up your test.

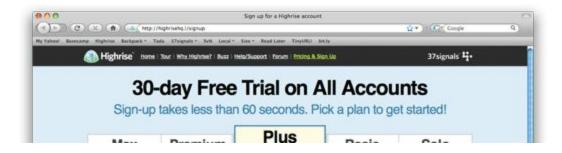
#### What elements should you A/B test?

A/B testing variants of each landing page element give you the best chance to increase conversions.

Now that you have a strong foundation to start testing let's go through some case studies to give you ideas for testing different elements.

#### 1. Test your headline

<u>Signal v. Noise tested five headlines and subheading on the Highrise signup page.</u> The winning variation put an emphasis on the 30-day free trial and mentioned that signup takes less than 60 seconds, and increased conversions by 30%.



Laura Roeder tested a long versus short headline on her page.

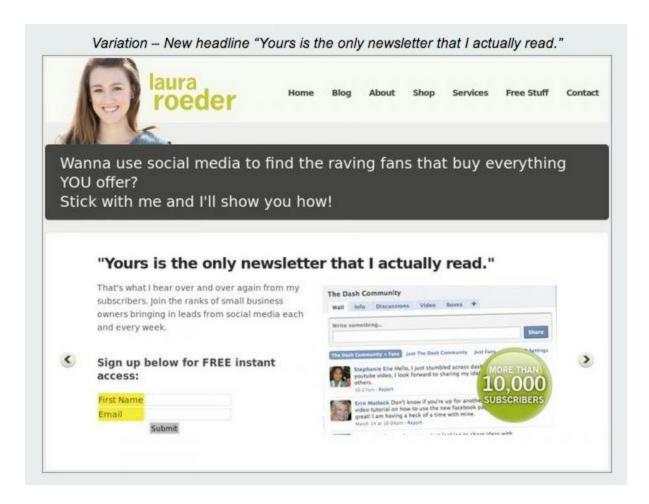
This was the control:





This was the challenger:





The challenger produced 24.31% more conversions — using a <u>customer's words</u> to get more newsletter signups.

#### 2. Test your copy and headline

<u>WikiJob A/B tested</u> to see if three lines of customer testimonials had any impact. The page with testimonials resulted in a 34% increase in sales. Here is the original page (without testimonials):

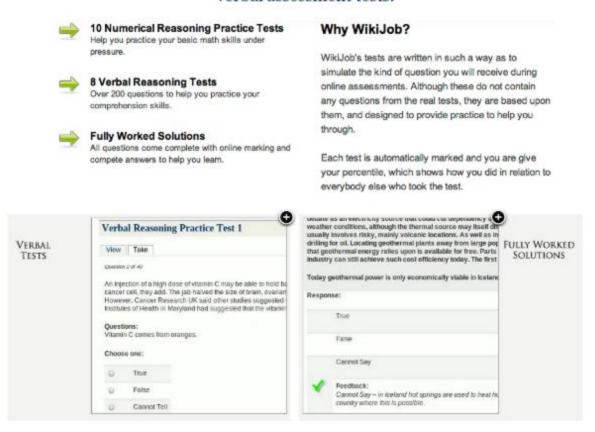




# Perform Better at Reasoning Tests with WikiJob

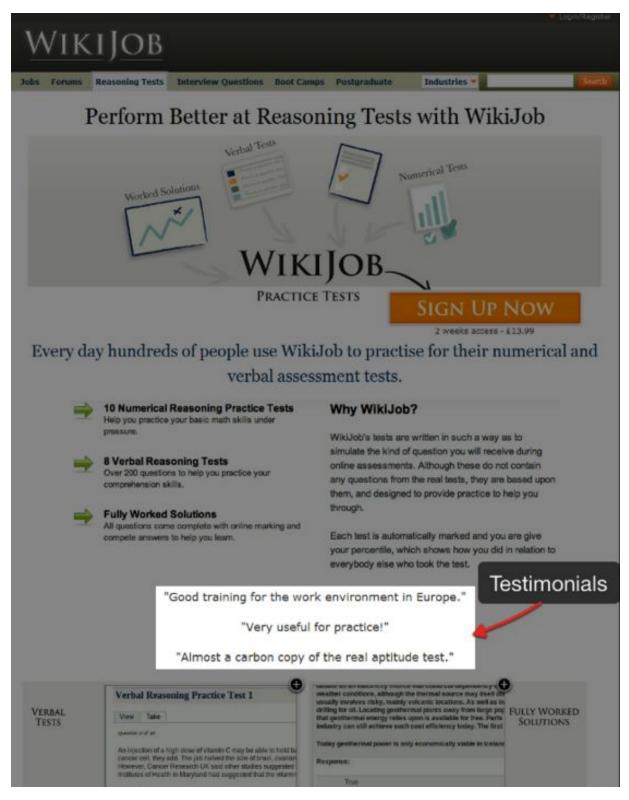


# Every day hundreds of people use WikiJob to practise for their numerical and verbal assessment tests.



Here is the 34% higher-converting page with testimonials:





Crazy Egg also tested a short page against a long page. The long version won by 30%:



# Control



# Challenger



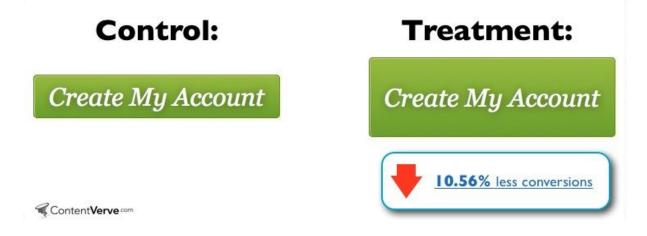


#### 3. Test the CTA button

Content Verve ran an A/B test on a Danish company's CTA by changing a single word. <u>It</u> resulted in 38.26% more conversions:



Button size can make a difference, too. In the example here, the bigger button received 10.56% more conversions:



Here, personalizing the CTA button copy increased conversions by 31.54%:

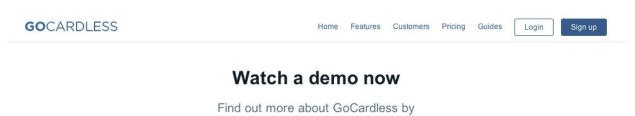




<u>GoCardless</u> one of the UK's leading online direct debit suppliers decided to change one word in their CTA button copy. The A/B test involved changing the word, "request" to "watch" to see which one would have an impact on conversions.

Variation B with the CTA button copy "Watch" increased product demo conversions by 139%:





#### 4. Test the form

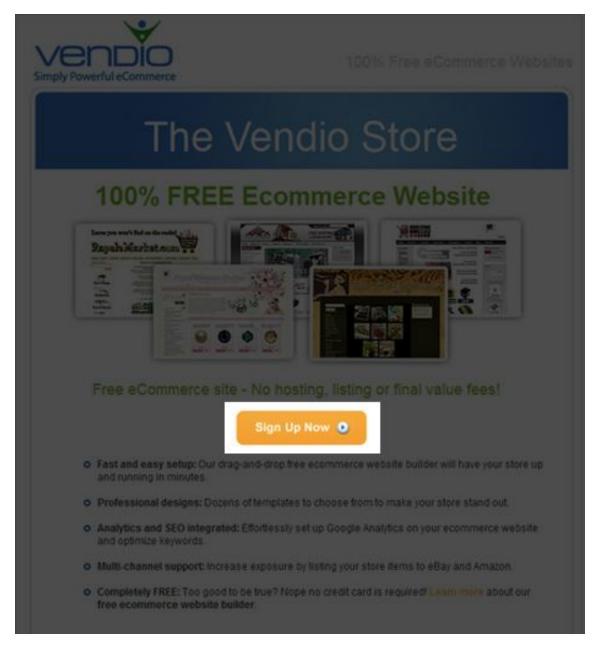
Vendio removed their signup form that lead to an increase in conversions. <u>This was the control page</u>:





The second version utilized a two-step opt-in process, so visitors didn't see the form as soon as they arrived on the landing page:





The two-step opt-in form became visible when visitors clicked the call to action button, this reduced friction, as visitors aren't intimidated to give out their information as soon as they land on a page. Removing the lead capture form on Vendio's landing page resulted in 60% increase in signups:

Removing a trust seal next to the CTA button increased conversions by 12.6%:

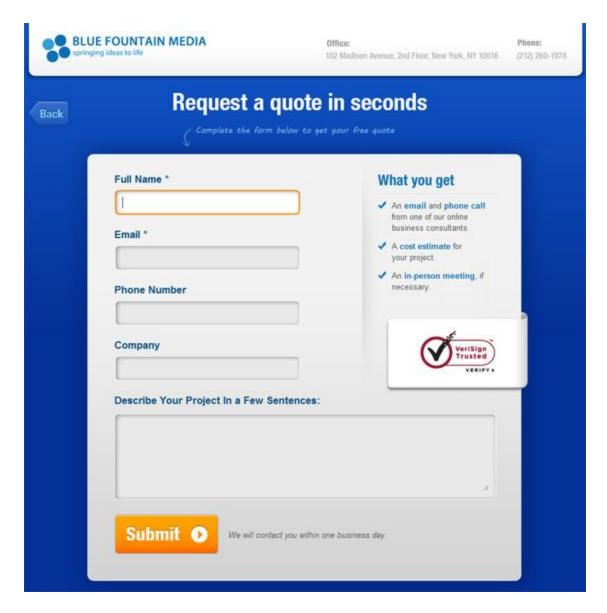


VERSION A	vs. VERSION B
First Name:*	First Name:
Last Name:*	Last Name:*
Email:*	Email:
ZIP/Postal Code:*	ZIP/Postal Code:*
Primary Telephone:*	Primary Telephone:*
TRUSTe* CERTIFIED PRIVACY	bmit submit

Interestingly enough, the above case study defies the best practice that trust seals and symbols always increase conversions.

Blue Fountain Media, on the other hand, increased conversions by 42% using a trust seal:





Removing the "company name" form field from <u>Expedia's landing page form</u>, gave the company a \$12 million increase in revenue!



# Variant A (Original)



# Variant B (Revision)

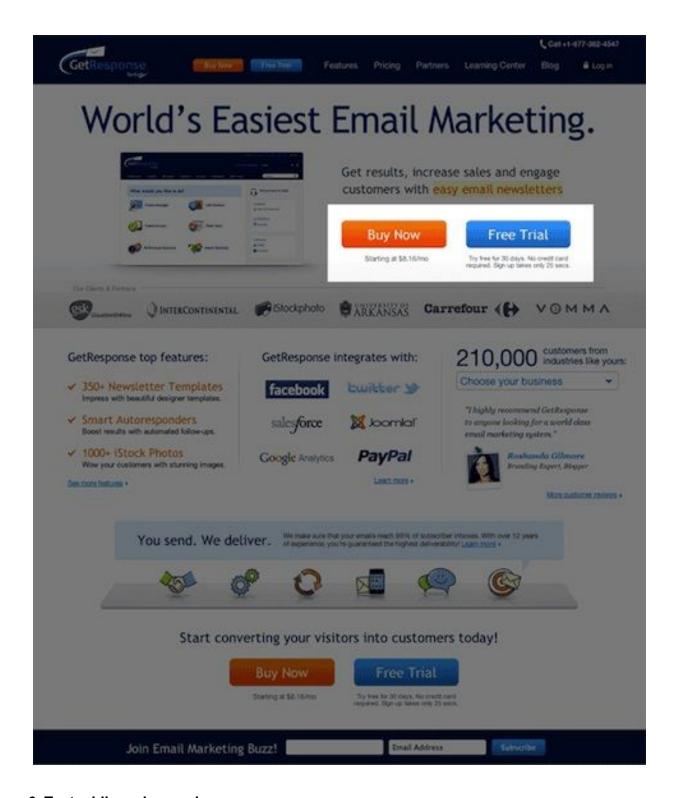


#### 5. Test a "free trial" button

This particular test is often very successful for SaaS company landing pages.

When <u>Get Response</u> added a "Free trial" CTA button alongside the "Buy Now" button, they <u>increased signups by 158.60%</u>:





#### 6. Test adding a human image

<u>Highrise experienced a 102.5% increase in conversions</u> when they added an image of a real person instead of a graphic explaining the service:







PERSON DESIGN

102.5%

**ORIGINAL DESIGN** 

#### 7. Test adding a video

<u>Grow your own groceries</u> is a service that focuses on showing their customers how to grow organic food. The service added a video on their landing page that resulted in a <u>12.62%</u> <u>increase in clicks</u> on the Add to Cart button.



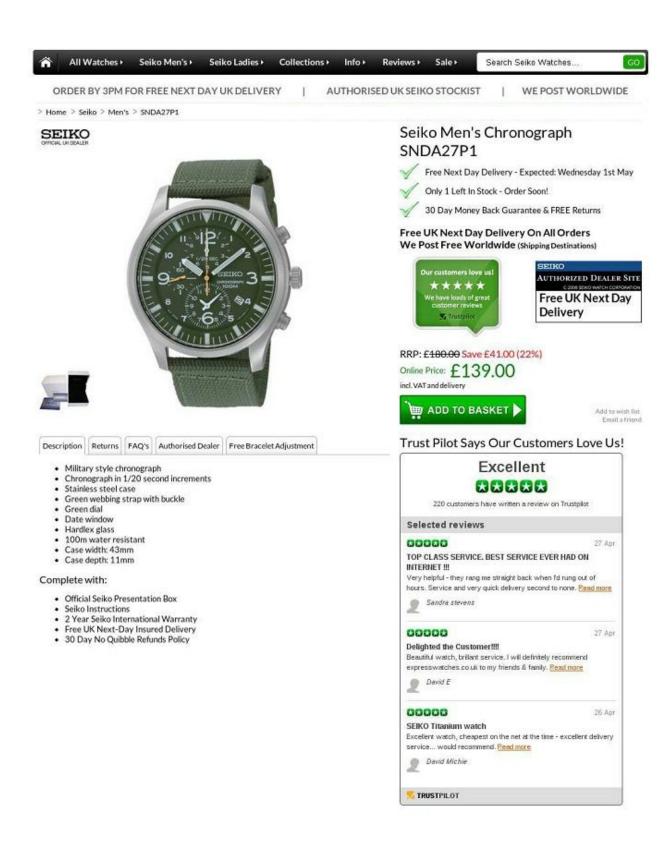
Visual Website Optimizer



### 8. Test customer review widgets

Adding social proof and authenticity badges on e-commerce pages helps with conversions. ExpressWatches, an online dealer of Seiko watches <u>added an authenticity badge on their page that declared them as an "Authorized Dealer Site,"</u> which increased sales by 107%:







A/B testing can drastically change your conversion rates. But before you begin testing, it's important to understand some best practices, major mistakes, and what elements to test. Once you have that foundation, it's all about repeating the process and adjusting your page variations accordingly.

# **CHAPTER 5: Advanced Guide to A/B Testing**

An A/B test works in two main parts. First, we create the variations, and then measure the conversions we get from each variation. The goal of an A/B test is the conversion rate we expect the optimal version of the page to deliver.

Mathematically speaking, your conversion rate is represented by a <u>binomial random variable</u>, which means the variable has two possible values (outcomes). You can either have a conversion or a non-conversion. Let's call the conversion rate variable "p."

Your job as an A/B tester is to calculate the value of p and for this you have to observe "n" number of visits to your landing pages. After observing n visits, you can calculate how many of those visits resulted in a conversion. This percentage value you observe is your landing page conversion rate.

For an A/B test, you must repeat this experiment multiple times, giving you different values for p. When you take all these different p values together, you're able to get the range for the conversion rate. You can then calculate the deviations in the value of p using the mathematical formula for a standard error:

#### Standard Error (SE) = Square root of (p \* (1-p) / n)

The smaller the deviation, the more you can rely on your conversion rate value being true. <u>Evan Miller</u> goes into more detail of how to manually run an A/B test.

#### What is multivariate testing (MVT)?

Multivariate testing (MVT) is a close contender of A/B split testing.

MVT is the second most popular testing option available for landing pages. In fact, according to <a href="Econsultancy"><u>Econsultancy</u></a>, MVT is rated the most difficult but most valuable testing method used by marketers.

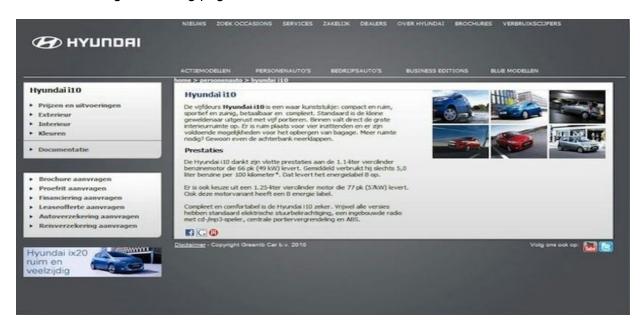
While A/B testing is the most widely used testing method, multivariate test results are considered to be more accurate.



#### **MVT** case studies

A <u>multivariate test was performed on Hyundai's product landing page</u> with the goal of increasing sales.

This was the original landing page:



Compare that page with the new version:





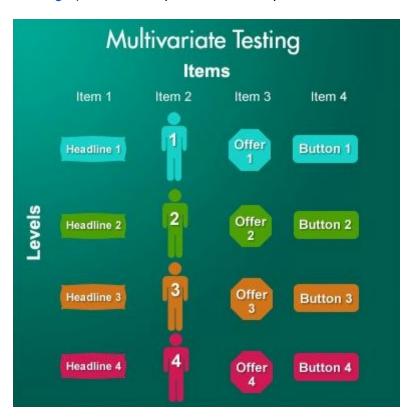
The extra CTAs and the larger images in variation B resulted in a 62% increase in conversion rates, and there was a 208% increase in CTR (step 1 to step 2).

<u>Wider Funnel</u> ran a multivariate test on W3i's page — producing 44 page combinations of the page — resulting in 162% increase in the conversion rate.

Much like A/B testing, MVT involves testing multiple page variations. However, unlike A/B testing where you create one variation of an element on your landing page, MVT takes every element of a page and creates variations of it simultaneously.

In MVT, your landing page is treated as a combination of elements (headline, image, copy, CTA, form, etc.) that have an effect on your conversion rate.

Convince and Convert's graphic below explains this concept:



While conducting MVT, your landing page is broken down into individual elements, and variations are created for all elements.

This is what happens during a multivariate test:





To better explain the concept, let's take a hypothetical dating service's landing page. The page has a *coy* headline, a *sparkly* CTA button, and a *short* form.

The following inputs will be generated:

- 1. Headline 1 and headline 2
- 2. Button 1 and button 2
- 3. Form 1 and form 2

While testing, you will create all possible combinations using these three variables and their individual three variations.

The combination of variations will look something like this:

- 1. Headline 1 + Button 1 + Form 1
- 2. Headline 1 + Button 1 + Form 2
- 3. Headline 1 + Button 2 + Form 1
- 4. Headline 1 + Button 2 + Form 2
- 5. Headline 2 + Button 1 + Form 1
- 6. Headline 2 + Button 1 + Form 2
- 7. Headline 2 + Button 2 + Form 1
- 8. Headline 2 + Button 2 + Form 2

You then divide your traffic between these 8 variations.

#### Confused?



Most marketers are — which is why they choose A/B testing instead. Yes, MVT enables you to test more variations of your landing page, but this breed of testing has its pitfalls.

#### The downside of MVT

- To run a successful MVT, you have to think beyond a simple "red versus green CTA."
  You need to be able to come up with a lot of versions of your landing page elements.
  This process can be tiring, and sometimes the variations don't even make that much sense.
- 2. A lot more traffic is required to reach statistical significance with a multivariate test because of the number of variations. If you experience a normal amount of traffic on your pages, MVT may not give you reliable results. As a rule of thumb, if your traffic is under 100,000 unique visitors per month, your page is not a fit for MVT testing. You can't manage major layout changes using this testing method, but you can with A/B testing.
- 3. If you don't get much landing page traffic, you will only be able to achieve approximate results, which is not the case with A/B testing.

A/B testing allows you to make one tweak to your landing page at a time. A/B testing is a more personalized, manageable form of testing landing pages and increasing conversion rates.

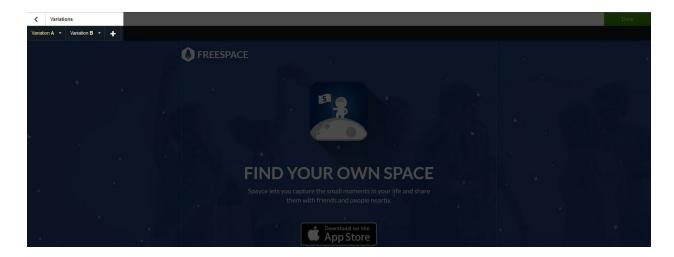
#### **CHAPTER 6: What Tools Do I Need?**

When it comes time to perform A/B tests, there are many tools available, such as Optimizely and Visual Website Optimizer.

However, when A/B testing landing pages, <u>Instapage</u> takes the lead because it allows you to easily create, but also test your pages with the help of a simple builder that even novice marketers can master.

Instapage simplifies the A/B testing process, with the help of its drag and drop builder you can create landing page variations with just a few clicks, like this:

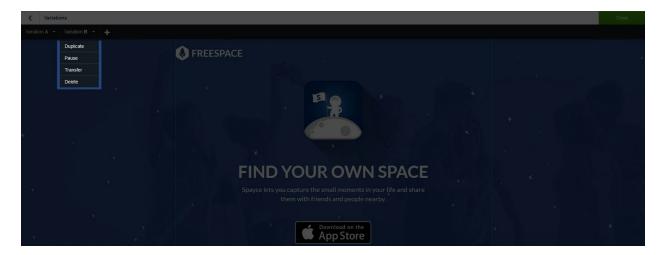




Instapage allows you to track all form submissions and button clicks as successful conversions.

Every variation you create with Instapage has four options found within its dropdown menu (Duplicate, Pause, Transfer, Delete).

- **Duplicate**: copy a specific variation when creating a new test
- Pause: temporarily prevent page visitors from seeing this variation (all stats are saved)
- Transfer: transfer the variation to another landing page
- **Delete**: remove a variation completely (all optimization stats will be deleted)



Your A/B testing results are tabulated on an easy to understand analytics dashboard, with the following four main metrics:

- **Visitors:** the number of unique visitors that have viewed a particular landing page variation.
- **Conversions:** the number of visitors who have filled out a form or clicked a CTA button on a variation.



- **Conversion Rate:** the percentage of visitors that turned into a conversion on a particular page variation.
- **Improvement:** the difference between the conversion rate tested against the control version and variation A.

For more information, please <u>read our help section article here</u>.

Yes, there are other testing tools on the market. However, nothing beats the simplicity and ease that Instapage offers.

A/B testing allows you to measure — without any assumptions — exactly which marketing message your potential customers prefer. The tests offer marketers the unique opportunity to increase their conversion rates based on a mix of hard science and customer behavior.

Want better conversion rates? <u>Build your landing pages with Instapage</u> and start A/B testing today.