

VOICE OF CUSTOMER (VOC)

THE SECRET WEAPON FOR GREAT
LANDING PAGE COPY



WordStream



GUIDE

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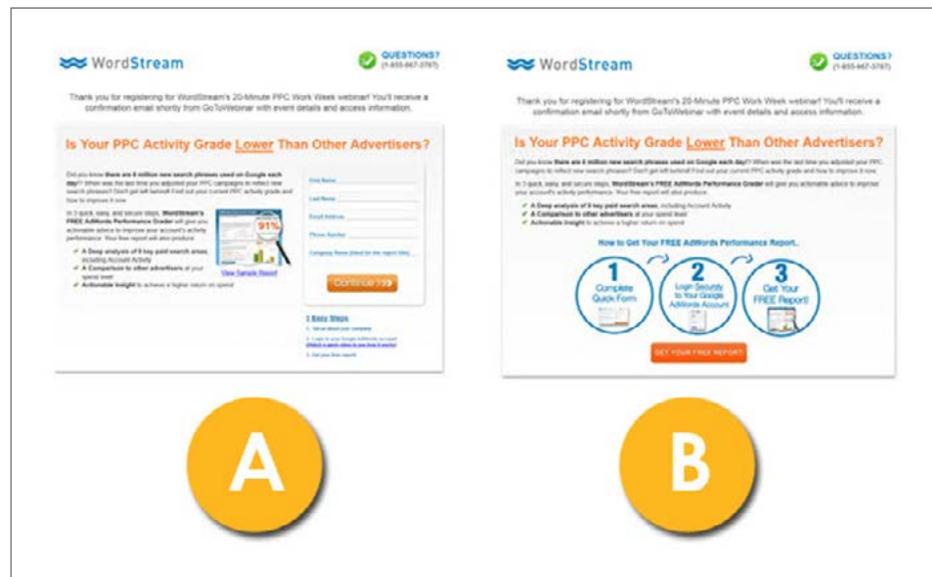
THE SECRET WEAPON FOR GREAT LANDING PAGE COPY

INTRODUCTION: THE MOST IMPORTANT LANDING PAGE ELEMENT

Most digital marketers agree that landing pages can make or break any campaign, be it PPC, social media, email, or display ads. Once you get people to click, the landing page has to convince your visitor to complete the conversion.

To assist in the goal of landing-page success, a number of software platforms exist to help marketers test landing-page elements. Visuals, calls-to-action (CTAs), layouts, offers, buttons, and many more elements can be tested. Software can help you conduct A/B tests and create new landing pages on the fly.

Testing different layouts — moving the location of your form or changing the size and color of your button — can help you snag more conversions like purchases, downloads, and signups. Just a tweak with the placement of a key visual element might lead to a significant increase in landing-page performance.



Unfortunately, when it comes to the actual words on the landing page, marketers tend to rush the process, going with a combination of gut feelings, past campaigns, and cursory competitive reviews to piece together landing-page copy. This method leads to costly mistakes and wasted time until the “right” message gets discovered through trial and error.

Despite all the conveniences afforded users with software and testing, they all overlook what accounts for the *biggest* factor — the absolute biggest factor — in landing-page success: **the words that go on the page.**

Copywriting Secret:

Some of the most successful landing-page copy comes directly from customers. It's not creative writing — it's sales writing.

This guide looks at the various ways marketers can improve landing-page copy to ensure their messages are on point. Market research methods and voice-of-customer (VOC) data are positioned as the most effective means to find, not create, the right words to use on landing pages and increase conversions.

SOFTWARE DOESN'T WRITE COPY

With all the technology at marketers' fingertips, it's easy to overlook copy on landing pages. The tendency is to rely on testing colors, layouts, random headline combinations, and anything else that can be tested to see what works.

Even a great copywriter can use emotional appeal, action verbs, and [power words](#) to make a message feel compelling, at least to other marketers, but the question remains: Is this how the target audience feels? Companies know the features and benefits of their products inside and out, but do those benefits match what the target audience desires?

EXISTING APPROACHES AND THEIR FLAWS

Landing-page design, aesthetics, and user experience are all important, but they're at-a-glance components. The serious landing-page visitor — the target audience marketers want to convert — will read the words on the page, and if those words miss the mark, a potential sale just left the website.

FATAL APPROACHES TO LANDING-PAGE COPY

1. **Guessing:** Trying a variety of random messages to see what works.

As advertising great Claude Hopkins wrote in *Scientific Advertising* in 1923, "Guesswork is very expensive." Sure, the right message may be found eventually but not before a lot of money has been spent and time gone by.

2. **Borrowing from competitors:** Not flat-out stealing, but making a landing page just slightly different from the competition's, under the assumption they know what they're doing.



But what if their assumptions are wrong? Then you're also starting off with the wrong message.

3. **Recycling messages:** Using tired, cliché messages that make vague promises to no one, e.g., “World-class software solutions for changing times.”

Nonsense cliché messages are signs of laziness and only lead to boredom — and who wants to buy a service or product from a lazy, boring company? It's anyone's guess what this software does in these changing times.

The first requirement is to understand the pain or problem the prospect has, then tell them how the product or service in question remedies the problem.

The point of marketing is to solve a specific problem for a customer. To do this, the first requirement is to understand the pain or problem the prospect has, then tell them how the product or service in question remedies the problem.

CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN THE TARGET AUDIENCE AND THE MESSAGE

The ideal solution for the landing-page copy problem would be a software product that runs an algorithm to tell marketers exactly which words to use — or just writes it for them. Unfortunately, no one's created that (yet), though it could be in the works in Silicon Valley.

The only way to know what customers want, to know what their true pains are and what the ideal solution would be, is to **ask them or observe them**. Armed with this knowledge, marketers can create landing-page copy that positions their product or service as the exact solution the prospect needs.

“You don't get an idea or a headline — you either build it, or you unfold it, petal by petal. You dig it out of the market research.”

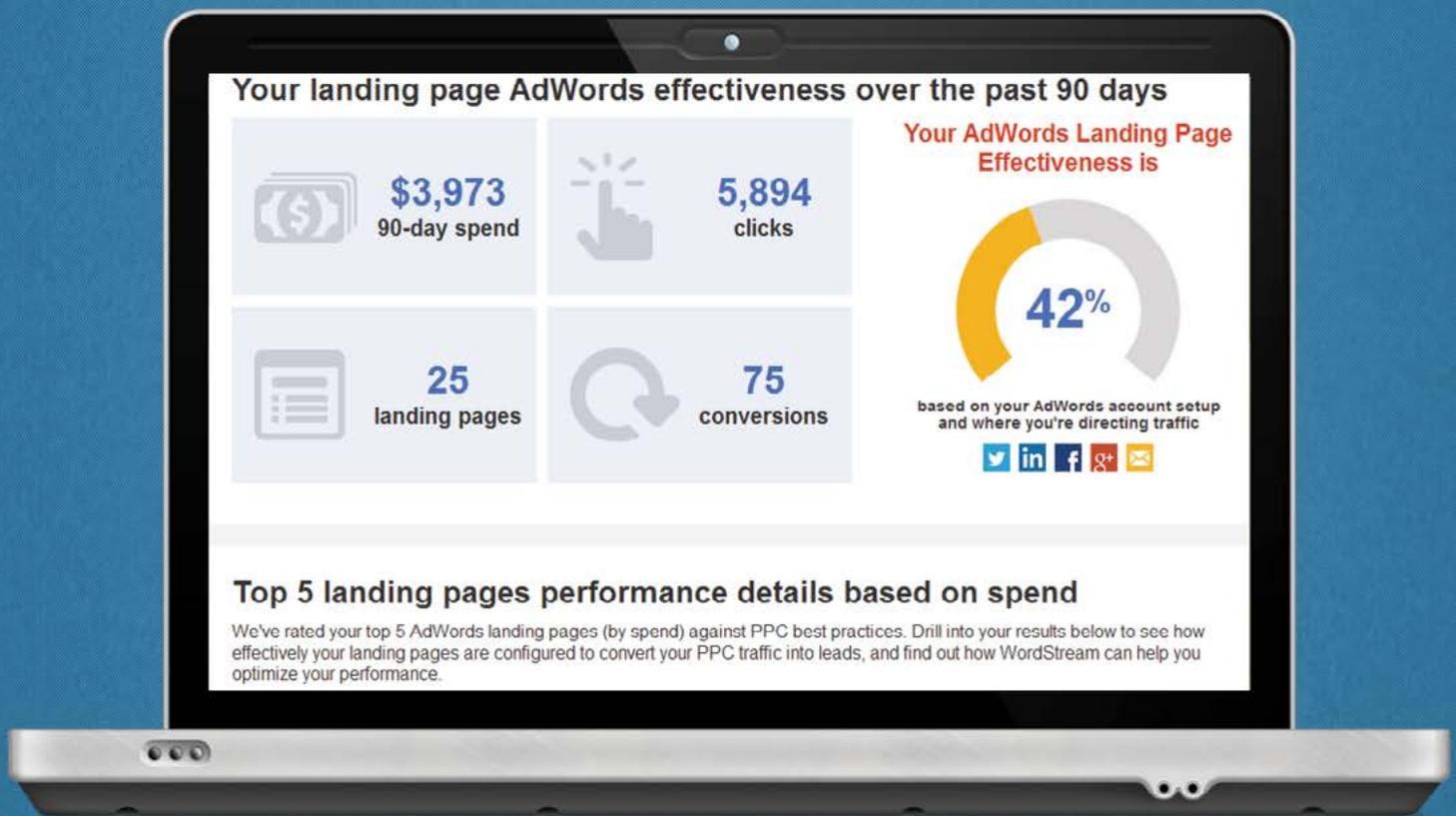
— Eugene Schwartz, *Breakthrough Advertising*

VOC IS THE FOUNDATION OF EFFECTIVE LANDING PAGE COPY

VOC, or voice-of-customer, is a market research technique that focuses on customers' (and prospects') wants and needs, then prioritizes them into a hierarchical structure before prioritizing them in terms of relative importance and satisfaction with current alternatives. VOC is a way to describe your customers' experiences with and expectations for your products or services.

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VOC is a way to describe your customers' experiences with and expectations for your products or services.

VOC is actionable data that includes a target market's **desires, pain points, preferences, expectations, and aversions**. Once VOC data has been captured (via methods listed later), it can then be used to create landing-page copy, sometimes using the exact words that come from

prospects and customers during VOC research.

As technical as VOC sounds, it can be distilled down to basic questions and answers with prospects and customers, and simply *listening* to the various conversations occurring online and offline.

The messages on the landing page below, from FreshBooks, comes from knowing what their customers' pain points are. It's simple to deduce that their research shows the target market, small business owners:

- 1) views billing as painful,
- 2) sees accounting as challenging,
- 3) needs access from anywhere, and
- 4) doesn't want to waste time with billing.

The image shows a screenshot of the FreshBooks landing page. At the top, a blue banner contains the headline "FreshBooks to make billing painless." followed by a small orange box with the number "1.". Below the headline is a green button that says "Try it Free for 30 Days" and a link "or Take a Quick Tour". To the right of the button is an image of a laptop, a tablet, and a smartphone displaying the FreshBooks interface. Below the banner is a section titled "Featured in:" with logos for "The New York Times", "CNN", "CBS", "Forbes", and "CPA Practice Advisor". Below this are three columns, each with a numbered orange box at the top: "2.", "3.", and "4.". Each column has a blue-bordered box containing a feature name: "Easy to Use", "Work Anywhere", and "Save Time Billing". Below each feature name is a short paragraph of text describing the feature.

1. FreshBooks to make billing painless.

Try it Free for 30 Days or [Take a Quick Tour](#)

Featured in: The New York Times, CNN, CBS, Forbes, CPA Practice Advisor

2. **Easy to Use**
FreshBooks is simple and intuitive, so accounting isn't intimidating. Plus you can talk to a real, live person anytime you have a question, 9am-6pm EST, Monday to Friday.

3. **Work Anywhere**
With FreshBooks, your business is accessible from any computer or mobile device (iPhone, iPad and Android), and your data is always backed up and secure.

4. **Save Time Billing**
FreshBooks is built for small business owners to get organized and get paid. You'll be tracking time, logging expenses and invoicing your clients in no time.

This type of actionable insight is gleaned from VOC data, and it makes landing-page messages highly impactful for the target audience. It also separates the ho-hum landing page from the home run landing page.

THE WHERE AND HOW OF VOC RESEARCH

Market research is a special category of marketing that can require years to master. The purpose here is to give marketers the basic methodologies to perform primary and secondary research to assist in landing-page copy creation.

Some research methods, such as surveys and interviews, require detailed planning, while others require nothing more than structured eavesdropping. The more research conducted, the better, but for landing-page copy most marketers need only use a few of these options. As not all methods are perfect, the cons of each are listed below the descriptions. Depending on the project, marketers may employ all the methods or just a few.

It's best to aggregate all the research sources into a final report for future use. It can also serve as a creative brief for future projects — until the market or the product, service, or company changes.

For all the methods below, except surveys and interviews, a simple document or spreadsheet, like this, should suffice to capture and communicate your VOC findings:

Example tracker

ABC Smartphone Forum	What frustrates people	What they'd like to see as a solution	What they can't live without	Powerful quote
June 2, 2014	Data charges that cause the family's monthly bill to skyrocket sometimes	A way to have a predictable bill each month	Paperless billing and auto-debit payment	"A flat fee would make me a customer for life."

But as the process evolves, it can become more sophisticated. The key thing is to use the same format for all research so combining it all at the end goes smoothly.

Whatever research method you choose, keep track of your findings and look for **common phrases**, the **particular pains that your customers and prospects experience**, and **what people want or expect** in your product or service, to name just a few.

RESEARCH SOURCES FOR CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

Internal company sources, such as customer service and sales reps, who have front-line experience with prospects and customers, serve as excellent sources of VOC information. They have phone calls, email exchanges, and even online chats with the target audience. Volumes of specific feedback, including complaints and praise, reside with these internal sources.

Con: The amount of work and coordination that go into formalizing a process to capture this information.

Formal surveys of customers and prospects either on the company website or via email. Fortunately, survey companies have all the tools to assist in the creation and execution of surveys. Among the best known are Survey Monkey, where [practically any type of survey can be created](#), and Qualaroo for [on-site surveys](#), which appear directly on websites and typically ask one or two questions.

The main point is to ask questions that will produce actionable answers. In other words, ask questions that have answers that can be used in creating your landing-page copy.

For surveys it's best to put extra thought into the types of questions to ask of both prospects and customers. The main point is to **ask questions that will produce actionable answers**. In other words, ask questions that have answers that can be used in creating your landing-page copy.

The table below contains sample questions to ask in a survey and create the types of sound bites that prove useful in crafting copy for landing pages:

Why did you choose our solution?	What's most important in your product or service search? Price, quality, etc.?
How does our product or solution make your life easier (i.e., fix the pain)?	Why haven't you solved this problem or pain point yet?
What adjectives would you use to describe our product or service?	What work title best describes your job?
What would make our product or service better?	What do you dislike about the options available in the market now?

Con: The time and occasionally the costs that can go into surveys—but they're worth it if done correctly.

Customer interviews reveal how customers feel about a product, service, or company overall. Some of the best quotes and sound bites come from this source. In fact, this source often provides compelling social proof to be used in a landing page's [testimonials section](#). They can even be used as headlines or subheads.

Claude Hopkins also wrote, "The advertising man [or woman] studies the consumer... They learn what possible buyers want and the factors which don't appeal. It is quite customary to **interview hundreds of possible customers**."

Con: The only downside to customer interviews is the time involved.

Focus groups still carry some weight, though the internet has diminished their use in many industries. Still, real one-on-one interaction with prospects and customers using a product can prove to be a goldmine.



Con: Can cost several thousands of dollars.

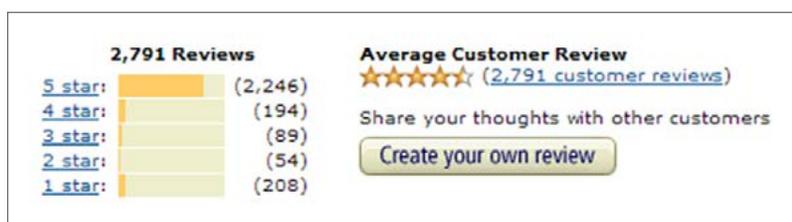
Online forums exist for virtually every product or service in existence and are a treasure trove of feedback. Marketers can find community-based forums where the conversations flow freely about specific topics or whole industries and their participants. Company-sponsored forums focused on the company's existing products and services keep the conversation focused.

A search for "smartphone forums," for example, shows 23,000 results — and that's where people are sharing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in abundance.

Con: It takes time to find reliable forums with reputations for having detailed input from participants instead of people who simply want to rant.

Amazon reviews and other review sites like Yelp and Angie's List contain specific reviews about products and services that can be used to inform your landing pages. In the case of Yelp and Angie's List, those reviews are usually at the local level, giving marketers a good view of the local market. Review sites are also valuable for getting insights on how a target market feels in general about an entire industry.

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Con: Few drawbacks exist for this approach, but, like forums, at times the comments provide little more than rants.

Question and answer sites, such as Quora and Yahoo Answers, have engagement for a variety of questions, from the simple "How do I pick an accountant?" to "What is the best e-commerce platform in the world?" Quora tends to have higher-quality answers from people who work in the particular industries.

Con: Same as reviews above.

Blog comments have [been maligned](#) by internet marketers as dumping grounds for spam links. In fact, some sites have chosen to [remove comments](#) and move the conversation to social media. However, for high-traffic sites with popular topics, it's not

uncommon to see hundreds of comments from a target market. This is a front-row seat to how people feel and think.

Con: Much like forums, blog comments can be filled with unhelpful comments from people who don't add much insight to a topic. It can take some digging to find the gold.

Social media may be a glut of opinion and feelings, but sentiment analysis tools can shorten the time needed to [find what a target audience is saying](#). Marketers can join the conversation or eavesdrop on what's being said. A company's own social media channels can serve as optimal places to gauge customer sentiment.

Con: Social media can lack depth, leaning more toward short comments that don't reveal much detail.

Search continues to be a fast path to find out what target markets think and feel. Odds are good that someone has written a piece that has the information needed to understand the market. Marketers can search "what to look for in XYZ product or service" and read an article (or report or industry website) from a trustworthy expert in the field — and it's safe to assume the marketer's target audience of prospects have read some of the same information during their own research, which means the landing page should address the exact same points brought forth in the article, report, or website.

Con: Repeated searches may be required to find the right type of research.

Competitors' content and messages should be reviewed and catalogued to potentially learn from what they know about the market already.

Con: Relying solely on competitors who may not have done any research themselves can be risky, because they may be guessing at what's important to the target market.

This isn't an exhaustive list of all the research channels available; however, it should get you started on where and how to conduct primary and secondary research.

ORGANIZE AND ANALYZE THE RESEARCH

After the research phase is complete, the analysis begins to create a hierarchy of needs that's prioritized by customers. Depending on the products or services, multiple customer profiles may emerge, each with different priorities.

For example, a web hosting company may find that small businesses are most concerned with price, while its enterprise customers are more concerned with security. That analysis might look something like this:

Customer	Hierarchy of Needs (in order of priority)
Small Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price • Ease of use • Reliability
Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security • Support • Price

SHOULD THE VOC MATCH THE USP?

The USP (unique selling proposition) is the number one reason people pick a solution or service from a company, so it should match what customers say in the VOC research.

Ideally a company's VOC data and USP match. The USP (unique selling proposition) is the number one reason people pick a solution or service from a company, so it should match what customers say in the VOC research. More can be found [on USPs here](#), but it's vital to test and reformulate a USP if it doesn't match the VOC needs and wants.

Example: If price doesn't matter to a target market, a company shouldn't use price as its USP.

Part of the USP is the promise it makes to the target market, and VOC data can reveal what that promise should be. Of course, the delivery of that promise is paramount — and companies should avoid promising something they can't deliver on.

FINAL STEPS: PUT THE RESEARCH INTO WORDS

VOC data will drive the creation of:

- headlines
- subheads
- bullet points
- CTAs
- testimonials

And other copy on the landing page. Each written element of the landing page should be traceable back to the research. The question shouldn't be, how do these words sound to the marketer? Instead it should be, how do they sound to the target audience? Do they address the prospect's pain points and show how your solution or service will alleviate the pain?

The question shouldn't be, how do these words sound to the marketer? Instead it should be, how do they sound to the target audience?

It's important to clarify that a company might have several types of customers, each with a different hierarchy of needs, therefore the landing-page copy will differ for each offer and customer segment.

For a company's homepage, it's nearly impossible to create a message targeted at every conceivable visitor, so the best approach is to choose messaging that targets the most important prospect or customer segment.

Examples of research copy placement on landing pages:

- The product or service's features and benefits (primarily the benefits) should match the target audience's pain points from the research that was conducted. See the FreshBooks example from before.
- Answer the "Is this solution right for me?" question by stating explicitly who the solution is for. Landing pages are no place for implying anything, and, again, visitors will read everything that's targeted to them. The best way to do this is to use the intended audience's title: "Project management software for **freelance graphic artists.**"
- Repurpose a customer quote as a subheading: "ABC Plumbing truly does go the extra mile." — John Q. Customer

Despite the mountains of research a company may produce, landing pages still require testing on an ongoing basis. Though it seems the research should be a one-and-done exercise, a good marketer knows the work is never finished and everything must be tested regularly because markets, needs, and wants change over time.

CONCLUSION

Market research and VOC data make landing-page copy creation a breeze compared to the alternatives. In fact, one could argue the writing is more like putting the pieces of a puzzle together. Copywriting best practices still matter, and research is at the core of all good copywriting, as noted by the copywriting legends Hopkins and Schwartz.

Market research leads to better landing-page experiences for target markets, which translates to improved conversions, more money, and less wasted time for marketers.



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