

A CASE STUDY IN SITE REGISTRATION COPY

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Recently, we looked at the click through rates for a site registration process on the Direct Marketing Association Web site. ([A Case Study In Site Registration Click-through](#)). In that study we found that it was the first page of the registration process that had the greatest potential for improvement. This article shows how we approached the task of improving that page and illustrates why you should *always* measure the results of your efforts.

The registration process allows users to get a free Web account. We had found that the click through rate for the first page was a little over 51% compared to rates in the 80th to 90th percentiles for other pages in the process.

A site wide review had just been conducted by an outside Web site consultant. He recommended improving the benefit copy on the initial registration page. By improving the perceived benefit of getting a Web account, we would improve the click through rate. As a result, we conducted A/B tests on various benefit statements for the first page of the account creation process (<http://www.the-dma.org/cgi/ftfirstime>).

Test Conditions

Two of our Sr. marketers each provided different benefit copy for the page. Each copy was run in an A/B test against the existing “control” copy. (The control copy itself had been created by the Web IT staff). Half the people coming to the page got the control page, the other half got the page with the test copy in an alternating fashion.

The first test copy (call it the M copy) was run from June 1st. through June 29th. The second copy (the N copy) was run from July 1st. through July 29th.

The control copy:

Create A DMA Web Site Account

Begin the process for obtaining a user name and password using the form below. Each individual in a company must get their own Web account. Obtaining a Web account is free. Both Non-members and Members can get a Web account.

1. First we will see if you are already in our database.
2. You will then be asked to choose your own user name.
3. We will e-mail you your password, which you can change.

If you have already been through this process and have forgotten your password, we can e-mail it to you.

The M copy:

Get a free Web Account today for special privileges:

- Insiders access to over 160 trend reports, research papers and best practice guides
- Online access to the latest DMA news impacting your career and business
- Exclusive access to our national job bank
- Special bookstore and event discounts for DMA members

For your free Web Account, use the simple form below. Each individual in a company must get their own Web account and both Non-members and Members can get a Web account.

If you have already been through this process and have [forgotten your password](#), we can e-mail it to you.

The N copy:

Register For Free Online Access To DMA's World-Class Direct Marketing Expertise

We invite you to access exclusive cutting edge research, analysis and 160+ case studies on all that's important in direct marketing.

Your information will be kept fully confidential. [Click here](#) to view DMA's privacy policy.

Registration is quick, easy and FREE.

Begin the process for obtaining a user name and password using one of the options [below](#). Each individual in a company must get their own Web account. Both DMA Members and Non-Members can get a Web account.

If you have already been through this process and have [forgotten your password](#), we can e-mail it to you.

Results

M test results:

Page	% Visitor Click through
Get A Web Account - Control	32.99%
Get A Web Account – M copy	33.53%

N test results:

Page	% Visitor Click through
Get A Web Account - Control	35.07%
Get A Web Account – N copy	35.93%

Analysis

The percentage difference in click through between the control copy and the N and M copy is not statistically significant. In effect, we are looking at the same results for the three copy versions.

Needless to say, this was not the expected result. We have long been educated to believe that the words matter.

One can suggest two reasons. One is that in both cases, the alternative benefit copy was not effective. Perhaps better copy would produce better results. The second possibility is that in this context, benefit copy is not useful in producing click through. We also noted that the alternative copy did not diminish results.

Lessons Learned

Best practice suggests that persuasive benefit copy should produce correspondingly better conversion results. This is a well accepted understanding. The test results are not what we would expect based on that understanding. This may be because of copy design or the conditions in which it was used.

The test does, however, highlight the importance of testing one's assumptions and the ROI of resources required in those efforts. The Marketers were sure the copy would make a difference and the only question was which copy would be better. Had we simply changed the copy and not tested the results, it would have simply been assumed the change had produced positive results.

Another lesson was about the culture of testing. When the copy test was first proposed, it created caution and nervousness in some of the Marketing staff. To some it appeared that we were comparing their competencies. As one person put it, "we should all get together and decide what copy is best and just use that". In the end, only two Marketers volunteered to create copy for the test. When the test showed that the copy did not make a difference, one person commented that, if it did not make a difference, then Marketing should be able to do what it wanted.

If you are not used to a rigorous testing culture, these reactions are understandable. But they can also kill your company's ability to improve through testing. In the end, it's up to management to create an environment where the risk of failure is an accepted part of growth.

Recommendations

Because there is no improvement, we continued to use the control copy. This is a relatively standard approach to improvement where one keeps the control until a new version positively defeats it.

We were not willing to give up our effort to improve the CTR for the page. The other element on the page was the form itself. Before trying additional copy variations, we elected to examine improvements to the form itself. The results of that inquiry will be in the next article.

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