ConvertLab360

PPC + CRO 2026: what happens after the click

How to turn paid clicks into leads and sales without raising the budget: clean conversion data, message match, forms, speed, AI Max and Final URL expansion, lead quality, hypotheses and tests that reach significance. Rules, thresholds, diagnostics and worksheets for Google Ads, Microsoft Ads and Meta traffic.

FREE GUIDE · 26 PAGES · NOVEMBER 2026

01 · Essentials
10 rules, first 14 days, diagnostics, audit, 2026 changes

02 · Money and data
Economics of conversion rate, tracking, lead quality

03 · The page
Message match, first screen, forms, speed, mobile, AI Max

04 · Testing and control
Hypotheses, sample size, experiments, benchmarks, worksheets

THE MOST VALUABLE PART COMES FIRST

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How to read the labels

GOOGLE MICROSOFT META — official help centers and documentation of the platform. Results in your account may differ. PRACTICE — experience of agencies, CRO practitioners and industry data; not a platform rule, so test it on your own account. CALCULATION — derived by arithmetic; plug in your own numbers. Where a source did not disclose its method, we say so.

How to use this guide

Conversions dropped or ads “stopped working” — start with p. 5 (diagnostics) and p. 6 (audit). Planning CRO for paid traffic — go in order: tracking → lead quality → message match → page → tests. Changing the page before the conversion data is clean means optimizing a number you can’t trust. Print the worksheets (p. 25) and fill them in with your numbers.

IF YOU READ ONLY ONE PAGE

10 rules with the biggest impact

01 **Fix the conversion before you fix the page** PRACTICE

A conversion that fires on form start, a thank-you page reloaded twice or a missing value — and Smart Bidding learns from noise. Every CRO project starts with a tracking check (p. 9).

02 **Optimize for qualified leads, not form fills** GOOGLE

Send CRM stages back to Google Ads (enhanced conversions for leads or offline import) and bid on qualified or converted leads. Keep the form submit as a diagnostic (p. 10).

03 **The page repeats the ad's promise** PRACTICE

Same offer, same words, same price in the headline as in the ad. Match the buyer's decision, not every keyword (p. 11).

04 **A dedicated page, not the homepage** PRACTICE

One audience, one offer, one main action. Navigation and extra links pull people away from the form (p. 12).

05 **Every form field must earn its place** PRACTICE

Up to ~5 fields — one step; more — split into steps with a progress bar. Judge by cost per qualified lead (p. 13).

06 **Mobile first, measured on real users** GOOGLE

LCP ≤ 2.5 s, INP ≤ 200 ms, CLS ≤ 0.1 by field data, not only Lighthouse. Most paid clicks are mobile (p. 14).

07 **Control where Google sends the click** PRACTICE

Final URL expansion in PMax and AI Max can send traffic to any page of the domain. For lead gen and services — exclusions, page feeds or off (p. 16).

08 **Hypotheses come from data, not taste** PRACTICE

GA4 by landing page and device, Clarity recordings, rage and dead clicks, sales calls. Each hypothesis has a reason, a change and a metric (pp. 17–18).

09 **Calculate the sample size before the test** CALCULATION

At 2% CR, detecting +20% needs ~20,000 visitors per variant. Not enough traffic — test bigger changes or test sequentially (p. 19).

10 **Judge by money, not conversion rate** PRACTICE

A higher CR with smaller orders or worse leads can lose money. Final metric — profit or cost per qualified lead (p. 8).

WHAT TO DO IN THE NEXT 14 DAYS

14-day plan: from clicks to a test backlog

The typical picture: ads go to the homepage or a generic service page, the conversion counts form starts or button clicks, nobody knows which leads became customers, and “CRO” means changing button colours. First measurement and economics, then the page.

Days	What to do and where	Outcome
1–2	**Google Ads → Goals → Conversions:** which actions are Primary, what exactly triggers each, counting “one” vs “every”. Test submit in Tag Assistant. Same for Microsoft UET and Meta Events Manager.	Conversions you can trust
3	Reconcile 30 days: leads/orders in ads vs GA4 vs CRM/backend. Mark each lead in CRM: source, campaign, form version, status.	The real gap and lead quality
4	Calculate break-even ROAS or maximum cost per qualified lead (worksheet p. 25). Put numbers on the value of +1 percentage point of CR (p. 8).	What CRO is worth
5	Landing pages report: top-10 pages by paid spend; CR by device; which keywords and ads land where. Check Final URL expansion settings.	Where the money lands
6–7	Message match audit: for each top ad group, ad headline vs page headline vs offer vs price (p. 11). Mobile speed on field data (p. 14).	A list of mismatches
8–10	Install Microsoft Clarity (free), collect 3–5 days of recordings. Watch 30–50 sessions from paid traffic; note rage clicks, dead clicks, scroll stop points, form errors.	Behaviour evidence
11–12	Talk to sales or support: top-5 objections, questions asked on the first call, why leads say no.	Copy for the page
13–14	Write 10–20 hypotheses, score them (p. 18), check traffic for each test (p. 19). Fix obvious bugs right away — they don’t need a test.	A prioritized backlog

What not to do in the first two weeks

Don’t redesign the whole page, don’t launch five tests at once and don’t change bid strategy at the same time as the page. If the page and the bidding change in the same week, you will never know which one moved the numbers.

FIND YOUR SYMPTOM

Diagnostics by symptom

Always check tracking and change history first — many “the landing page broke” stories are a tag, a form plugin or a redirect. Then find your symptom in the table.

Symptom	Likely cause	What to do
Conversions jumped, sales didn’t	Conversion fires on form start, button click or page view; duplicates	Test-submit, check the trigger; count “one” for leads PRACTICE
CR halved overnight, no account changes	Site release: broken form, consent banner over the button, new redirect, slow script	Submit the form on mobile yourself; compare release dates with the drop
Good CTR, low CR	The ad promises what the page doesn’t show; price or offer surprises	Message match audit (p. 11); show the price/offer in the ad
Many leads, few customers	Optimizing for form fills; too easy a form; broad match + AI Max on informational queries	Bid on qualified leads (p. 10); add a qualifying question
Mobile CR far below desktop	Slow LCP, layout shifts, form hard to fill, sticky elements cover the button	Field CWV by device (p. 14); watch mobile recordings
Meta traffic converts much worse than Google	In-app browser, cold audience, page built for search intent	Test in the in-app browser; separate page for social (p. 15)
PMax / AI Max traffic lands on blog or odd pages	Final URL expansion is on	Exclude URLs or turn it off for lead gen (p. 16)
Ads show far more than CRM	Different attribution windows; view-through; duplicates; spam leads	Reconcile on the same period; filter spam (p. 9)
Test “won”, results didn’t follow	Stopped too early, too little traffic, novelty effect, season changed	Sample size first (p. 19); run full weeks
CR up, revenue down	Cheaper products sell more, fewer upsells, lower lead quality	Judge by profit or cost per qualified lead (p. 8)
Quality Score “below average” for landing page	Page not relevant to the keyword, hard navigation, mismatched expectations	Page per theme; keyword in headline; clear next step GOOGLE

20 MINUTES THAT STOP SILENT LOSSES

What to check first

Where	What to check	Recommendation
Google Ads → Conversions	Primary actions, trigger, counting, value	Only real business actions as Primary; leads — count “one”
Enhanced conversions	On or off, which data is sent	On, hashed email/phone from the form GOOGLE
Offline / CRM import	Are qualified and won leads sent back	A separate action per CRM stage GOOGLE
Landing pages report	Where spend lands, mobile-friendly click rate, CR by page	Top-10 pages by cost reviewed monthly
Final URL expansion	On in PMax / AI Max? Which pages get traffic	Exclusions or off for lead gen PRACTICE
Tracking template	Static URLs, missing `{lpurl}`, broken redirects	Templates built on `{lpurl}`
Page on mobile	First screen, button visible, form usable, consent banner	Fill the form on a real phone every month
Speed (field data)	LCP, INP, CLS of the landing pages	Search Console → Core Web Vitals; PageSpeed “real users”
Form	Number of fields, required ones, errors, spam protection	Remove fields nobody uses in sales
Thank-you step	What happens after submit, what the user sees	Next step: calendar, call time, what to prepare
Meta / Microsoft	CAPI with `event_id`; UET with enhanced conversions	Same events and values as in Google
Consent Mode	Consent default before tags, banner doesn’t block the CTA	Consent Mode v2 in EEA/UK traffic GOOGLE

Why this comes first

None of these needs a new design, yet this is where budget leaks most often: false conversions that train bidding, traffic sent to the wrong page, and a form that doesn’t work on half the phones.

CHANGES THAT AFFECT YOUR LANDING PAGES

What changed in 2024–2026

When	What happened	What it means for you
03.2024	INP replaced FID as the Core Web Vitals responsiveness metric GOOGLE	Heavy JavaScript and tag stacks now count against the page
2025	AI Max for Search campaigns: search term matching, text customization and Final URL expansion in one setting GOOGLE	Google picks the landing page more often than you — control it (p. 16)
2025–2026	Performance Max: more reporting (channel and asset level), URL exclusions and page feeds GOOGLE	You can see and steer which pages PMax uses
2026	Enhanced conversions for web and for leads combined into one setting. Sources give different months (April vs June) GOOGLE	Check the toggle in your account; send hashed form data
15.06.2026	New offline conversion and enhanced conversions for leads integrations go through the Data Manager API, not the Google Ads API GOOGLE	CRM integrations built before need a check with your developer or connector
2026	Less browser-side signal on iOS; Meta pushes Conversions API with deduplication PRACTICE	Server events are no longer optional for Meta traffic (p. 15)
2026	AI Overviews and AI Mode carry ads; queries get longer and more conversational PRACTICE	Pages must answer the full question, not just repeat a keyword

The key takeaway

Platforms automate targeting, bids and even the choice of landing page. Three levers stay in your hands: the quality of the conversion signal, the economics (target by margin or qualified lead) and the page people land on. This guide is about the last two working together.

WHY THE PAGE DECIDES PROFITABILITY

Why conversion rate is money

With the same budget and the same cost per click, conversion rate is the multiplier of everything. It also sets how much you can afford to pay per click — and in an auction, the advertiser who can pay more wins more traffic.

E-commerce: same budget, different CR CALCULATION

Line	Before	After +25% CR
Budget / CPC / clicks	$10,000 / $1.00 / 10,000	$10,000 / $1.00 / 10,000
Conversion rate → orders	2.0% → 200	2.5% → 250
AOV $120 → revenue / ROAS	$24,000 / 2.4	$30,000 / 3.0
Gross profit at 40% margin − ad spend	**−$400**	**+$2,000**

Lead gen: CR up, quality down CALCULATION

Line	Before	Easier form
Budget / CPC / clicks	$10,000 / $4 / 2,500	$10,000 / $4 / 2,500
CR → leads / CPL	4.0% → 100 / $100	5.2% → 130 / $77
Lead → qualified	30% → 30	22% → 29
Cost per qualified lead	**$333**	**$345**

How much you can pay per click CALCULATION

> **Max CPC = CR × max CPA**

Max CPA $60: at 2% CR you can pay $1.20 per click, at 3% — $1.80. The same keyword becomes profitable at a higher position.

The lesson

The second table looks like a 30% CR win in the ad dashboard and is a loss in the CRM. That's why the final metric of a CRO test for paid traffic is profit or cost per qualified lead, never CR alone.

WITHOUT THIS, CRO OPTIMIZES A WRONG NUMBER

Conversion tracking you can trust

A new landing page is the most common moment tracking breaks: a new form, a new thank-you step, a new tag. Smart Bidding then learns from false conversions and shifts budget to where the noise is loudest.

A real failure pattern PRACTICE

After new landing pages went live, a conversion action fired when someone *started* the form, not when they submitted it. Bidding chased form starts; real leads fell. The fix: correct the trigger, loosen the tCPA target while data recovered and exclude the broken period from learning (data exclusions).

- [ ] Primary = only real leads, calls, purchases
- [ ] Trigger = successful submit, not click or start
- [ ] Leads counted “one”, purchases “every”
- [ ] Purchase value = order value, same currency
- [ ] Thank-you reload doesn’t fire again
- [ ] Enhanced conversions on
- [ ] GCLID / wbraid stored with the lead in CRM
- [ ] Test submit seen in Tag Assistant
- [ ] Same lead count: ads ≈ CRM (±10–20%)
- [ ] Spam leads filtered before counting
- [ ] Calls from ads tracked separately
- [ ] Microsoft UET and Meta CAPI — same events
- [ ] Data exclusion for broken periods
- [ ] Tracking change log kept

When the data broke — what to do in bidding PRACTICE

Situation	Action
Conversions over-counted for some days	Fix the tag, add a data exclusion for those dates, don’t raise targets
Conversions missing for some days	Fix the tag, data exclusion; don’t cut budgets on “zero conversions”
tCPA chokes delivery after the fix	Loosen the target or temporarily use Maximize conversions

TEACH THE ALGORITHM WHAT A GOOD LEAD IS

Lead quality: CRM data back to the ads

A landing page can always get more form fills — make it easier, add a discount, remove the phone field. Whether that's a win only the CRM knows. Send CRM outcomes back to Google Ads, and both bidding and your tests start to work on quality.

Method	How it works	When to use
Enhanced conversions for leads	Form sends hashed email/phone; later you upload CRM status matched on that data GOOGLE	Google recommends starting here if you have no offline import yet
Offline conversion import	CRM stores the GCLID with the lead and uploads stages with time and value GOOGLE	You already store click IDs; long B2B cycles
Both	Better matching + full CRM outcomes PRACTICE	Mature lead gen with sales team

Which stages to send GOOGLE

01 A separate conversion action per stage

Lead → qualified (MQL/SQL) → opportunity → won. Each with its own value.

02 Optimize for the deepest stage with enough volume

Qualified or converted leads as Primary; the raw form submit as Secondary for diagnostics.

03 Give stages a value

For example, qualified = average deal × win rate. Then you can switch to value-based bidding.

Quality signals on the page PRACTICE

One qualifying question (budget, company size, service area) costs a little CR and saves sales time. Tag every lead with the form version so you can compare SQL rate per variant.

Check with your developer GOOGLE

Since 15.06.2026 new offline and enhanced-conversions-for-leads integrations use the Data Manager API. Connectors and CRM apps usually handle this — confirm yours does.

THE CHEAPEST LIFT IN PAID TRAFFIC

Message match: the page keeps the ad's promise

People click an ad because of a specific promise. If the first screen doesn't repeat it in the same words, they go back to the results. This is also one of the factors Google names for landing page experience: does the page meet the expectations set by the ad GOOGLE.

Match audit: one row per top ad group

Element	In the ad	On the first screen	Match?
Query / intent	"emergency boiler repair"	Headline about repair today	yes / no
Offer	"Free diagnostic visit"	Same words near the button	yes / no
Price / number	"From $89"	Same price, same conditions	yes / no
Proof	"4.9 ★ 1,200 reviews"	Same rating visible	yes / no
Action	"Book online"	Booking, not a generic contact form	yes / no

What practice reports PRACTICE

Agencies report double-digit CR lifts from putting the same offer in the ad and on the page, and dedicated PPC pages beating the homepage. Methods are rarely disclosed — treat the size of the lift as a direction, not a forecast.

Where it backfires PRACTICE

A page per feature or per keyword gave cleaner match but no better conversion: thin traffic was split across too many variants. Match the buyer's decision and the ad group theme, not every keyword.

Use it in both directions

Sometimes the right fix is the ad, not the page. Recordings showing people hunting for something the ad promised mean the ad oversells. Rewrite the ad to what the page really offers — fewer clicks, more conversions.

5 SECONDS TO DECIDE WHETHER TO STAY

The first screen of a paid landing page

What must be visible without scrolling

PRACTICE

- [ ] Headline = the ad's promise
- [ ] Who it's for and the result, in one line
- [ ] The offer and its conditions
- [ ] One main button with a specific verb
- [ ] One proof: rating, client logos, number
- [ ] Phone number for call-driven niches

What to remove or move down PRACTICE

- [ ] Full site navigation and footer menus
- [ ] Sliders and autoplay video above the offer
- [ ] Pop-ups in the first seconds
- [ ] Two equal buttons with different goals
- [ ] Generic stock photos
- [ ] Chat widget covering the button on mobile

Below the first screen — answer objections in the order people have them

Question in the visitor's head	Block that answers it
Is this for me?	Who it's for / not for; use cases by segment
Does it work?	Cases with numbers, reviews with names, before/after
How much and what's included?	Price or range, packages, what happens after the request
What if it goes wrong?	Guarantee, contract terms, cancellation
What happens next?	3 steps after the form; response time

Landing page experience GOOGLE

Google looks at the usefulness and relevance of information, ease of navigation, the number of links on the page and whether it meets the ad's expectations. Quality Score is a diagnostic, not a target.

Specific beats "100%" PRACTICE

In a published test, a vague "100% privacy" line near the form lowered signups, while a concrete promise about how the email would be used raised them. Specifics reassure; slogans don't.

THE LAST STEP IS WHERE MOST LEADS ARE LOST

Forms: fields, steps and lead quality

Every field must be used by sales. Fewer fields usually raise completion, but not always quality — so judge a form test by cost per qualified lead, not raw submits.

One step or several PRACTICE

Fields	Format	Note
1–3	One step	Steps add little or even lose a bit
4–5	One step; test steps if quality questions are needed	The crossover zone in 2026 benchmarks
6+	Multi-step with a progress bar	Easy questions first, contacts last

What the data says PRACTICE

Classic test: 5 fields converted at 13.4% vs 10% for 9 fields — but collected less qualifying data. A counter-case exists where cutting fields lowered conversion. Big “multi-step wins” often just fix a badly built long form.

Fair test PRACTICE

Same questions and validation in both versions, only the flow differs. Track lead → opportunity rate per version, not only completions.

Form details that cost leads PRACTICE

- [ ] Phone field rejects spaces or “+”
- [ ] Errors shown only after submit
- [ ] Required “Company” for consumers
- [ ] Captcha visible before any field
- [ ] No mobile keyboard types (tel, email)
- [ ] Button text “Submit” instead of the result
- [ ] No autofill attributes
- [ ] Nothing said about what happens next

The thank-you step is part of the funnel

Offer the next step right away: book a time in the calendar, “we’ll call within 15 minutes”, what to prepare for the call. It raises show-up rate and gives you a second, deeper conversion to measure.

PAID TRAFFIC DOESN'T WAIT

Speed and Core Web Vitals for landing pages

Google's own retail research: every second of delay can cut conversions by up to 20%; as mobile load time goes from 1 to 10 seconds, the probability of a bounce grows by 123% GOOGLE. Those are older studies and upper bounds — but the direction hasn't changed.

Metric	Good	What it measures	Usual culprits on landing pages
LCP	≤ 2.5 s	When the main content appears	Huge hero image, slow server, render-blocking fonts and CSS
INP	≤ 200 ms	How fast the page reacts to taps	Tag managers, chat widgets, A/B tools, heavy page builders
CLS	≤ 0.1	Layout jumps	Banners and images without size, late fonts, consent bar

Thresholds — Google Core Web Vitals, measured at the 75th percentile of real users.

Fixes in order of payoff PRACTICE

01 Hero image: compressed, sized, preloaded

WebP/AVIF, width/height set, `fetchpriority="high"`, no lazy-load on the first screen.

02 Audit third-party scripts

Remove tags nobody uses; load chat and heatmaps after interaction or later; one A/B tool, not three.

03 Reserve space for everything that appears late

Consent bar, sticky button, reviews widget. A jump at the moment of a tap = a lost click.

04 Measure by device on field data

Search Console → Core Web Vitals and PageSpeed "what real users experience". Lighthouse is a lab test.

Speed is a bidding advantage CALCULATION

A faster page converts more, and higher CR means a higher affordable CPC (p. 8). That's why speed work pays back twice in paid traffic.

MOST PAID CLICKS, THE WEAKEST CONVERSION

Mobile and in-app browsers

Landing pages usually convert worse on mobile than on desktop even when mobile brings most of the traffic. Social traffic adds another layer: the page opens inside the Facebook or Instagram app, not in Chrome or Safari.

Mobile checklist PRACTICE

- [ ] Button visible on the first screen
- [ ] Tap-to-call for call niches
- [ ] Inputs ≥ 16px so iOS doesn't zoom
- [ ] Sticky CTA doesn't cover form fields
- [ ] Consent bar doesn't hide the button
- [ ] Form tested on a real iPhone and Android

Meta traffic checklist PRACTICE

- [ ] Open the ad link in the Instagram app yourself
- [ ] Pixel + Conversions API, same `event_id`
- [ ] Login / payment works in the in-app browser
- [ ] Page matches the creative, not the search intent
- [ ] Instant Form vs landing page compared on quality
- [ ] UTM on every ad

Search vs social: one page rarely fits both PRACTICE

	Search click	Social click
State	Already looking for a solution	Interrupted, curious, colder
First screen	Answer + offer + button	Continue the creative's story, then the offer
Length	Short is often enough	More proof and explanation
Form	Direct request or booking	Softer step: quiz, calculator, guide

If Meta reports far fewer conversions than the CRM

Before blaming the creative, check the in-app flow and server events. Browser-side signal on iOS keeps shrinking; without Conversions API and deduplication the algorithm sees only part of the results.

WHEN GOOGLE CHOOSES THE LANDING PAGE

AI Max, Performance Max and Final URL expansion

With Final URL expansion, Google can send a click to another page of your domain that it considers more relevant to the query. In Performance Max it is on by default; in Search it comes with AI Max GOOGLE. For a catalogue that can help; for carefully built lead-gen pages it often doesn't.

Business	Setting	Why
E-commerce, large clean catalogue	Expansion on; exclude blog, cart, account, policy pages	Product and category pages can match long queries PRACTICE
Lead gen, services	Off, or page feed / inclusions with service pages only	Each service page carries its own offer and form PRACTICE
Local, call-driven	Off or strict inclusions	Blog and "about" pages don't make calls
Dedicated campaign pages	Off for those campaigns	Practitioners rarely see expansion beat a dedicated page

How to roll out AI Max without losing control PRACTICE

01 One feature at a time

Search term matching first, text customization next, Final URL expansion last — or never for lead gen.

02 Exclusions before launch

URL exclusions at campaign level; inclusions or page feeds where available. Blog, careers, privacy, login — out.

03 Check the tracking template

A static tracking URL without `{lpurl}` overrides the landing page Google picked and breaks expansion.

04 Review where traffic lands weekly

Landing pages and search terms reports; compare CR of expanded URLs with your chosen ones.

Known side effects PRACTICE

Under Final URL expansion, pinned RSA assets may not be respected, and headlines can be generated from the landing page. Make sure every indexed page you allow is fit to receive paid traffic.

WHERE PEOPLE ACTUALLY DROP OFF

Finding leaks: GA4 and Microsoft Clarity

Numbers show where the problem is; recordings show why. Use both before writing a single hypothesis.

Report	What to look at	What it tells you
GA4 → Landing page	Paid sessions, engagement rate, key events by page and device	Which pages leak the most money
GA4 → Funnel exploration	Page → form start → submit → thank-you	Which step loses people
Google Ads → Landing pages	Cost, CR, mobile speed score per URL	Where spend lands vs where it converts
Clarity → Heatmaps	Clicks and scroll depth for paid traffic only	Whether the offer and form are even seen
Clarity → Rage clicks	Repeated fast clicks in one area MICROSOFT	Something looks clickable or broken
Clarity → Dead clicks	Clicks with no response MICROSOFT	People expect a link, image zoom or price
Form analytics	Field focus, errors, time per field	Which field makes people quit

Case: the ad was the problem

MICROSOFT

A SaaS team saw rage and dead clicks on paid landing pages: the ads set expectations the page didn't meet. They rewrote the ads — the case reports +12% paid conversions and −20% bounce rate.

Case: CTA ignored MICROSOFT

An agency found ~5% dead clicks and heatmaps showing ad visitors skipping the main CTA. A new landing page brought 20+ leads a month at the same spend. Vendor-published cases — directionally useful.

Filter to paid traffic

Organic visitors read blogs; paid visitors came for an offer. Segment recordings and heatmaps by UTM or gclid, by device, and by campaign — otherwise you design for the wrong audience.

FROM OBSERVATION TO A TEST WORTH RUNNING

Hypotheses and prioritization

> **Because we saw [data], we believe [change] for [segment] will cause [effect on metric]. We'll know when [primary metric] moves by [X] over [N weeks].**

Where good hypotheses come from PRACTICE

Source	Example observation	Hypothesis
Message match audit	Ad says "free visit", page doesn't mention it	Offer in headline and near the button
Clarity recordings	Mobile users scroll past the form looking for price	Price range above the form
Form analytics	40% quit at "Company size"	Move it to step 2 or remove
Sales calls	Every second lead asks about contract length	Answer "no lock-in" on the first screen
Search terms	Many "near me" and "today" queries	Location and same-day availability on top

Score and sort PRACTICE

Criterion (1–5)	Question
Impact	How much of the paid traffic and money does it touch?
Evidence	How many independent sources point to it (data, recordings, sales)?
Ease	Hours to build and to check it doesn't break tracking
Testability	Is there enough traffic to read the result (p. 19)?

Don't test bugs

A broken form on Android, a 6-second LCP or a missing price in the ad's promise are fixes, not experiments. Ship them and note the date in the change log.

Evolve, don't redesign

Step-by-step changes on the current page beat a big-bang redesign: you keep what works and learn what moved the numbers.

MOST PAID LANDING PAGES HAVE LESS TRAFFIC THAN A TEST NEEDS

How much traffic an A/B test needs

Visitors needed per variant to detect a relative lift with 95% confidence and 80% power. Approximation: $n \approx 16 \times (1 - p) \div (p \times \text{lift}^2)$.

Baseline CR	Detect +10%	Detect +20%	Detect +30%
2%	~78,000	~20,000	~8,700
3%	~52,000	~13,000	~5,700
5%	~30,000	~7,600	~3,400
10%	~14,000	~3,600	~1,600

CALCULATION Visitors per variant. Use a proper calculator for the final plan.

Rules of thumb PRACTICE

Practitioners name 100 to 350+ conversions per variant as a floor. Run full weeks (at least 1–2 business cycles), decide the stop rule before the start, don't peek and stop at the first "significant" day.

Not enough traffic PRACTICE

Only 2 variants. Bigger, bolder changes (offer, page structure), not button colours. A closer metric (form start, booking step). Pool similar pages into one test. Or test sequentially.

Sequential test (before / after) — how to make it honest PRACTICE

01 One change, then hands off

No bid strategy, budget or ad changes in the same period.

02 Same length, same days of week

2–4 weeks before vs 2–4 weeks after.

03 Check the season

Compare with the same weeks last year and with campaigns you didn't touch.

SPLIT THE TRAFFIC WHERE THE MONEY IS SPENT

Running landing page tests inside the ad platforms

An A/B tool on the site splits visitors; an ad-platform experiment splits auctions and shows the effect on cost per conversion. For paid traffic the second answer is usually the one you need.

Google Ads custom experiment GOOGLE

01 **Campaigns → Experiments → + → Custom experiment**

Custom experiments are used for landing page tests in Search and Display campaigns.

02 **Change only the final URL**

Keep keywords, ads, bids and budgets identical, otherwise you test several things at once.

03 **Split 50 / 50**

Google recommends 50% for the cleanest comparison; cookie-based split for a consistent user experience.

04 **Run until the experiment shows significance**

Plan by the table on p. 19; Smart Bidding needs time to settle in both arms.

Platform / campaign	Tool
Google Search, Display	Custom experiment with a different final URL GOOGLE
Performance Max	Optimization experiments (e.g. Final URL expansion on vs off) GOOGLE
Microsoft Ads	Experiments with a traffic split, same logic as Google MICROSOFT
Meta	A/B test in Ads Manager: two ads identical except the website URL META

Pitfalls

Both pages must fire the same conversion action. Don’t edit the base campaign during the test — changes may not sync to the experiment arm. And remember: a page that wins on CR can lose on qualified leads; read the CRM before applying.

USEFUL AS A SANITY CHECK, DANGEROUS AS A TARGET

Landing page benchmarks and how to read them

Segment	Median landing page CR
All industries	6.6%
SaaS	3.8%
E-commerce	4.2%
Professional services	~6%
Financial services	~8.3%
Events and entertainment	12.3%
“Good” threshold used by practitioners	10%+

PRACTICE Unbounce Conversion Benchmark Report, as cited by 2026 sources; underlying data Q4 2024. No newer edition found as of November 2026.

Why your number differs

Traffic source can matter more than industry: paid search, paid social and organic convert very differently on the same page. A “conversion” also means different things — a newsletter signup vs a demo request.

Better benchmarks

Your own history by page, device and campaign; the same weeks last year; your best page as the target for others. External medians only tell you whether you’re far off.

Metrics to track per landing page PRACTICE

Metric	Why
CR by device and campaign	Averages hide a broken mobile version
Cost per qualified lead / profit	The real result of the page
Form start → submit rate	Separates page problems from form problems
Field LCP / INP / CLS	Speed regressions after releases

A RHYTHM THAT KEEPS PPC AND CRO IN SYNC

Weekly and monthly cadence, change log

When	What to do
Daily (5 min)	Conversions arrived? Any spike or zero? Form works on mobile after releases
Weekly	Test status vs plan; landing pages and search terms report; where AI Max / PMax sent traffic; 10 paid-session recordings
Every 2 weeks	Lead quality from CRM by campaign and page version; spam check
Monthly	Reconcile ads vs GA4 vs CRM; field Core Web Vitals; update the hypothesis backlog; one decision per finished test
Quarterly	Message match audit of top ad groups; offer and pricing review; new page or section for the biggest leak

Change log

Date	Page / campaign	What changed	Expected effect	Result
03.11	/boiler-repair	Offer “free visit” added to headline	CR +15%, same SQL rate	CR +11%, SQL ≈

Who owns what

The PPC specialist owns traffic and conversion setup; the CRO side owns the page and tests; both share one log and one metric. Most “the ads stopped working” stories are a page release nobody told the PPC team about. The first row is an illustrative example.

AN HONEST LOOK AT THE CONTESTED QUESTIONS

Where sources disagree — and how to choose

Question	Positions	Our approach
Fewer form fields	Fewer fields = more leads vs fewer fields = worse leads; a counter-case where cutting fields lowered CR	Remove what sales doesn't use; keep one qualifying question; judge by cost per qualified lead
Multi-step forms	Vendors claim +14% to +86%; others say wins come from fixing bad forms	Steps from ~6 fields; same questions in both versions
Page per keyword	Tighter match lifts CR vs thin traffic kills tests	Page per ad group theme and buyer decision
Final URL expansion	Finds relevant pages in big catalogues vs dilutes lead-gen pages	On with exclusions for e-commerce; off or strict inclusions for lead gen
Minimum for A/B tests	100, 350, 1,000 conversions per variant; some say 30,000 users	Calculate from your CR and the smallest lift that matters (p. 19)
Sequential vs A/B	Only randomized tests count vs before/after is fine for small sites	A/B when traffic allows; before/after with seasonality control otherwise
Navigation on landing page	Remove it vs keep trust links	Remove the menu; keep logo, phone, policy and reviews links
Price on the page	Price filters out leads vs price filters out bad leads	Show a range or "from" price for most services; test for high-ticket

The choosing rule

If advice contradicts the platform's own current help article, the help article wins on settings. On page and offer questions no rule replaces a test on your traffic, judged by money in the CRM rather than a dashboard metric.

WHAT EATS BUDGET MOST OFTEN

Twelve mistakes we see most often

01 Ads to the homepage

No offer, ten links, no clear next step.

02 Counting form starts

Bidding learns from people who didn't submit.

03 No CRM feedback

Cheap leads win, customers don't.

04 Ad promise missing on the page

The visitor goes back to the results.

05 Page and bids changed in one week

No way to know what worked.

06 Stopping tests early

Day-3 "winners" that disappear.

01 Button colour tests on small traffic

Too small to ever reach significance.

02 Expansion left on for lead gen

Paid clicks land on the blog.

03 One page for search and social

Two audiences, one compromise.

04 Desktop-only review

Mobile breaks unnoticed.

05 Tag pile-up

Slow INP from scripts nobody reads.

06 Judging by CR alone

More conversions, less money.

The essentials in one sentence

A conversion you can trust, CRM quality back in the ads, a page that keeps the ad's promise on a fast mobile screen, control over where Google sends the click, and tests sized to your traffic and judged by money.

PRINT AND FILL IN

Your numbers: economics and test plan

A · What +1 point of conversion rate is worth

Line	Example	Page 1	Page 2
1. Monthly paid clicks to the page	2,500		
2. Current CR	4%		
3. Lead → qualified rate (or margin for e-commerce)	30%		
4. Value of a qualified lead (avg deal × win rate)	$900		
5. Value of +1 pp CR = line 1 × 1% × line 3 × line 4	**$6,750 / month**		
6. Max CPC = line 2 × max cost per lead	4% × $100 = $4		

B · Test plan

Hypothesis	Metric	Visitors / variant (p. 19)	Weeks	Result	Decision
Example: offer in headline	SQL / visitor	7,600	4	+11%	apply

How to read it

Line 5 is the monthly budget a CRO effort on this page is worth. If the traffic needed per variant is more than two months of clicks, test a bigger change or a closer metric instead of a small tweak.

Checklist: your paid traffic lands on a page that converts

- [ ] Primary conversions = real leads and sales
- [ ] Trigger on successful submit; leads count "one"
- [ ] Enhanced conversions on
- [ ] CRM stages sent back to Google Ads
- [ ] Bidding on qualified leads or value
- [ ] Ads ≈ CRM reconciled monthly
- [ ] Dedicated page per ad group theme
- [ ] Headline = the ad's promise
- [ ] One main action, no site menu
- [ ] Form fields used by sales only
- [ ] Field LCP ≤ 2.5 s, INP ≤ 200 ms, CLS ≤ 0.1
- [ ] Form tested on a real phone and in-app browser
- [ ] Final URL expansion controlled
- [ ] Hypotheses scored, sample size calculated
- [ ] Tests judged by profit or cost per SQL
- [ ] Change log kept

Want us to review your landing pages and ads together?

ConvertLab360 runs Google, Microsoft and Meta ads and the pages they land on as one system: tracking, lead quality, message match, speed and tests. We'll review your top landing pages against this guide for free and show you the 3–5 most expensive leaks.

Get a free audit → convertlab360.com

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Write in English, Ukrainian or Russian — we reply within 24 hours.

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