Perfecting Your Page:

Can donation page optimization boost online giving?

May 9, 2008

Donordigital
ONLINE FUNDRAISING • ADVOCACY • ADVERTISING

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"Optimization to us feels like the new cash cow: the results last longer than a bump we'd see from a discrete marketing buy, and it doesn't require us to increase our outbound email, which is a struggle for us." - Steve Daigneault, Managing Director, Internet Communications, Amnesty International USA

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Introduction and Overview

Online fundraising has become a growing source of income for many non-profits over the past 10 years. But while organizations typically spend lots of time spent developing clever, creative, and inspirational online content, they often overlook more mundane aspects of online appeals that can make a big difference in converting advocates, subscribers, and other supporters into donors. Specifically, while email and web page copy may persuade people to "click to donate now," ***less than half of those who click through to the donation page (and often just a few percent) typically complete the donation transaction***.

Marketers are increasingly turning their attention and resources to landing page optimization. For example, both Marketing Sherpa and Marketing Experiments have published reports recommending increasing donate button size and using more eye-catching colors to increase conversion rates (i.e., the percentage of people who complete an action after navigating to the landing page). However, as most case studies have focused on e-commerce sites, Amnesty International USA decided to find out whether similar changes to donation landing pages could increase conversion to donate as well.

Donation page optimization: Summary of learning

♦ <u>Size DOES matter</u>: Bigger donate buttons helped convert more donors

♦ <u>Color can matter too</u>: A vividly colored donation button <u>can</u> strongly boost donation page conversion…but seasonality and color choice influenced whether it did

♦ <u>Less is more</u>: Removing unnecessary fields from the personal information form significantly increased conversion to donate

♦ <u>Remind people (nicely) why they want to donate</u>: Polite header copy ("Please make a tax-deductible gift…") followed by short appeal copy yielded better conversion than a more forceful call-to-action ("Donate Now! Help us…") without appeal copy

♦ <u>No need to be demanding</u>: Using firmer language on the donation button ("Donate Now" instead of "Submit") did not produce statistically higher conversions

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Report Contents:

Background and objectives

In partnership with Donordigital, Amnesty International USA embarked on a project aimed at improving donation landing page conversions before the important end-of-year fundraising season in order to increase total donations. We teamed with Optimost to perform this testing, as their software can facilitate rigorous multivariate[1] testing on nearly every conceivable aspect of a donation landing page, as well as track whether conversions to donate are statistically different from current levels. As Amnesty International USA drives traffic to its online donation pages from multiple sources (e-mails, Google search, and website links), we tested donation landing pages coming from each of these.

Methodology

1) For each test, Donordigital and Amnesty International USA consulted with Optimost to understand the maximum number of page components (variables) we could test at one time[2], yet still produce statistically significant results.[3] The amount of traffic to the pages was the main limiting factor.
2) Bearing in mind these limits, and considering industry suggestions on "hot" variables for testing, we chose variables we believed could significantly improve donation page conversion rates.
3) Combinations of these variables were then vetted and tested on individual landing pages.
4) Optimost tracked results on its password-protected server, where we could view them in real time and compare the "challenger" pages to the "baseline" landing page.
5) Donordigital analyzed results and, with Optimost, made recommendations for future testing. Due to sample size constraints, we focused on the "variable" level results (individual landing pages which combined multiple variables did not typically yield high enough sample sizes to be statistically different from the baseline).

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[1] In this context, multivariate testing is a process by which more than one component of a web page may be tested in a live environment. It can be thought of in simple terms as numerous split tests or A/B tests performed on a single page at the same time. While A/B tests are usually performed to determine the better of two content variations, multivariate testing can theoretically test the effectiveness of limitless combinations. The only limits on the number of combinations and the number of variables in a multivariate test are the amount of time it will take to get a statistically valid sample of visitors and computational power.

[2] Optimost utilizes client estimates of expected levels of traffic paired with the expected page conversion rate to arrive at sample size projections. Ideally each landing page tested would generate a minimum sample size of n = 50 actions (i.e., conversions).

[3] We assessed statistical significance at the 90% confidence level (i.e., any test with a 90%+ confidence was considered statistically significant) and directional significance at the 80% confidence level.

Test 1: Email appeal landing page

The two variables (page components) we evaluated in the email landing page test were (A) header and (B) "donate" button. Each of these variables had three possible "values" as indicated below:

Table 1.1: Email Landing Page Variables		
Test 1: Email Landing Page	**Variable A: Header***	**Variable B: Donate Button Color/Text**
Value 1	*"Polite" + Appeal Copy, Black*	*Grey "Submit"*
Value 2	**Forceful Call-to-Action, Red**	**Red "Submit"**
Value 3	**Forceful Call-to-Action, Black**	**Red "Donate Now!"**

Values in italics denote those present on the "baseline" landing page used prior to testing.
* Polite header: "Please make a tax-deductible gift today to stop the abhorrent practice of extraordinary rendition" followed by appeal copy. Call to action header: "Donate Now! Help us end extraordinary rendition!"

As each combination of variable values was tested, a total of 8 "challenger" landing pages were evaluated in addition to the "baseline" page. *(See Appendix 1.2 for more details)*

Test 1 Results:
- The vivid red submission buttons performed significantly better than the baseline.
  - The "Donate Now!" language performed only slightly better than "Submit."
- Replacing the "polite" header plus appeal copy with a more forceful call-to-action header actually *diminished* conversion rates by up to 22%.
  - While the email copy must persuade supporters to click-through to the donation page, these findings indicate that some short appeal copy on the donation page itself can be persuasive in the final decision to donate.
  - While changing the baseline header to a call-to-action header had a negative impact, the red call-to-action header performed somewhat better than the black one.
  - In following tests, we made an effort not to combine multiple changes into one variable as was done here (tone, additional copy, and color), so we could isolate the impact of each change.
- Other takeaways: The best performing challengers (number 1 and number 4, see table 1.2) lifted donations by roughly 22% (and +$3K) versus the baseline!

Table 1.3: Email Landing Page Results			
Baseline	**Challenger**	**Conversion Rate % Change**	**Significantly Different?**
Submit	DONATE NOW!	**+29%**	**Yes**
Submit	SUBMIT	**+25%**	**Yes**
"Polite" Header* + Appeal Copy (Black)	**Call-to-action Header** (Black)**	**-22%**	**Yes**
"Polite" Header* + Appeal Copy (Black)	**Call-to-action Header** (Red)**	**-12%**	**Directionally**

* Polite header: "Please make a tax-deductible gift today to stop the abhorrent practice of extraordinary rendition" followed by appeal copy.
** Call to action header: "Donate Now! Help us end extraordinary rendition!"

Test 2: Main donation landing page

The five variables (page components) we tested were (A) headline, (B) intro text format, (C) gift string order, (D) presence of "title" and "suffix" fields on personal information form, and (E) size/color of the donation button. *(See Appendix 2.2 for all variable combinations tested)*

Test 2: Main Donation Page	Variable A: Headline*	Variable B: Intro Text Format	Variable C: Gift String Order	Variable D: Title & Suffix** on Personal Info Form	Variable E: Donation Button Size/Color
Table 2.1: Main Donation Landing Page Variables					
Value 1	*Original*	*Paragraph*	*High to Low*	*Yes*	*Small/Grey*
Value 2	**Easy to donate**	**Bullet points**	**Low to High**	**No**	**Big/Red**

Values in italics denote those present on the "baseline" landing page used prior to testing.
*Original = Donate to Amnesty International, Easy to donate = Donate in just 60 seconds
**Title = Mr., Mrs., Dr., etc.; Suffix = Jr., Sr., etc.

Test 2 Results:
♦ Removing just the title and suffix input boxes from the donor information form generated over a 30% lift in our conversion rate.
♦ Vivid red submission buttons performed significantly <u>worse</u> than the baseline[4].
   o As this result is contradictory to the email landing page test, it underscores the importance of testing variables within various situations and populations.
♦ The remaining variables did not have a significant impact on conversion rate.
♦ Other takeaways: While reversing the gift string order slightly increased conversion, we do not have donation data to assess whether average gift amount was affected by this change.
   o All of our future testing partnerships with Optimost will track this donation data in addition to conversion rates.

Baseline	Challenger	Conversion Rate % Change	Significantly Different?
Table 2.2: Main Donation Landing Page Results			
Title and Suffix in Personal Info Form	**No Title or Suffix in Personal Info Form**	**+31%**	**Yes**
Submit	SUBMIT	**-18%**	**Yes**
High to Low Gift String	**Low to High Gift String**	**+6%**	**No**
Intro Copy- Paragraph Format	**Intro Copy- Bullet Point Format**	**+2%**	**No**
"Donate to Amnesty International" Header	**"Donate in just 60 seconds" Header**	**-1%**	**No**

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[4] As this finding contradicts not only our email landing page test results, but also conventional wisdom in this field, we hypothesized why this result occurred. One convincing explanation from Optimost is that while the color red psychologically draws attention and heightens urgency, it could also raise anxiety (or mean "stop"). Because this test was run just prior to year-end, when donation traffic increases (See Appendix 2.3), it is likely that many people who visited this online donation page during this time were not well-acquainted with Amnesty International, and that these individuals may have been "spooked" from donating by the inclusion of this unfamiliar-looking submission button. Corroborating this hypothesis, preliminary results of a retest in progress indicate a 6% lift for this landing page utilizing the <u>red</u> button.

Test 3: Google search landing page

The three variables (page components) we tested were presence of intro copy about the source of AIUSA's funding, color of the donation submission button, and presence of a 2nd VeriSign logo by the "donate" button. *(See Appendix 3.2 for all variable combinations tested)*

Table 3.1: Search Landing Page Variables			
Test 3: Google "Search" Landing Page	**Variable A: Funding Source Copy***	**Variable B: "Donate Now!" Button color**	**Variable C: 2nd VeriSign™ Security Logo Under Donate Button**
Value 1	*Yes*	*Red*	*No*
Value 2	**No**	**Green**	**Yes**
Value 3	**-**	**Turquoise**	**-**

Values in italics denote those present on the "baseline" landing page used prior to testing.
* Funding source copy reads: "Amnesty depends on the generosity of individuals like you to fund our life-saving work. To maintain our impartiality, Amnesty does not accept any money from governments."

Test 3 Results:
♦ Not all button colors are created equal (for successful donor conversion).
- o The vivid green donate button performed directionally better than the red baseline button (+22%).
  - ▪ Green may psychologically indicate "go" to the supporter.
- o However, the turquoise button performed directionally worse than the baseline (-13%).

♦ The security of transactions or impartiality of funding sources are not at the forefront of donor conversions.
- o Removing 2nd VeriSign seal by the donation button did not help or hurt conversion rate.

Chart 3.2: Search Landing Page Results			
Baseline	**Challenger**	**Conversion Rate % Change**	**Significantly Different?**
DONATE NOW! (red)	DONATE NOW! (green)	**+22%**	**Directionally**
DONATE NOW! (red)	DONATE NOW! (blue)	**-13%**	**Directionally**
VeriSign Secured — ABOUT SSL CERTIFICATES	VeriSign Secured — ABOUT SSL CERTIFICATES **x 2**	**+6%**	**No**
Funding source copy*	**No funding source copy**	**+5%**	**No**

* Funding source copy reads: "Amnesty depends on the generosity of individuals like you to fund our life-saving work. To maintain our impartiality, Amnesty does not accept any money from governments."

Key testing takeaways
♦   Tiny changes to your donation page can have a huge impact on conversions, but you won't know until you test!
♦   Apparently size does matter: similar to the industry learning that large font is more eye-catching, bigger donate buttons helped our client to convert more donors.
♦   A little color goes a long way, but test to see which colors work best with your supporters and on which landing pages.
♦   Remove as many fields as possible from the personal information form.   Amnesty International loses little quality information about its supporters by removing the title and suffix fields, and in return receives much stronger conversion rates.
♦   Seasonality can play a role in who is visiting your donation page – and hence, how familiar visitors are with your organization and your donation process -- so take this into consideration when planning tests and/or potential changes to donation pages.

How to get started with testing
Make sure these test results apply for you! While certain factors increased donation page conversion among AIUSA's supporters, results from your organizations' supporters may differ, so testing is paramount before rolling out any changes. Below are some guidelines to keep in mind when starting the landing page testing conversation:

♦   Multivariate testing:
   o   You'll need an outside software vendor, and a relatively steady stream of traffic with good conversion rates for this testing to produce actionable results.
      ▪   Companies such as Optimost or Widemile provide software that makes it relatively easy to track test results in real-time; however, cost will be a deterrent for many nonprofits.
      ▪   Google's Website Optimizer is a free alternative for organizations using Google AdWords; however, unless you're very research and analytics savvy, you will need a consultant to help you implement tests and analyze results.
   o   Start small: choose only a few variables to test, with two (or three) values for each so that you generate meaningful results in a relatively short period of time.
♦   A/B testing:
   o   Even if you can't afford (or don't have enough traffic) to do multivariate testing, you can still do A/B (split sample) testing on your big ideas.
♦   General:
   o   Don't test multiple values (e.g., size and text) in one page component (variable) - you won't be able to tease out how each one is influencing the results.
   o   Track donation amounts in conjunction with conversion to evaluate impact.
   o   Donordigital and other consulting firms can help your organization determine how to best implement tests or analyze results...just give us a call to get started.
   o   Plus, check out the additional resources section below for more ideas!

Additional Resources:
The Advantages of Multivariable Testing: Optimost explains how to do A/B testing, and how multivariate testing can deliver more robust results.

Improving Conversion 50-60% by Applying Continuity and Congruence: Marketing Experiments explores key principles of communication for landing pages.

7 rules for landing page optimization: Jonathan Mendez' "Optimize and Prophesize" blog lays out some basic elements that drive landing page performance.

Ten Common Landing Page Mistakes: Widemile's landing page mistakes to avoid.

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Appendix

Appendix 1.1: Email donation landing page (baseline)

Appendix 1.2: Test 1 combinations of variables tested

Test 1: Email Landing Page	Variable A: Header*	Variable B: Donate Button Color/Text
Baseline	*"Polite" + Appeal Copy, Black*	*Grey "Submit"*
Challenger 1	*"Polite" + Appeal Copy, Black*	Red "Submit"
Challenger 2	Short Call-to-action, Black	Red "Submit"
Challenger 3	Short Call-to-action, Red	Red "Submit"
Challenger 4	*"Polite" + Appeal Copy, Black*	Red "Donate Now!"
Challenger 5	Short Call-to-action, Black	Red "Donate Now!"
Challenger 6	Short Call-to-action, Red	Red "Donate Now!"
Challenger 7	Short Call-to-action, Black	*Grey "Submit"*
Challenger 8	Short Call-to-action, Red	*Grey "Submit"*

Values in italics denote those present on the "baseline" landing page used prior to testing.
* Baseline: "Please make a tax-deductible gift today to stop the abhorrent practice of extraordinary rendition" followed by appeal copy. Call-to-action challenger: "Donate Now! Help us end extraordinary rendition!"

Appendix 2.1: Main donate landing page (baseline)
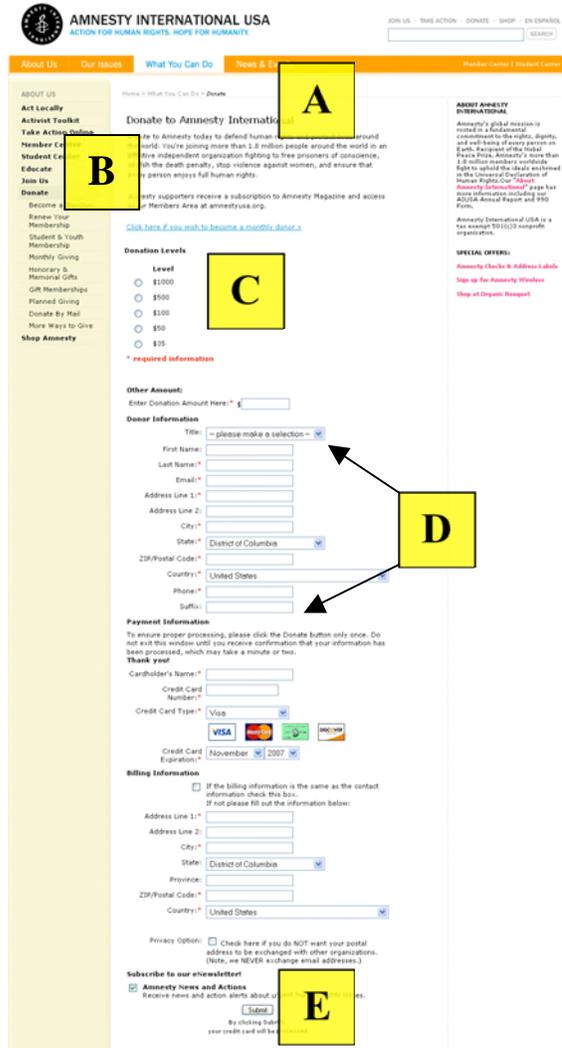


Appendix 2.2: Test 2 combinations of variables tested

Test 2: Main Donation Page	Variable A: Headline*	Variable B: Intro Text Format	Variable C: Gift String Order	Variable D: Title & Suffix on Personal Info Form	Variable E: Donation Button Size/Color
Baseline (25)	*Original*	*Paragraph*	*High to Low*	*Yes*	*Small/Grey*
Challenger 26	New	*Paragraph*	*High to Low*	*Yes*	*Small/Grey*
Challenger 27	New	Bullet pts	*High to Low*	*Yes*	Big/Red
Challenger 28	*Original*	Bullet pts	*High to Low*	No	*Small/Grey*
Challenger 29	*Original*	*Paragraph*	*High to Low*	No	Big/Red
Challenger 30	*Original*	Bullet pts	Low to High	*Yes*	*Small/Grey*
Challenger 31	*Original*	*Paragraph*	Low to High	No	Big/Red
Challenger 32	New	Bullet pts	Low to High	No	*Small/Grey*
Challenger 33	New	Bullet pts	Low to High	No	Big/Red

Values in italics denote those present on the "baseline" landing page used prior to testing.
*Original = Donate to Amnesty International, New = Donate in just 60 seconds

♦ This time-series data chart demonstrates how level of traffic to the Amnesty International site increased significantly in the weeks leading up to the calendar year end (labeled "holiday season"), and then abruptly decreased again after the 1st of the calendar year (labeled "post-holiday season").

Seasonal Effect on Landing Page Traffic
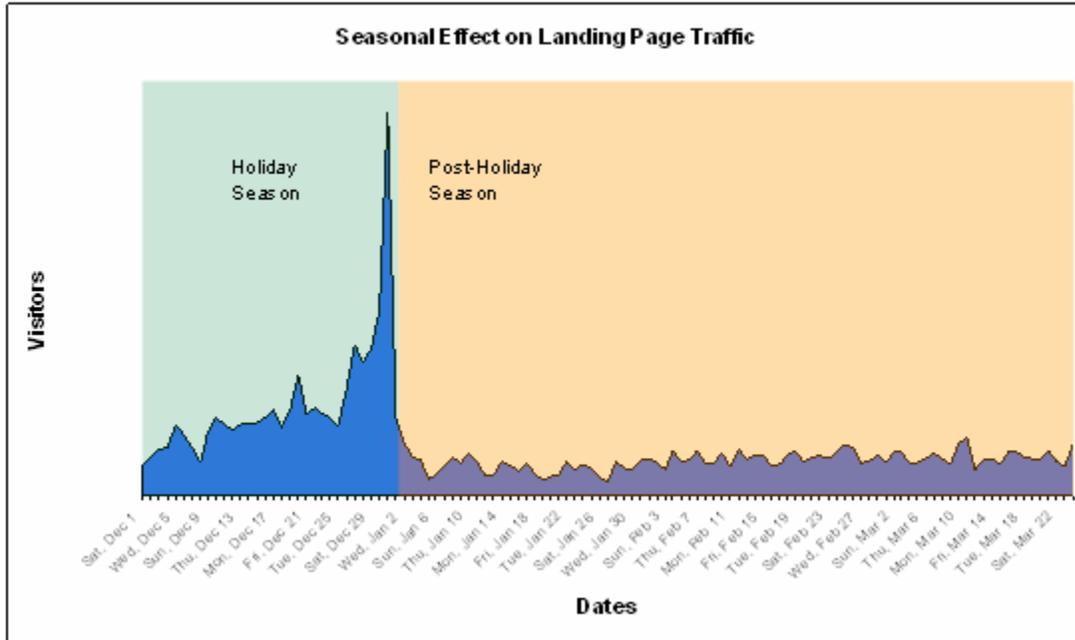
♦ Seasonal changes in traffic like that shown above typically coincide with changes in "types" of visitors, and can result in different outcomes than expected, as seen in the Main donation landing page test.

♦ Appendix 3.1: Search landing page (baseline)

Appendix 3.2: Test 3 combinations of variables tested

Test 3: Google "Search" Landing Page	Variable A: Funding Source Copy*	Variable B: "Donate Now!" Button color	Variable C: 2nd VeriSign™ security logo under submission button
Baseline (38)	*Yes*	*Red*	*No*
Challenger 39	No	Green	Yes
Challenger 40	*Yes*	Turquoise	*No*
Challenger 41	*Yes*	Green	*No*
Challenger 42	No	*Red*	*No*
Challenger 43	*Yes*	*Red*	Yes
Challenger 44	No	Turquoise	Yes
Challenger 45	No	Green	*No*
Challenger 46	No	Turquoise	*No*
Challenger 47	*Yes*	Green	Yes
Challenger 48	*Yes*	Turquoise	Yes
Challenger 49	No	*Red*	Yes

Values in italics denote those present on the "baseline" landing page used prior to testing.
* "Amnesty depends on the generosity of individuals like you to fund our life-saving work. To maintain our impartiality, Amnesty does not accept any money from governments."