



Testing Your Way To Profits

**can you guarantee
your success?**



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Introduction

One of the most basic facts about having a business enabled website is that, no matter how well designed it is or how much you paid a copywriter to create a stunning sales letter for you, you still have little or no idea how well it will perform until it goes live.

One of the most basic facts of everyday life, on the other hand, is that no matter what it is that you do, it could almost always be done better, and the only real way that you can establish how is by testing.

There is no such thing as a perfect website, although there have been many sites that have been so successful that you might have been forgiven for believing that they were pretty near to perfection!

But, I am certain that if you asked even the top level experts and gurus that created the sites that generated millions of dollars in revenues for them, they would tell you that there was something that they could perhaps have done better.

That is the nature of website creation, and quite naturally so, because we all have different tastes, likes and dislikes, and what looks or reads well to me may seem like a hideous mishmash to you.

No matter how well your site is designed, it therefore stands to reason that it could always be improved.

However, most sales enabled web pages, or indeed any other kind of webpage is likely to be made up of many different elements, and whilst it is good to know that you would like to improve a particular page, but knowing where to start on what to change is the key.

For example, your web page may have a header banner across the top which you think looks attractive and professional, but that is only your opinion.

It is the opinion of your customers that matters so would changing it improve the performance of your page?

Your page will certainly have a headline, and perhaps a sub-headline as well. Is this an area where your page could be tweaked so that it performed more profitably?

There will be graphics on some of the pages, and perhaps videos as well.

All of these may be helping the rate of sales that you make from your site, but equally, they may not be.

The first essential job of any business or organization that is trying to sell any kind of product or service online is to get visitors to their site.

In fact, even if your site is not selling, you should still be testing to make sure that its performance is optimized.

Having done so, however, it is then equally as important to maximize conversions from that page. This will most commonly mean getting the visitor to buy the product or service on offer, sign up for a mailing list or perhaps to click on an advertising link.

From this, it logically follows that the better your page is designed, the more conversions you should expect. Once you have the page built, and have managed to drive a few hundred visitors to your site, then you need to start thinking about what you were going to do next.

And what you're going to do next is to start testing, because testing is the only way that you can genuinely establish how your site can be improved, so that it generates more conversions for you.

In fact, most experts will tell you that you should never stop testing all of the pages of your website, because everything that you do can be improved, and even the smallest degree of improvement will mean that you enjoy improved conversions and therefore returns.

Two types of comparative site testing

In terms of online business, there are two types of comparative testing that you can apply to the pages of your site, A/B, split or back-to-back testing as against multivariate testing.

The first of these is obviously relatively straightforward and basic, as you are testing one version of your webpage against another on which very few , or often, only one change has been made.

Multivariate testing, on the other hand, means that you are testing several variables at the same time, which obviously means that the analysis of any results that you obtain from your tests is somewhat more complex.

Nevertheless, it is certainly possible to run a very effective multivariate testing campaign by using some great free software which we will look at in a lot more detail later.

There are, of course, paid software programs that *claim* to do a far more in-depth job, but, from my own testing, I am not so sure that they do so. Hence, I am going to focus on the free software to show how you can set up various multivariate testing experiments.

For now, however, let us consider the two different types of testing, before considering why and how you would use them.

A/B or Split testing

When you are split testing, you take two version of what is essentially the same page (with very few changes) and run both of them to see which of the two versions converts the best.

Once you have established that fact, then use the better performing version as your control page, and test that control page against yet another variation. You allow both of these variations to run until you have sufficient visitor statistics to make any results that you are seeing valid, and then do the same thing yet again.

The important thing to note here is that you always use the best performing variation of your page as your control, and any time you create a variation that performs worse than your existing page, then you continue to run with the existing page, rather than changing it.

The importance of constantly testing pages against one another in this manner cannot be over emphasized, so let us look in little more detail at how you might run a simple back to back testing campaign on a page on your website.

The first thing to say is that no element of your webpage should be ignored when you are testing, but for a simple back to back split test to have any validity you must change only one element of your page at a time.

Back to back testing should be an ongoing process, and one that starts from a macro level and gradually works down to the finite (micro) details.

For example, if you are want to split test different versions of your headline, then you should off by changing only the headline, but do so completely.

You might start your test with one headline that reads "***Tons* Of Ultra-Responsive Targeted Traffic To Your Website - Even If You Are An Online Marketing Newbie!**" whilst the other reads "**The Secret Way To Drive A Truckload Of Targeted Visitors to Your Site Starting Today**".

These two headlines could not be any more different, so you are still working at the 'macro-level' by making large scale changes. That is generally how you would start your back to back testing campaign.

You then need to have a reasonable number of visitors to both of these pages so that you can ascertain which one performs better.

Of course, the more visitors you manage to land on your site before you decide to decide which page to keep and which to lose, the more valid that decision will be. On the other hand, however, driving too many visitors to a page that is not converting well is wasting one of your most valuable assets, your site traffic.

So, there is a balancing act to be performed between jumping in to curtail the test too quickly, and allowing too many visitors to view your test pages before you decide to make a decision.

Although there is no hard and fast rule for how many visitors you should allow to come to your site before you decide to make such a decision, I would usually want to see at least a couple of hundred visitors who have viewed both variations of my page before coming to a decision.

Another consideration is that you should be comparing the results from your test pages using traffic that arrives on your site from the same (or, at the very least, similar) sources, because if you do not do so, then your results will be 'skewed' and therefore have far less validity.

If, for example, you are an expert at using a Pay-Per-Click advertising program like [Google AdWords](#), then you will know that any traffic you are driving to your site should be extremely well targeted.

If you are using AdWords to drive traffic to a sales page, you would naturally anticipate that many of the people who land on that page are already expecting a sales offer to be made, hence your conversion rate should be quite good.

On the other hand, anybody who comes to your site from reading one of your articles is more likely to be someone who is seeking further information at a far more generalized level. You would therefore expect sales conversions from this kind of traffic to be significantly lower.

From this, it is obvious that a direct comparison of conversion rates from these two different sources of traffic would not be valid or meaningful. This should highlight the importance of using traffic from the same type of promotional resources in your back-to-back testing activities.

After testing the two headlines shown above, you will eventually see one of the pages perform better than the other, according to your own testing requirements.

At that point, you should then take the page that is performing less well and try a completely different headline on that page. Run your test again, and keep doing so until you are satisfied that the headline you are using is the most effective one you can think of.

Incidentally, it is extremely important that you keep a file of all of the headlines that you have tested previously, because if you do not do so, it is remarkable easy to find yourself testing the same headlines (or whatever else it is you are testing) more than once.

This is obviously a waste of time, and is wasting your traffic as well, because the very fact that the headline is in that file tells you that it was not successful.

Once you have tested many different headlines against one another, and have decided that you have found what appears to be the best for your site, then you need to start testing on a 'micro' level by changing only one word of that headline and running the same back to back split tests again.

Generally speaking, when you are testing at a macro level between completely different headlines, the testing results are likely to be extremely clear. However, when you start testing headlines with only one word changed, then you are likely to see far less difference between the results for your page A and page B.

Nevertheless, even testing at this level should show you that one version of your page does perform better than the other, so even tweaking of such a minor nature is still going to be effective.

An interesting software program that you might be interested in which can shortcut some of your testing is called [Glyphius](#), and it is one that you might want to check out.

This program has a in-built database of over 100,000 profitable and non-profitable Clickbank adverts. You can copy and paste anything that you want to test – headline, sub-headline, even a simple sentence or an order link – into the program and it will then score that information in comparison with everything that is in the database.

The version that is now on the market has been vastly improved and upgraded since I got my hands on the program, but lets use my earlier version to test one of the headlines that I highlighted earlier:

Winner So Far:

Score: Font Size:

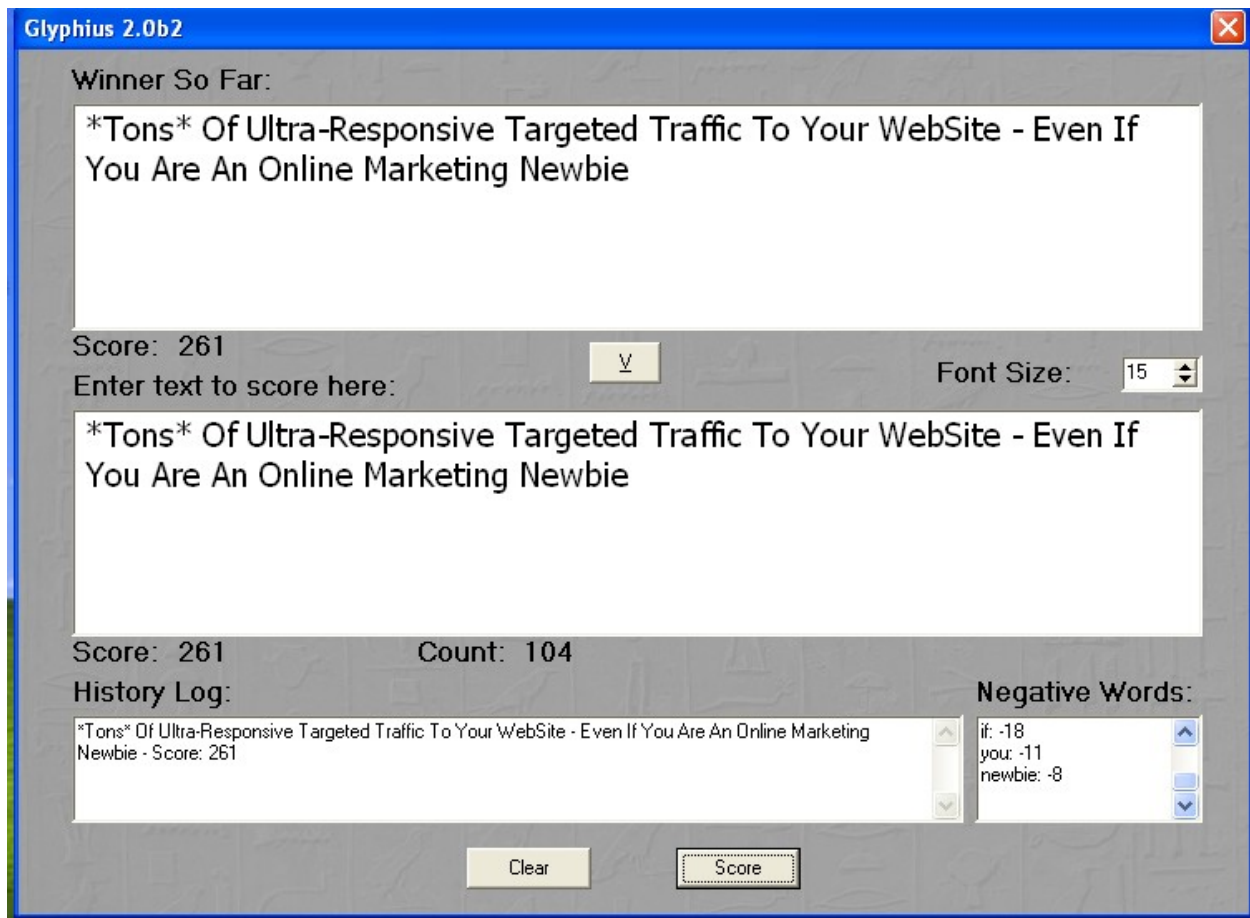
Enter text to score here:

***Tons* Of Ultra-Responsive Targeted Traffic To Your WebSite - Even If You Are An Online Marketing Newbie**

Score: Count: 104

History Log: Negative Words:

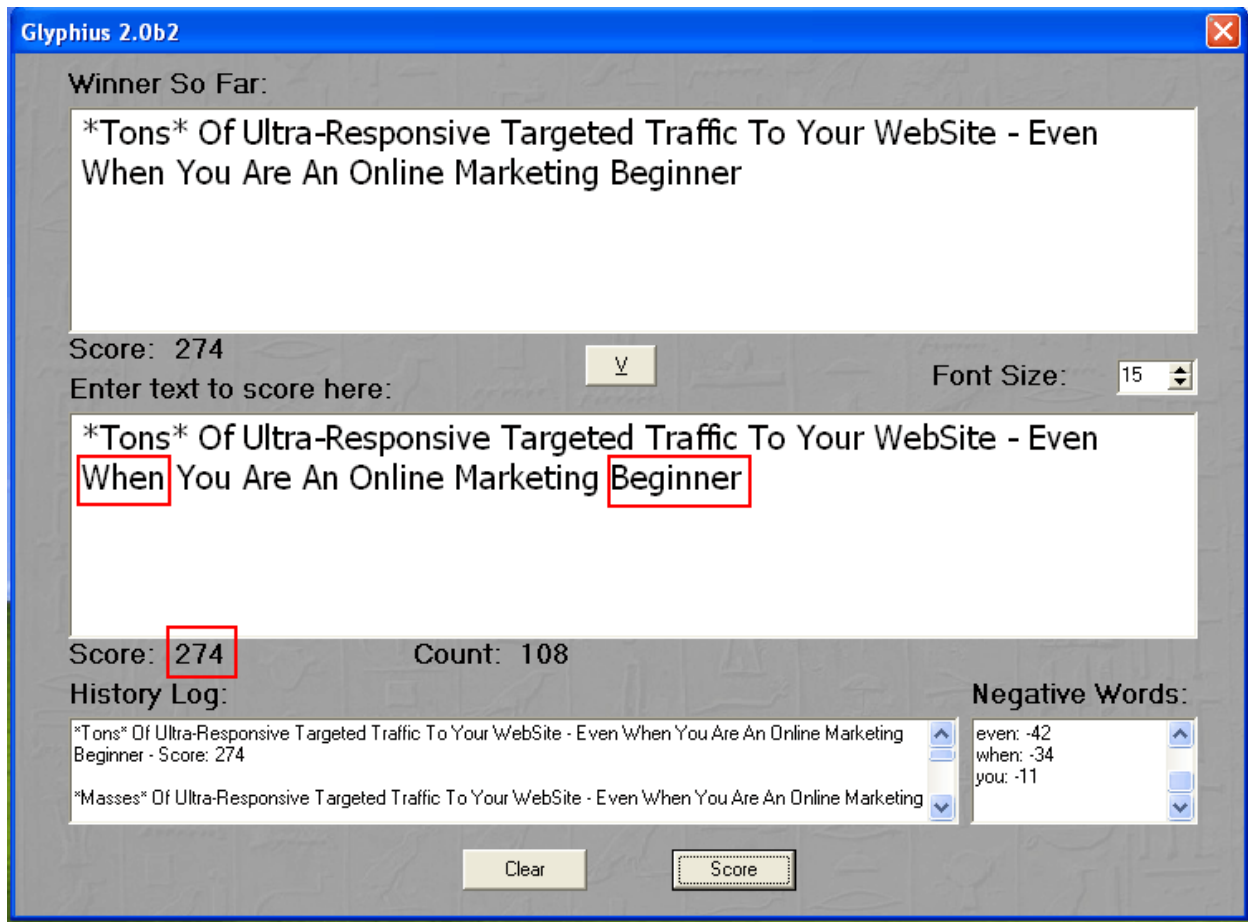
Click on the 'Score' button at the bottom of the screen, and we find that this particular headline gets a score of 261:



Also note that we are losing quite a few points because of the inclusion of several words that the software has determined are 'negative' words, those that feature more commonly in unsuccessful adverts than those that do well.

So, the first thing that you would focus upon should be replacing some or all of these negative words with something a little more positive.

The biggest score 'loser' is 'if', which takes 18 marks off our score, so lets see whether we can change that one first:



We change just two words and the score rises slightly, telling us that this is a better version of the advert according to the database. Also, note that this score increase comes despite the fact that the 'negative-ness' of the words being used has increased!

This is because Glyphius is not testing the ad on a strict word-for-word basis. It is instead testing it for the overall effectiveness of the headline as a whole according to the ads in their database that are successful and those that are not.

A free alternative that you can use to test the headline that you are using is the 'Emotional Marketing Value Headline Analyzer' that can be found on the [Advanced Marketing Institute](#) website.

This excellent tool tests the emotional appeal value of your headline by assessing whether the words that you are using are primarily 'Intellectual', 'Empathetic' or 'Spiritual'.

Let us test the same headline again:

Enter Your Headline Text

Paste your headline in the text area below. The analysis engine will **automatically cut your submission at 20 words**, so we encourage you to do a word count before submitting! This will ensure the most accurate analysis.

Tons Of Ultra-Responsive Targeted Traffic To Your WebSite - Even If You Are An Online Marketing Newbie

Submit For Analysis

Clear Text

Just submit this for the analysis by hitting the appropriate button, and lets see how this scores:

Your Headline's **EMV Score:**

35.29%

This score indicates that your headline has a total of 35.29% Emotional Marketing Value (EMV) Words. To put that in perspective, the English language contains approximately 20% EMV words.

And for comparison, most professional copywriters' headlines will have **30%-40% EMV Words** in their headlines, while the most gifted copywriters will have **50%-75%** EMV words in headlines.

A perfect score would be 100%, but that is rare unless your headline is less than five words.

While the overall EMV score for your headline is 35.29%, your headline also has the following predominant emotion classification:

Empathetic

Your headline words have a predominantly Empathetic appeal. While not as common as words with Intellectual impact, words which resonate in with Empathetic impact often bring out profound and strong positive emotional reactions in people.

Copy containing empathetic impact words are best used to attune with people and businesses involved with care-giving. For example, nurses, doctors, and counselors all tend to respond easily and favorably to Empathetic words. Women, and especially mothers, are very strong in their use of Empathetic impact words in the language. While use of Empathetic impact words does not have to be limited to these groups, we've found that by selecting more words with Empathetic impact delivers desirable conversion responses from those types of market segments.

This is a pretty reasonable score (as it says, most professional copywriters would expect to get between 30% and 40%) and it is primarily empathetic, which is what most of the really effective headlines are, so that is good too.

So, after using software like Glyphius and utilizing this free checking resource, you can do some tweaking of your headlines (in particular) before your site ever goes live

Unfortunately, programs like Glyphius are not exactly cheap to buy, but, because of their inherent ability to save you lots of wasted money, they very quickly pay for themselves.

Imagine, for example, that I was thinking of running the second headline that I noted earlier:

The screenshot shows the Glyphius 2.0b2 application window. It features a 'Winner So Far:' section with a text box containing the headline 'The Secret Way To Drive A Truckload Of Targeted Visitors to Your Site Starting Today'. Below this, the 'Score' is 209, and there is a 'v' button. The 'Enter text to score here:' section contains the same headline. To the right of this section is a 'Font Size' dropdown set to 15. Below the input section, the 'Score' is 209 and the 'Count' is 84. A 'History Log' section shows the headline and score. To the right, a 'Negative Words' section shows counts: 'of: -3', 'your: -15', and 'today: -2'. At the bottom are 'Clear' and 'Score' buttons.

Glyphius 2.0b2

Winner So Far:

The Secret Way To Drive A Truckload Of Targeted Visitors to Your Site Starting Today

Score: 209

Enter text to score here:

The Secret Way To Drive A Truckload Of Targeted Visitors to Your Site Starting Today

Font Size: 15

Score: 209 Count: 84

History Log:

The Secret Way To Drive A Truckload Of Targeted Visitors to Your Site Starting Today - Score: 209

Negative Words:

of: -3
your: -15
today: -2

Clear Score

Okay, the score is not so bad, but the other headline is clearly better, so in all likelihood, this is a headline that I would not even bother testing further, because it is far less likely to convert

What you should be looking for are a couple of headlines that score similarly with both Glyphius and the free AMI tool to test, and so I would probably drop this one now. This would allow me to save money on wasted PPC advertising and less of my traffic as well.

Using your 'winning' page automatically

One excellent split testing software program that you might want to have a look at can be found at [Ad Test Pro](#), because this program can do something remarkably neat for you.

Say that you want to test three or four versions of any particular page against one another. You load your four pages onto one URL and the script will then present different versions of the page to anyone who arrives on your site.

Once the script has enough meaningful data to analyze, it will calculate which of your pages is the most effective and automatically show that one to all of your visitors from that point on.

Of course, at that point, you would remove the three non-performing versions of the page, and replace them with three more, and begin your testing again.

The beauty of this program is that because it always chooses your best performing page, every time a new page 'wins' by landing more successful conversions, then that becomes the default page that is shown from that point on.

This therefore automatically means that your conversion rate will continue going up.

This is a very smart little tool that I would definitely recommend you take a look at, because for less than \$10 (at the time of writing) it really is something of a no-brainer if you are serious about your testing, which of course, you should be.

Tracking your test results

Whether you are running basic split testing or are focusing on multivariate tests, you need to be able to access the data that you must have in order to establish which pages work best for you.

There are several tools that you can do this job with, and fortunately, all of them are free!

Your web host has probably built various statistics packages into the control panel that you use to manage your website, so that is a good place to start.

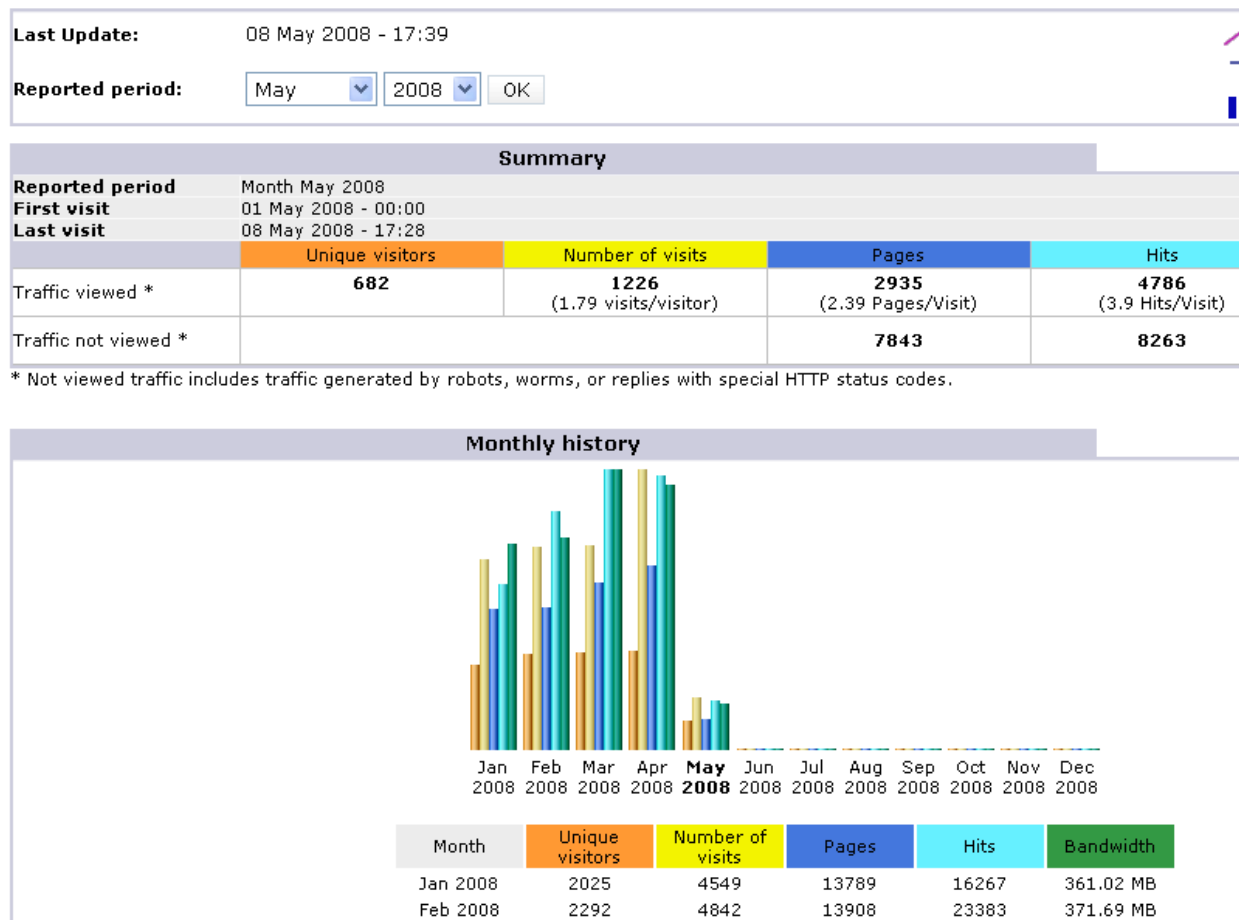
If, for example, you use a web host who offers a cpanel and you are using the default 'X' skin, then you should see something like this about half way down the cpanel 'home' page:



Click on the 'Web/FTP Stats' icon and you come to a page that looks like this:

- »» [Analog](#)
Analog produces a simple summary of all the people who have visited your site. It is fast and provides great lightweight statistics.
- »» [Awstats](#)
Awstats produces very pretty stats.
- »» [Webalizer](#)
Webalizer is a more complex stats program that produces a nice variety of charts and graphs about who has visited your site. This is probably the most popular stats engine available today.
- »» [Webalizer Ftp](#)
Webalizer is a more complex stats program that produces a nice variety of charts and graphs about who has visited your site. This is probably the most popular stats engine available today.
- »» [Subdomain Stats](#)
This will show statistics for the subdomains on your account.
- »» [Latest Visitors](#)
This will show you the last 300 visitors who came to your site and some interesting information about them.
- »» [Bandwidth](#)
This will show how many bytes your account has transferred.
- »» [Error Log](#)
This will show errors in your site, images not loading, missing files, etc. This is very useful for debugging CGI scripts.

There are several good stats programs here including Awstats and Webalizer. The information that Awstats produces looks like this:



Scroll right down to the bottom of the Awstats page, and you will find the data for each individual page of your site, as well as other key information such as the keywords that brought people to your site, the places that they came from and so on.

The only data that you are getting in real time is that which shows the latest visitors, but that should not be a major disadvantage, because everything is updated every 24 hours by default anyway.

Using any of these in-built stats programs will definitely help you, but there is a far more powerful tool that you can set up that essentially gives you every bit of information that you could ever need, and that program is [Google Analytics](#) (referred to in this report as 'GA').

This is an excellent online resource that enables you to collect masses of information about visitors to your page, such as how they found that page and how they interact with it once they have done so.

For example, if you are using AdWords (which is primarily what the tool was designed for) or any other PPC advertising program, you can simply compare the behavior and profitability of visitors who were referred from each of your ads. You also know what keywords drive visitors to your site, which keywords the search engines are indexing your pages for, and basically everything else that you could need to know about your visitors.

As suggested above, Google Analytics is particularly effective if you are going to drive visitors to your site using AdWords, because the program allows you to track sales conversions on a page by page basis.

Because both programs are owned and run by Google, it imports the appropriate AdWords cost data automatically, which obviously simplifies matters considerably. This gives you the ability to track the profitability and effectiveness of any AdWords campaigns that you 'tie' to a particular site, whilst tagging your AdWords destination URLs. You therefore have everything that you will need to keep an eye on both keyword and campaign conversion rates automatically.

Using Google Analytics is a piece of cake too. You simply copy and paste the urchin tracking code into any pages that you want Analytics to report on, and that is it:

Legacy Tracking Code (urchin.js)

[New Tracking Code \(ga.js\)](#)

Copy the following code block into every webpage you want to track.

Click in the box below to select all code. Copy and paste the code segment into the bottom of your content, immediately before the </track. If you use a common include or template, you can enter it there.

Refer to this tracking code if your site already has urchin.js installed. Please note that urchin.js **will not receive feature updates** and

```
<script src="http://www.google-analytics.com/urchin.js" type="text/javascript">
</script>
<script type="text/javascript">
_uacct = "UA-4366273-1";
urchinTracker();
</script>
```

Analytics will give you more information than your own hosts stats and it is free, so there is no good reason at all not to begin using it right away.

Multivariate Testing

Multivariate testing refers to a situation where you make several changes on your web pages at the same time, and then test the different versions against one another.

This is clearly more complex and involved than running simple back to back tests, because every alteration that you make between pages is going to be a factor that contributes to the popularity (or lack of popularity) of any particular page.

Whilst split testing can be done in a reasonably effective way manually, it is almost totally impossible to run any kind of meaningful multivariate testing campaign without software that will enable you to do so.

Given the relative complexity of analyzing the results from using multivariate testing methodology, it is perhaps no surprise that a lot of the commercially available software is relatively expensive.

For example, a sophisticated program like [Kaizen Track](#) will take care of almost every aspect of testing and tracking for you, but it will do so at a price that might be beyond the pocket of many online businesses or internet marketers.

And a perhaps more surprising thing is that you do not need to buy complex or expensive software at all. There is an excellent program that will allow you to run and track multivariate testing campaigns available for free.

When we were looking at back to back split testing, we focused on modifying only one aspect of your page. Whilst this makes such a testing program relatively simple, it also tends to ignore one very basic idea about people who visit your webpage.

This is the fact that all website visitors take in the total experience of landing on any particular webpage, and they do not focus on one specific area of the page. At the same time, research has shown that most web site visitors will leave within a few seconds unless they find a compelling reason to stay on the page that they have just arrived at

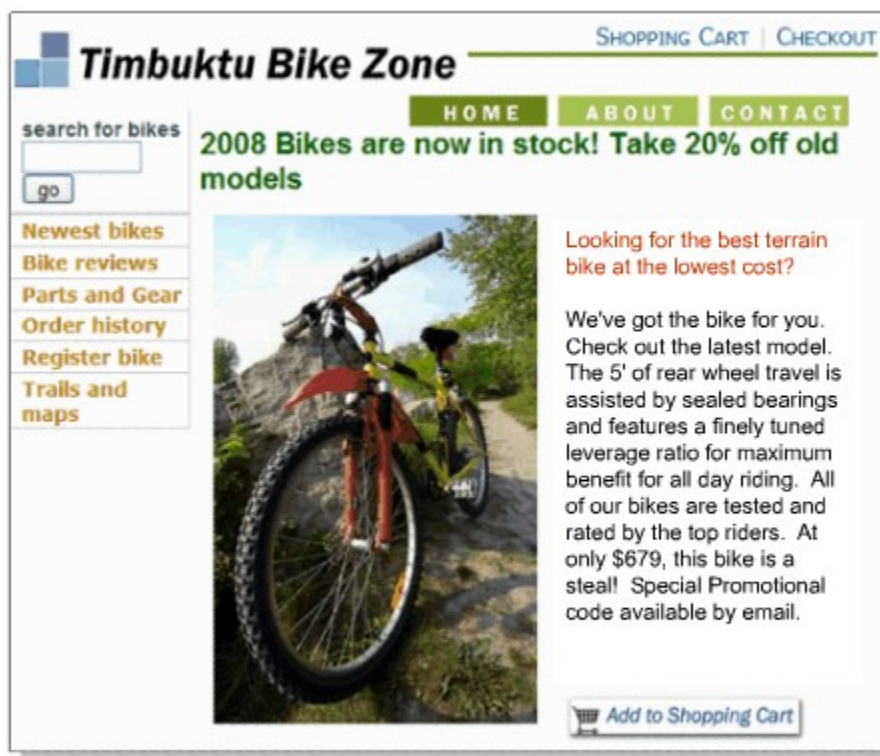
This is the reason for multivariate testing, because once you accept that a webpage is viewed as a whole, rather than a series of component sections, then it becomes clear that testing complete web pages against each other should be your primary consideration.

Using Google Website Optimizer

The program that will allow you to do this is [Google Website Optimizer](#).

Let us look in a little more detail how the program works, so that you can begin to understand why it is such effective tool if you want to test various different web pages featuring several changes against one another.

Imagine that you have a site which focuses on Timbuktu mountain bikes. Your original landing page looks something like this:



Okay, this is a relatively attractive looking page, with a nice graphic, a reasonably powerful headline and a links section well to the fore (in the favored top left-hand section of the page).

This is going to be your control page against which all others are going to be tested.

We established earlier that the first thing any online business needs to do is to drive traffic to the web pages. It should not however be overlooked that the second objective is to make sure that they stay on that webpage long

enough to take the action that you want them to take, whether that be buying your product, clicking on a link or subscribing to your mailing list.

What we now want to do is take this original page and change it in various ways, so that there are several variations that become available.

In order to begin setting up the experiment, it is therefore essential that you know exactly what you are going to do, and have your control page ready, so that the GWO program can make changes to that page to enable the test to begin.

It is also necessary to have a Google Analytics account to use GWO as well, so if you did not set one up earlier, do so now.

When you first begin to set up your experiment, you will see an initial page that looks like this once you have logged into your GWO account:



New Multivariate Experiment

Step 1: Set up test and goal pages.

1. Name Your Experiment

The experiment name will help you to distinguish this experiment from others; your users won't see this name.

Experiment name:

Example: My homepage test #1

2. Identify Your Test Page

This page will show different experiment combinations to your users. [Learn more.](#)

Test page URL:

Example: <http://www.example.com/webpage.html>

3. Identify your conversion page

This is an existing page that users reach after completing a successful conversion. For example, this might be the sign up for a newsletter, or fills out a contact form. [Learn more.](#)

Conversion page:

Example: <http://www.example.com/thankyou.html>

So, you need to input the page that is going to be the one where the changes will take place (the control) at 2, and the page which the visitor will

visit that identifies that a conversion (of whatever type you are looking for) has taken place.

For example, if you were selling your own product and making it available for immediate download, then this might be your download page.

If, on the other hand, the conversion is getting someone to sign up for your mailing list, the page would be the thank you page that you showed to the new subscriber after they have confirmed by double opting in.

This step is obviously critical, as this is how the GWO program together with Google Analytics can track the success of each different page variation for you. Note also that the conversion page should be on the same domain as the other pages, because it becomes considerably more difficult to set up GWO properly if you are using two different domains:

2. Identify Your Test Page

This page will show different experiment combinations to your users. [Learn more.](#)

Test page URL: <input type="text" value="http://abc123.com"/> Example: http://www.example.com/webpage.html

3. Identify your conversion page

This is an existing page that users reach after completing a successful conversion. F signs up for a newsletter, or fills out a contact form. [Learn more.](#)

Conversion page: <input type="text" value="http://abc123.com/archives/2007/12/12/10-simple-traffic-tips/"/> Example: http://www.example.com/thankyou.html

Incidentally, Google does check that the domain and the conversion page do actually exist before allowing you to move to the next stage of the set-up process, so using a fictitious domain name as I have done above only works for illustrative purposes.

The next page really just indicates the sections of the site pages that you might want to alter, there is therefore nothing that actually needs doing here, so click 'Continue':

New Multivariate Experiment

Step 1a: Plan your experiment

Before you can begin the technical set-up of the experiment, you'll need to decide which specific content you'd like to test



Examples of page sections to test.

Choose your page sections

Your marketing team should decide which sections of your test page you want to test. Some examples of potential test page sections could be headlines or images.

Review desired page sections with your technical team

Before you can begin implementing the experiment on your site, you need to agree on which sections to test. Once you have chosen your page sections, your webmaster can copy the Website Optimizer JavaScript tags and add them to your page.

For a full overview of the experiment set-up or to review upcoming steps, click on the links below.

The way that you use GWO is to insert code that is generated by the program onto the pages that you want changing, and this code obviously needs inputting correctly.

The next page therefore asks who is going to do the job. In truth, it is relatively straight forward to do, but if you have technical staff, it is probably a job that is best left to them.


The code page itself looks like this, so all you do is work your way through the page and follow the instructions for where each snippet of Javascript code should go:

1. Test Page: Add Control Script, Tracking Script, and Identify Your Page Sections

 Test page: <http://webbiz99.com>


 [View a sample source code](#)



Control Script: Paste the following **at the beginning** of your test page's source code. 



```
<script>
function utmx_section(){}function utmx(){}
(function(){var
```



Tracking Script: Paste the following **at the end** of your test page's source code. 

```
<script>
if(typeof(urchinTracker)!='function')document.write('<sc'+ript
src="'+
'http'+(document.location.protocol=='https:'?'s':'//ssl':'//www')+>
```



Page sections: Find the sections  in your page that you'd like to vary as part of your experiment.  content with the following tags and give each section a unique name.

Paste the following **immediately before** the content you would like to vary:

```
<script>utmx_section("Insert your section name here")</script>
```

After the codes are installed, you need to add all of your variation 'blocks' into the GWO program, so that the original page knows where to find the variations that you want to test.

Going back to the original Timbuktu Bike Zone page, I am going to imagine that we want to create three new variations of that page which will feature three new headlines and graphics.

The additional new headlines will be '2008 Bikes now in stock' which is going to be tested against 'Make This Bike Yours' and 'Get Fit Mountain Biking'.

At the same time, we will change the graphics on each page to one that is more appropriate to the headline, and then each of the three new headlines and three new graphics has to be loaded into the program:

:



- Test different versions of each section on your landing page



Once all of the Javascript codes are successfully installed, when any visitor comes to your site, they will be shown a different combination of graphics, headline and text, and the GWO program will gradually build a statistics database to show you which particular combinations work the best.

The GWO program retains all of the appropriate data so that you can keep a constant watch on what page combination is the most effective at generating conversions. You would therefore run the experiment until you decided that it was either not effective or, ideally, until it was successfully completed.

When you decide that the experiment is complete, then GWO will publish a detailed report that will highlight how all of the different page variations performed when set against your control page (the original one) so that you can see whether these new pages have done better or worse.

Whilst they are somewhat similar in nature, unlike the Ad Test Pro software that we were looking at earlier, the GWO program does *not* make the decision for you to run with any particular web page once it established the one that is performing the best. It simply gives you the data and allows you to make the decision.

Nevertheless, one is free whilst the other costs money (albeit not a great deal), so the choice is yours.

But, with a combination of GA and GWO in place, the multivariate testing power that you have for free is fairly unbelievable, as you will discover a little later.

Getting organized

Whilst using the Website Optimizer software is remarkably easy, nevertheless, some prior planning of any experiments that you are going to run will definitely pay dividends.

Here are a few planning steps that will enable you to get more accurate results from GWO far more quickly than you might otherwise achieve:

Use the right page in the correct scenario: If you are just getting started with GWO or are perhaps still relatively new to the idea of testing in general, then you might want to start by using a page that gets very low traffic, or even a page that you have set up specifically for testing purposes.

In this way, whilst you are learning, if you make a mistake, then the end result should not be a total disaster.

However, once you are certain that you know what you are doing, and you are ready to start generating some truly meaningful results, then you should test using a page that already generates a lot of traffic. Doing this will allow you to see meaningful statistical results that much more quickly.

Don't be too ambitious: As suggested earlier, the program allows you to test as many variables as you want, so that you could, for example, test 15 or 20 headlines, graphics or body text all at the same time.

Doing so would, however, mean that it would take you a great deal of time and effort to produce results that actually mean anything. Thus, you would be delaying the day when you could really start maximizing the returns that you enjoy from your efforts.

Start with just a couple of graphics and a couple of headlines until you are really sure that you are on top of testing, and then move on to bigger and better things.

Keep your conversion goal realistic: If you pick a difficult conversion goal, then the chances are that you will not see many conversions happening. So, for example, if you are selling a premium priced product, you are not going to see that many sales numerically, but that is irrelevant in the light of your earnings per sale. You would still, however, be seeing fairly poor conversion rates if the sales page were your test, and therefore

optimizing your page would be relatively difficult based upon the information that you were receiving.

Thus, it make far more sense to pick a conversion that is relatively easy to achieve, such as adding a subscriber to your mailing list (or adding an item to as shopping cart) as your initial conversion goal, because this allows you to build your positive results far more quickly.

This in turn enables you to maximize your pages that much more quickly as well, which represents a significant step towards making more money from your websites.

Be creative and bold: As far as possible, you should try to make sure that any two things that you are testing against one another are reasonably comparable directly. If, for example, you are giving away a newsletter called 'Fast but safe motoring tips', you would get far more meaningful results if you tested that against something like '20 top tips for safe, fast driving', rather than using something with far less emotional 'punch' like 'driving guide'.

Meaningful testing is all about testing like against like whenever possible, so try to come up with headlines, graphics and text materials that are bold and vibrant, but (at least reasonably) equally effective and powerful, whenever you can.

Make sure that your combinations work: It is pretty obvious, but one of the objectives of testing is to establish what combinations will work best together. You, however, must make sure that all of your combinations are at least viewable and readable

For example, if you have a page with a blue background, then it is going to serve no purpose to test blue text on that background as one of the options that you are considering for your test.

Testing cannot defy the laws of common sense, so do apply some!

The bottom line is....: Only you know what is going to work best for your business in the long run, and, even if you have not been an active tester previously, the chances are that you still have some idea of what will work and what won't.

Apply that knowledge as quickly and as extensively as you can, and use what you already know as your starting point.

Why using free Google software works

How GWO & GA complement one another

Here is a great example of how using Google Analytics together with the Website Optimizer software enables you to test what one is telling you against the other so that you can see what your stats are *really* indicating.

This example is so powerful because you may have read some of the earlier sections and wondered why using the data from the Analytics program was any more effective or illuminating than using the data from the inbuilt stats programs like Awstats or Webalizer. This example will show you why.

I recently decided to change the sales letter page for a relatively old product as a way of trying to breathe some new life into a sales campaign that had begun to flag a little. So, I created what I hoped was a pretty smart 'Web 2.0' style sales page, but, sticking to my own advice, I tested the old version against the new one for a few weeks.

To my amazement, Website Optimizer was reporting that the new page was actually performing nearly 8% *worse* than the old one, which I admit made me feel a little disappointed, but also totally confused as to what could be going on.

So, I started going through the stats using the Analytics program, but I really could not see anything that appeared to be out of the ordinary or unusual. But then I took a look at a section of the Analytics page where your visitors are separated by visitor type, into those who are 'New' and those who are 'Return' visitors, and, bang, there was the answer, staring me in the face.

When I was looking at new visitors, the new page was performing way better than the old one, showing conversion rates that were something around 50% better. However, for returning visitors, the old version of the page was the one that was working best, showing a conversion rate that was in excess of 20% better.

This would make some sense when you consider the facts, because the returning visitor was initially impressed enough by the *old page* to want to return. On top of that, the reason that they wanted to return was most likely to be that they *nearly* took the required action last time, but for some reason, decided not to at the last moment.

If they now return to a page with which they are familiar already, the chances have to be that much higher that this time they will take the action required of them.

If, however, they were to be taken to a brand ne page with which they were completely unfamiliar, then there is a far greater chance that the will be more confused and disorientated than comfortable, hence, they will not take the required action.

Like I said, all of this makes sense when you think about it logically, but it was only after analyzing the stats using Analytics and tying that together with what GWO was telling me that it made any sense.

The information was, however, invaluable, because it enabled me to tweak the whole process, so that new visitors are all taken to the new version of the sales letter, whereas returning visitors are shown the old version.

As a direct result, conversion rates as whole have climbed to a point where the overall improvement (since we first started this campaign) is something around 7%.

The 'moral' of the story is that whilst GWO can give you a ton of valuable information, the real meaning of the tale can often lie buried within the finer details, and that is where using the Analytics program in conjunction with GWO really comes into its own.

How to define a conversion?

Sometimes, you might want to redefine what represents constitutes a conversion as far as your business is concerned, although in many cases, a conversion is remarkably easy to define.

For example, if you are showing people a sales page, then you will probably define a conversion as happening when you make the sale.

Similarly, if you are showing your site visitors a form from which they can subscribe to your list, then the same situation would apply. They undertake the definite action that you require by signing up for your list, and that is your conversion confirmed.

But sometimes you may not be looking for such a concrete, decisive action to constitute a conversion.

For example, if you were showing someone a catalogue page or they were reading an article that you had published, then when they finish, they will not necessarily trigger an actual browser event to indicate that fact.

However, they have spent sufficient time on your page to indicate that they were a visitor of value who did what you wanted them to do (which was read what you presented to them), even though they did not take any particular action that would have represented a traditional conversion.

For this reason, you may want to add a 'timer' element to some kinds of pages, so that you know how many people stayed on there long enough to do what you wanted them to do, if this is the type of conversion data that you want.

This is something that you can easily do using GWO by replacing the code that triggers the traditional conversion quantifier (e.g. a sale) with one that is based on time.

The code can be found [here](#), and all that you need to do is replace the original chunk of code with this one.

There is more to testing...

Many marketers believe that testing their sales or landing page is the be-all and end-all of testing, and that they do not need to do any more than that in order to be successful.

However, whether you are running simple split tests or more complex multivariate testing using software, there is one fact that will always apply.








That is, no matter what else you do, you must test *every aspect* of every website that you build without fail, because, as dictated by Murphy's law, you can almost guarantee that anything that you do not test will go wrong or malfunction.

So, having established that there are a couple of tremendous Google programs that you can use for free for some of your site testing, let us look at other things that you should consider testing when you are creating your business enabled websites.

Test your HTML

If you have created a website using HTML coding, then you need to know that your coding is correct. The reason that this is important is twofold.

First, internet surfers do not all use the same browsers. Go back to the Awstats program that we were looking at earlier for proof of that fact:

Browsers (Top 10)	
	MS Internet Explorer
	Firefox
	Unknown
	Mozilla
	Opera
	Safari
-	Curl
-	LibWWW
	Netscape
	NewsGator (RSS Reader)
	Others

If your HTML coding is incorrect or defective, then it may be that your page does not open correctly in certain browsers. This is therefore something that you need to test, and something that we will come back to a little later.

The second reason that your HTML code needs to be correct is that it is by using this code that the robot programs that the search engines send to your site (known as 'spiders') can navigate their way around, and therefore index all of your individual pages.

If, therefore, your coding is poor or untidy, you can lose valuable search engine traffic, simply because your code confuses or misleads the spider when it lands on your web page.

Both scenarios mean that you can lose lots of high quality traffic because your code is untidy, cluttered or cumbersome, so making sure that your HTML is the way that it should be is extremely important.

There is a recognized international standard to which all HTML coding should comply that is laid down by the [World Wide Web Consortium \(W3C\)](http://www.w3.org/).

Perhaps surprisingly, HTML specification, which defines how any web page is going to be displayed in a browser window, is not a static thing with many updates approved by W3C over the years.

When this happens, the new standard is assigned what is called a document type definition (DTD), every one of which is unique, and the resultant document is assigned the title for web page creation purposes of a DOCTYPE.

So it follows that, because each of these DOCTYPEs represents a new HTML format, in order to ensure that every page of your site (yes, *every* page) complies with accepted HTML standards, you must validate your pages as appropriate to the HTML standard that was originally used to create that page.

Thus, knowing a little about the kind of DOCTYPE that you are creating is important because it is only in this way that you will know what type of HTML page you are creating.

Of course, if you code all of your HTML pages from scratch, by hand, then you will most probably already know what DOCTYPE you have created.

Most people who create HTML pages, however, do not create the page by coding every single line, preferring to use free WYSIWYG site creators and editors like [NVU](#) or an online resource like [Synthasite](#) or [Weebly](#).

In this scenario, of course, the web site creator has probably got very little idea of what DOCTYPE they have created, so here is how to find out.

Open up the web page that you are validating (i.e. testing) in your browser window and click 'View' at the top left hand corner, then 'Source' if you are using Internet Explorer or 'Page Source' in Firefox. You should see something that looks like this at the top of the page:

```
<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC
    "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01 Transitional//EN">
```

This section of the code is what the HTML validator (of your browser) is looking for any time it visits a web page, as this indicates exactly what type of HTML document it is, and therefore, how it should be handled.

So, armed with this information, the HTML validator can read the HTML file and compare it to the appropriate set of rules created for this document type.

All good HTML validators require such a DOCTYPE statement in order to read the page correctly, and load it into the browser window properly. And, if there is no such statement available, then many HTML validators will fall back to assuming that the HTML being used is the default version, which is often something like HTML 2.0.

As we are now past HTML 4.0, it becomes clear that any validator that reads your page using the default version is going to find lots of coding errors when it reads it, errors which do not, in fact, exist in reality.

So, you must validate the HTML code of your pages in order to ensure that they can be seen in every browser and that the search engine spiders are going to be happy. You can do this either by using the [W3C validator tool](#) itself or try this one [here](#).

Now, you will probably be either amazed or totally depressed the first time that you use such a tool because of the number of apparent errors there appear to be on your page.

Not all of the errors are likely to be genuine – try both of the validators above, and you may end up with entirely different results, which would indicate exactly that fact – and there are many simple solutions to HTML coding problems that you might encounter.

You will find many of the best solutions to your HTML problems [here](#).

Another thing that needs testing on your pages are the links that you have, both internal (those that link to other pages on your site) and external links as well (those linking to other peoples sites).

Broken links will definitely cause you problems with the search engine spiders because they will try to follow them whenever possible, and if they go nowhere, that does nothing to help you get indexed quickly.

Use a program like [Link Valet](#) to check that validity of all of your links, and make sure that you remove any that are broken or pointing to pages that no longer exist.

Make sure that all of your spelling is correct too.

It is an absolutely basic must-do that any web master checks his own spelling fully before the site goes live, but the fact is that it is very difficult to do this if you try to edit your page yourself. So, get someone else to proofread it for you – it does not matter how many times you do it yourself, you will not get it right - or use software to do the job.

However, if you use Microsoft Office, do not be tempted to rely on the spellchecker that is bundled with the Word program. It will miss many typos and common grammatical errors, so you would be far better using a resource like SpellCheck.net to make sure that you do not miss anything.

Test how long it takes to download your pages using a resource like [Website Optimization](http://WebsiteOptimization) (not the Google one!). This will tell you how long it takes your pages to fully download using all the different connections speeds, which is something that you really do need to know.

One of the quickest ways of driving visitors away from your site is to have a home page that loads inexorably slowly.

Aim to have a home page that loads in less than 20 seconds if possible, whilst other pages should take no more than 15 seconds, and all of these times should be tested assuming that your site viewer has the slowest connections speeds available.

If the page is downloading too slowly, then the first thing to check is the size of the graphics files that you are using on your pages. If possible, reduce the number of graphics that you are using, and certainly, you should be looking to reduce the size of the individual images themselves.

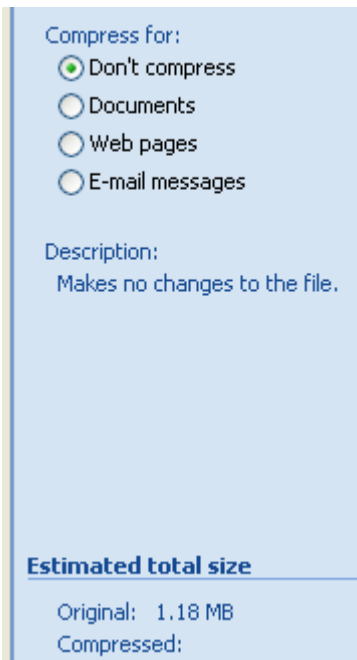
If you are using Microsoft Office, check whether the version that you have features the 'Picture Manager' program. If so, you can use that to compress the pictures that you want to feature on your site by using the 'Edit Pictures' utility:



Then click 'Compress Pictures' on the right hand side of the screen:



This will then give you several options of the level of compression that you need so, in this example, I have a picture that is 1.18mb:



Compress for:

- ☒ Don't compress
- ☐ Documents
- ☐ Web pages
- ☐ E-mail messages

Description:
Makes no changes to the file.

Estimated total size

Original:	1.18 MB
Compressed:	

and clicking on 'Compress for Web pages' reduces to 52.2kb, which is a massive reduction in size.

If this is not going to work for you, there is a free online graphic compression resource [here](#).

Always aim to get your graphics files as small as possible, certainly never over 100kb per graphic.

Basically, the smaller your graphics files are, the quicker they will load, and that could make a significant difference to the speed that your web page itself loads, which will mean that more people will stick with it.

Think of it this way. Have you ever visited a web page and got bored waiting before the page actually had enough time to download?

Of course you have.

Everyone has been in that situation and we've all done exactly the same, which is close the page and move on before we even had a chance to look at what was on there. Everyone has done exactly that at some point, and that is why you want your page to download as quickly as possible summarized as perfectly as possible.

Browser tests you must run

As suggested previously, there is no end or limit to the amount or degree of testing that you should do, but there is no doubt that one of the most overlooked tests is the browser test.

When you created your web pages, you used a particular browser to test that the page worked, and in all likelihood, you did so with your own favorite browser enabled. If you are an Internet Explorer fan, then every time that you opened the page up, it would default to an IE page, and a similar thing would happen if you are a regular Firefox, Opera or Safari fan.

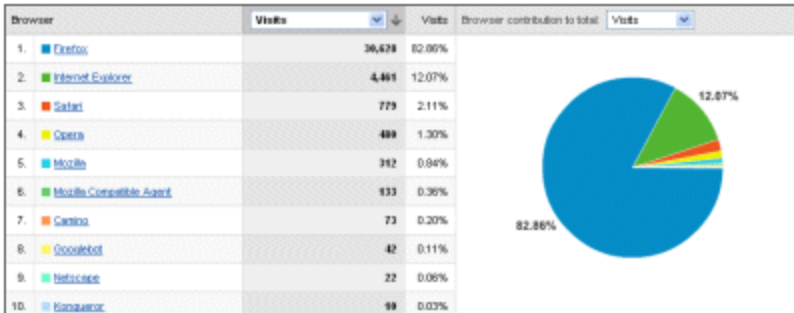
The problem comes about because not everyone uses the same browser as you do, and you need to make sure that, no matter what browser people are using, they can still see your page the way that you meant it to be shown.

Part of this problem comes about because of what we looked at before, the idea that if your HTML code is not the way that it should be, then you will have problems in other browsers.

And, whilst more and more people are creating their websites using more dynamic (and often simpler) site codes like CSS, PHP and Javascript, it is still a fact that most website creators do not test their sites fully in every type of browser. They therefore have no way of knowing whether what they have created is going to be seen by everybody in exactly the way that they planned it to be seen.

The first thing that you need to establish is the browsers that people are using to arrive on your site, and, whilst it is a given that the vast majority will use either Internet Explorer or Firefox, you need to know every browser that people are using, so that you can test for every one.

You can do this either by using the statistics programs that are built into your web hosting account like Awstats or Webalizer, or you can get this information (as you would probably expect by now) from Google Analytics:



As suggested, the main browsers that you always likely to see are IE and Firefox, but Netscape, Opera and Safari are others that are becoming increasingly popular, so you need to make sure that your page works in all of these as a bare minimum requirement.

Testing the pages of your site in various different browsers is not such a difficult thing to do anyway, as there are lots of sites where you can run browser tests online, so use the resources that are available.

For example, Browsershots (which is a free service) will create screenshots of how your page will look in a wide variety of different browsers, so that you can keep a record for future reference.

When you first begin to use the service, you add the URL of the page that you want to test to a job queue, after which a number of computers will automatically open the web page that you are testing in their different browser windows.

They then create a screenshot of that page, and everything is uploaded to the Browsershots server, after which, they advise you that your results are ready for download.

In my experience, this rarely takes more than 30-45 minutes, so even though the service is entirely free, it is one that is perfectly acceptable for almost all testing purposes too.



Armed with these results, you can then make any coding adjustments that might be needed to make the page appear correctly across all of the different browser platforms that Browsershots presented you with.

If this service is not going to be quick enough for you, there are various paid services that can provide almost instantaneous results like [Browsercam](#), [NetMechanic](#) and [Litmus](#), but, in all honesty, I do not really see why would need to use them unless you really cannot afford to wait less than one hour.

One final thing that you should do is to test your page with a text only browser such as [Lynx](#). Although not very many people nowadays are using text-only browsers, there are still a few that do, so make sure that even they can see the essentials of your page if they should attempt to view it.

Once you think that everything is ready to go, then go through a final checklist using the [Web Standards Checklist](#), which is an excellent resource for making absolutely certain that every single little detail of your site is properly tested and checked before launch.

Specific sales process testing

Make sure that you can get paid

If your website is designed to sell a product or service, then there are specific items that you need to test on that page in order to make sure that the whole system that you have put in place works efficiently.

This is not referring to testing one version of your page against another as we were when we were looking at back-to-back testing and so on. This is about testing specific elements on your page without which the total sales process will not work properly, if at all.

The first things that you must test are any payment links that you have featured on the page.

For example, it is a relatively common practice in internet marketing circles to add several small payment links that a visitor will see placed at strategic points as they scroll down the page, with a main 'Buy Now' button featured near the bottom of the page.

You must test each and every one to make sure that they all work, and that they actually take the visitor to a Payment Processor like [PayPal](#) if they decide to make a purchase.

As suggested above, many marketers use a couple of different payment links, so make certain that everyone works, and if you have different pages connected to different payment processors (not everyone feels comfortable using PayPal for example) make sure that they all work too.

Your download, upsells and OTO's

Then, check that once a payment has been processed that the customer is taken to the correct page from where they can actually download the product (if it is digital), or make the appropriate arrangements for delivery.

Also, at some point in the sales process, you should (must!) present you new customer with an opportunity to buy another product from you, or at least an upgraded license to the product that you just sold them.

So, for example, if you had just sold a \$37 e-book to a new customer, you might want to offer them a complementary product that will help them use the information from that book far more efficiently for \$47.

A surprising number will make the purchase, because you managed to get over their initial sales resistance before you made that all-important first sale, and they already have their credit card in their hand, so many will buy.

This is particularly true if the additional sale is presented to them in the form of what is known as a 'One Time Offer' (OTO), which is where the price that is offered is exceptionally low or the offer is upgraded with the addition of several extra bonuses.

However, the reason that such a page is known as an OTO is that that it will only ever be presented to the customer this one time, so they have to make their mind up now. Perhaps not surprisingly, this is an extremely effective marketing tactic indeed.

But, no matter what it is that you are selling, or how you are presenting your additional offer, you need to have an automatic system in place that enables this page to be presented to everyone that makes that initial purchase from you.

For example, some people prefer to make the initial sale before this additional offer is presented to the customer. In this case, there must be a system in place that will automatically take the customer to the additional offer page immediately *after* their initial purchase is completed.

Alternatively, other marketers prefer to introduce the additional offer to the customer *before* the first sales is actually completed, because doing it this way enables the customer to make only one payment for both items at the same time, which they believe to be more convenient.

The same situation applies once again. There must be an automatic system in place that is integrated with whichever payment processor you are using that shows the new customer the upsell or OTO offer at exactly the right stage of the sales process.

That whole system must be rigorously tested, because if it is not working, then you are going to lose significant amounts of money from these automatic sales. That would be particularly tragic as every one of these sales represents almost pure profit (it was the first sale that cost you time and money).

Testing e-mail deliverability

Once someone becomes your customer, then you will add them to a mailing list, so that you can send them details of special offers and additional

recommended products as a way of generating additional revenues with as little work as possible.

In order to do this, most marketers use e-mail, but because of the growing tide of Spam mail, e-mail marketing is becoming less effective for one primary reason. No-one welcomes trash e-mail, so, many people have added 'filters' to their incoming mail box.

Even those that have not are working with Internet Service Providers who, by way of adding an additional service to their customers, are *automatically* filtering incoming mail. Unfortunately, most of these filtering services are not very accurate but they are very aggressive, so many perfectly valid e-mails get trashed by them.

How much of your mail actually gets through is therefore a critical factor in deciding how profitable your future business is likely to be, so you need to test the deliverability of the outgoing mail server that you are using.

[Litmus](#) is a site that has several e-mail testing tools as does [Delivery Detective](#) from Tower Data.

Use them to establish just how much of your mail is getting through, because you may be surprised (or more likely shocked) how low the deliverability rates that you are currently achieving are.

For example, I have recently tested a new (supposedly professional) e-mail delivery service where the successful delivery rate was just over 30%!

The best solution for this problem is to use either one of the two premier autoresponder services in the market, [Aweber](#) or [GetResponse](#) for handling all of your mailing list building activities.

Not only will this enable you to automate almost all of your list building, but, as both of these services regularly achieve deliverability rates in excess of 99%, you will know that the vast majority of your mail is getting through.

You will probably also see the results pretty quickly in terms of increased cash in the bank as well, so even though both services require a monthly fee, it is one that is well worth paying.

You like it, but...

It stands to reason that no matter how you create your site, you are going to like it, but the important thing is, what do other people think? You, after all, are somewhat biased and more importantly, when you are talking about your sales pages, you are not the customer.

So, once you think that your site is fully ready to go, with everything that could be tested fully validated, that is the time to ask for the opinion of others. That is, if you like, the real 'acid test', as it is their opinion that counts, not yours.

Asking family and friends what they think has some value, but you should also be aware that they are unlikely to be too critical for fear of upsetting you, so they are probably not the best people to ask.

Far more effective is to find online forum sites where other people who run similar businesses (or are customers of them) gather and ask their opinion. They are far more likely to tell you the truth and make recommendations about how your site could be improved and, given that they are in the same business as you, their input could be vitally important.

For example, if you are an internet marketer, then you should join a site like the [Warrior Forum](#) or [Digital Point](#), and ask other marketers to critique your site. You will almost certainly find that, whilst some people like your site, others will not be so keen, but that is not really the point, because that is just life.

What is more important is the recommendations that people come back with for making improvements.

Understand that the real value of this test is that they are viewing your site for the first time in exactly the same way that any new visitor would.

You, on the other hand, have seen it dozens or perhaps hundreds of times and are therefore blind to errors and imperfections that any first time visitor will see immediately.

In other words, their viewpoint is probably way more valuable than yours, so do not be too 'precious' or protective about your page. Accept that they are

trying to help and are definitely in a position to do so, and be prepared to implement as many of their recommendations as you can.

The final job is to then go back to the earlier operation of validating that all of your pages are properly coded, that they load correctly in all browsers and that your site has followed all of the guidelines laid down in the W3C checklist that we looked at earlier.

Make a back up copy of all of the pages of your site on a DVD or CD-ROM (and test that it works) before FTP-ing all the pages of the site to your hosting account before finally making the whole thing live.

Conclusion

This book has been written with the primary objective of demonstrating exactly why testing is such a critical part of running a successful business online, mainly because it is a part of the business process that many marketers and online entrepreneurs neglect.

It is not, however, intended to be an exhaustive list of everything that should be tested, because there are three factors that you always need to bear in mind.

First, *everything* that you create needs testing. No matter what it is that you do in your specific business, it must work properly, and the only way that you can know that for a fact is by testing every possible variable and parameter. Only you know what those variable and parameters are within your own industry or organization, but, in essence, everything that could ever possibly go wrong should be tested as rigorously as possible.

Secondly, testing must always be an ongoing process, because something that works fine today will not necessarily work properly tomorrow. For example, if your payment processor decides to tweak their system slightly (which happens all of the time), it is not unknown for download links or supposedly automatic transfers to upsell or OTO pages begin functioning incorrectly.

The third factor is that you should always try to anticipate the unexpected, and prepare accordingly.

For example, if your site is ticking along with 1000-2000 visitors per week, what will happen if there is a sudden surge of 20,000 visitors one day? Is your site coding robust enough to handle that, or would the site page that everyone wants to look at download so slowly that the whole system would become jammed up?

If that were to be the case, think how many sales you might lose, simply because you never expected that to happen!

It is not a particular nice thought, so being prepared for what could happen is essential

No matter what it is that you do, test everything that you can think of that could ever possibly go wrong, and do whatever you can to remove or

alleviate those potential problems, or at least, make whatever preparations you can to limit the damage.

For example, if you are thinking of switching to a new web host, test their customer support desk, their response time, and everything else that you can think of testing. Accept that, no matter how professional they appear at the beginning, things can go wrong, so testing them in every way that you can is critical.

Far too many marketers and online business people vastly underestimate the importance of testing, so do not allow yourself to be amongst them, for this simple reason.

Do you think that is pure coincidence that most of the top people in most industries that are making money online are also the most fanatical testers?

Do you think for one moment that those two facts are entirely unconnected?

No, nor me.

So, if you want to be one of the most successful people in your business, you know what to do next now, don't you?

