The Number One Way to Reduce Your Website Bounce Rate

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You've arrived, but feel lost. Or confused. You're being bombarded with stimuli. Or too many choices. You're unsure what to do next.

I know exactly what you're going to do next. You're going to leave. You're off in search of a place where you feel comfortable, confident, more "at home."

Now here's the rub. You actually were at someone's home—their home on the web—their home page, but something went terribly wrong.

The problem's simple enough. **The home page isn't simple enough.** The host made you work. As a website visitor, you don't want that. And as a website host, your goal must be to invoke a sense of belonging.

The Number One Way to Reduce Your Website's Bounce Rate #Marketing by @feldmancreative

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Want to use Click to Tweet on your blog?

The goal of a home page is to get the visitor to click

Bounce rate, which is revealed in your analytics, indicates the percentage of web site visits where only a single page was viewed. Translation: zero clicks.

For a blog site, you need not get overly concerned about bounce rate. One-and-done visits are common. However, those that enter your site via its home page are likely to be first-timers. In this case, a high bounce rate is deadly.

So how do you inspire a visitor to click a page deeper into your site? You interest them. And how do you interest your visitor? You communicate an idea that is easy to understand and memorable. Marketers often describe such ideas as "sticky."

Made to Stick, the bestselling book by Chip and Dan Heath, spells out the formula with six principles. The first, and perhaps, most vital, is simplicity.

I'll paraphrase from the book where they ask and answer the question, **"How do you find the essential core of your ideas?"** They submit you must be a master of exclusion. You must relentlessly prioritize.

The book's chapter on simplicity also offers the following:

- It's hard to make ideas stick in a noisy environment
- You must weed out ideas, even if they're important, in an effort to highlight *the most important one*
- Uncertainty—caused by multiple choices—tends to paralyze readers
- Powerful ideas are compact and meaningful

Is your homepage simple? Does it elicit the response you want from visitors? If it's not clear and compact, it's time to review and revise it. It's time to simplify.

What's in it for me?

If you've studied copywriting even a wee bit, you're likely to have read the "WIIFM" lesson. A common derivative of it goes: readers don't care about your company or product; they care about themselves.

I want to say you get the idea. I want to say everybody does. But they don't. In fact, I don't think it'd be outrageous to say a painfully large majority can't (and maybe never will) comprehend the concept. And it's a pity because when you shine the spotlight on yourself, you lose business.

Your headline has a job to do

While your typical web-browsing human is obviously not a goldfish, researchers like to explain his or her average attention span falls short of the little orange pucker's.

This means your job is to create a page, which is capable of expanding the average attention span. You need to grab 'em fast. This is the headline's job. The headline on your home page is the first line the visitor reads and therefore **the most important line on your entire website.**

The headline on your home page is the most important line on your entire website.

Is yours up to the task? Concede the answer is "no" if:

- The first word is "We" or "Our"
- It focuses on your leadership or some other form of self-congratulation
- Understanding it requires additional reading
- It delivers more than one message
- It puts clever before clear
- It's trite
- It isn't about the visitor
- It doesn't deliver a WIIFM

My take on the simplest and truest test of your home page headline: its job is to get *some* readers to think, "I've come to the right place."

Note the italicized word "some." It makes an important point:

Your goal isn't to appeal to everybody. You can't.

In a KISSmetrics post, Joanna Wiebe, an accomplished copywriter and conversion specialist, explains, "Great copywriters know that you don't write for 100% of your traffic. If you try to make everyone happy, you'll make no one happy. Seriously. Writing for 100% gets you conversion rates of 2% (which is why most Fortune 500s have such abysmal conversion rates)."

In that same post, Joanna also presents a systematic way to write your ultimate home page headline.

Let's evaluate home page headlines

For the show and tell that follows, I've selected a single niche: marketing automation platforms. I like this for a number of reasons:

1. You're a marketer, so you may recognize some of the companies
2. They're marketing companies, so they *should* do well
3. Their products are complex, so they have a simplification challenge
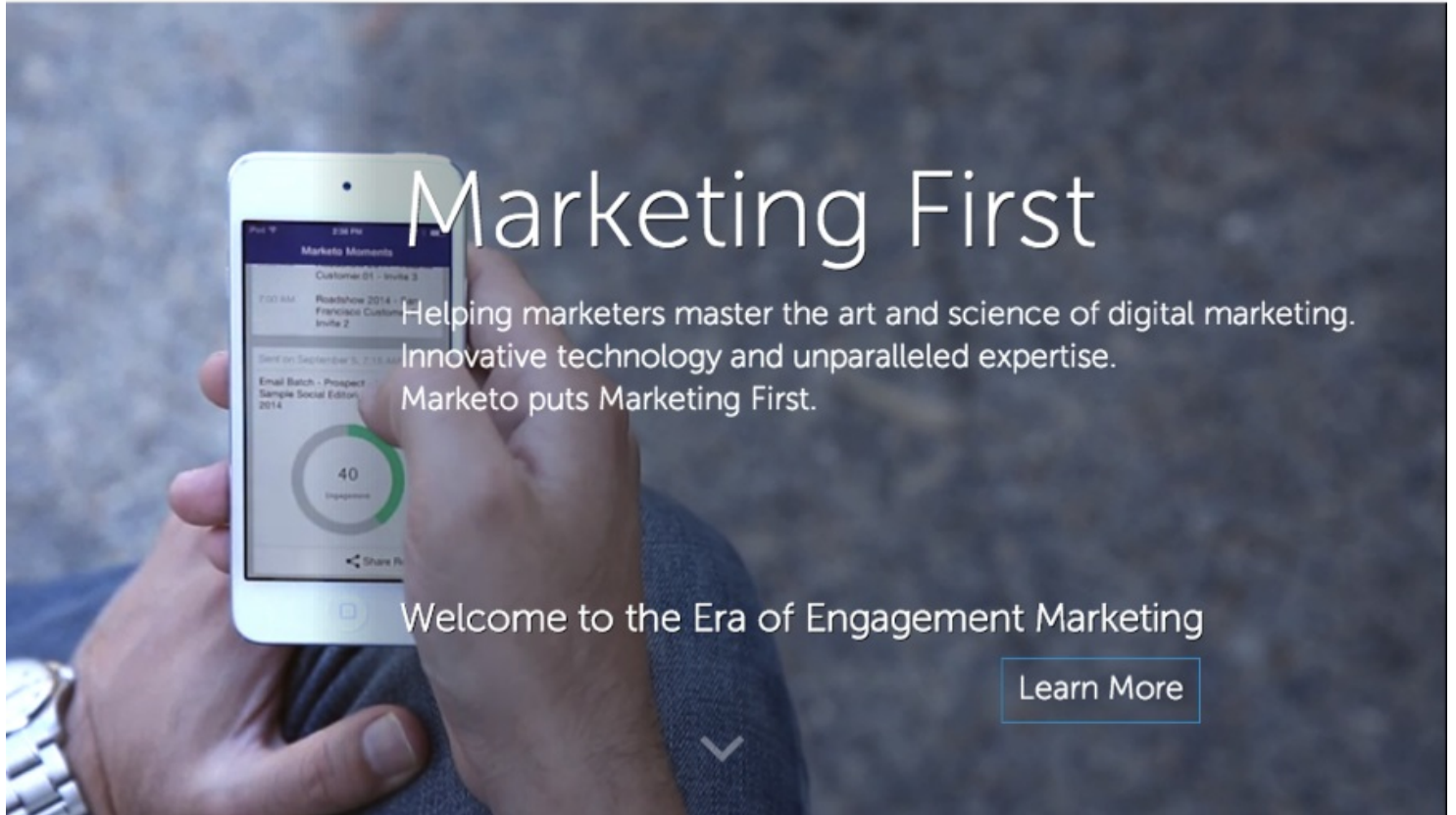
Here we go.

Marketo

Products   Customer Success   Resources   About

Marketing First

Helping marketers master the art and science of digital marketing.
Innovative technology and unparalleled expertise.
Marketo puts Marketing First.

Welcome to the Era of Engagement Marketing

Learn More

Marketo's "Marketing First" message may be concise, but it's not clear. The copy that follows, "master the art and science of digital marketing," begins to get into value proposition, but ultimately is about Marketo, not me.

Ouch, a slider, meaning multiple messages are presented—slowly. The objective of this frame is clear. They want you to download a paper. The paper is going to explain why you need to be a modern marketer. Why not tell me the answer? Provided the answer explains the benefit of becoming one, I'd click.

The headline reads, "Marketing Maturity Has An Impact on Business." Hmm. I'm expected to know what marketing maturity is. I don't. If I synthesize it a bit, I think, "I must be an immature marketer." While that feels slightly urgent, it puts me off.

Here, we're provided an ideal example of how to not write a home page headline. Act-On chooses to focus on Act-On. Their headline reads like a bad press release and scores a nice round zero for emotional connection.

Every other element is equally disastrous. The main image is beyond comprehension. The call to action is a generic "learn more" (and competes with three more CTAs just below it).

Don't do what they do.

Thanks HubSpot. They've provided an example of what I mean by "WIIFM." This headline is miles from amazing, but at least, if I have a business and want to grow it, I may click something.

I should explain, this home page "hero shot" is animated. The word "business" gives way to a sequence where it's

replaced by "traffic," then "leads," then "customers," then "revenues."

It's a bit of a yawner, but it's about me. Oddly, it doesn't qualify me in any way. The sweet spot for HubSpot is small business, but I believe they aspire to enlist any size business. The ambiguity shows.
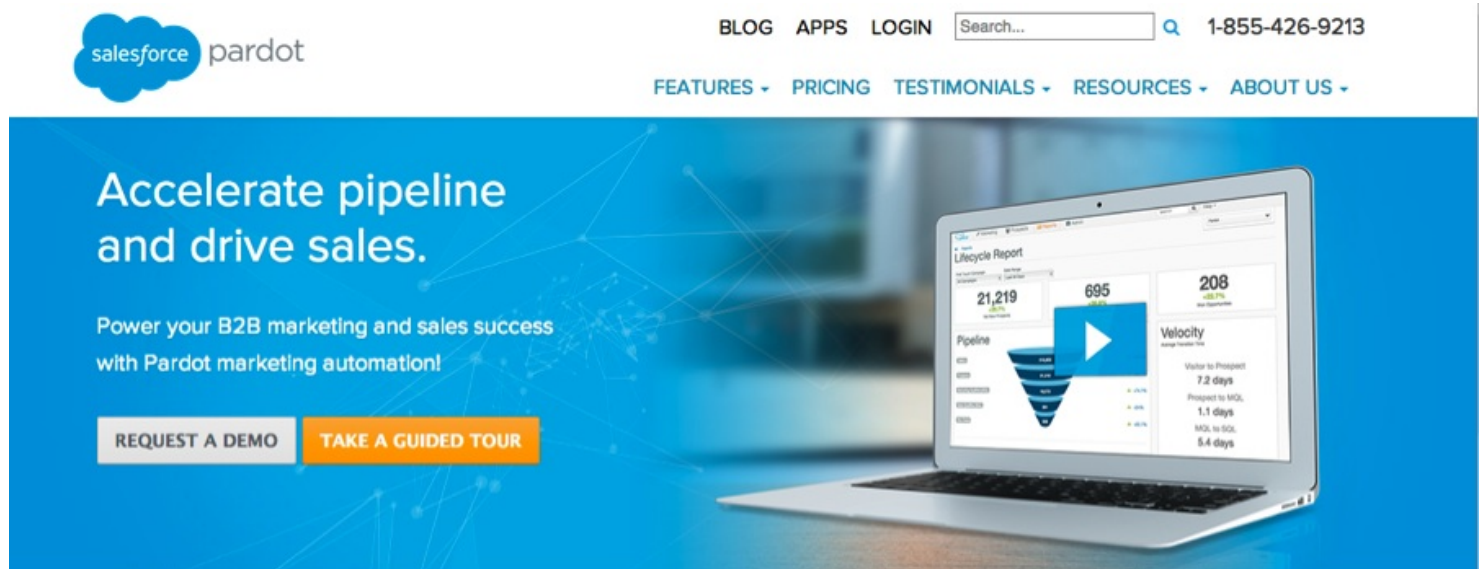
I want to endorse this one (or any one). Thumbs up for "drive sales." I get that. Thumbs down otherwise. "Accelerate pipeline?" WTF?

The subhead reads "Power your B2B marketing and sales success with Pardot marketing automation." I already know the name of the company (since I'm at their website), but there are some information bits in there that might help.

A headline that could work might be, "Drive your B2B sales with marketing automation."
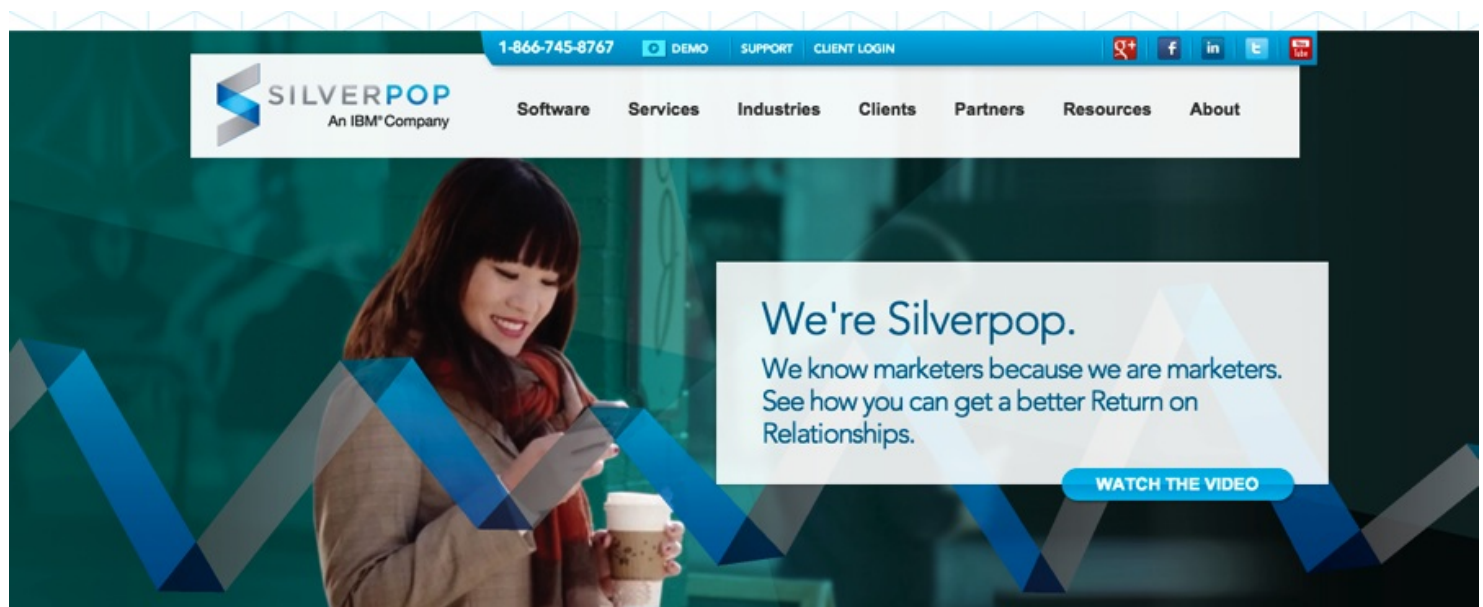
I suppose you've gathered by now even companies in the marketing space don't excel at writing home page headlines. This, the first of a series of four dull slides, tells me "We're Silverpop." Did they think I missed the logo? The headline is a waste of space.

I hadn't heard of Loopfuse, but read they're an up-and-comer in the space. Then I learned Salesfusion acquired the company.

I give this home page headline a B. If my answer to their question is "yes," I'm up for reading more or clicking. If they were to tell me why I should bring marketing and sales together in a concise headline I might give them an A.

Yes!

Disclosure: I write for LeadSquared. I've written several headlines for their home page, but this ain't one of them, so this ain't about me.

LeadSquared has tested this headline and concluded it works. Do I need to tell you why? We have ourselves a sticky idea. I know WIIFM. "Land more leads, close more deals." This sounds appealing.

I'll keep reading. It says I can "try it free." This is perfect proof of how not to overthink it. This, finally, is an example of a home page that captures my interest. This is effective. No wonder the guy in the photo's celebrating.

Stick the headline

If you've watched any gymnastics, you're familiar with the idea of "sticking the landing." The "stick" means the gymnast landed their final aerial trick by landing firmly on their feet. There's no stumbling. No extraneous movement.

Apply the idea to your home page. Eliminate what's extraneous. Don't allow your reader to stumble. Write a solid headline that hits one point hard and clearly. If you sell a marketing automation platform and want visitors to click a page deeper, tell the reader what's in it for him or her.

Generate more leads with your online marketing.

Do you have a solution that helps people stash stuff they saw online so they don't forget about it?

Remember everything. That's what I'm talking about. Do you help customers organize their finances?

Perfecto.

Do you make it easy for shoppers to find the car they want?
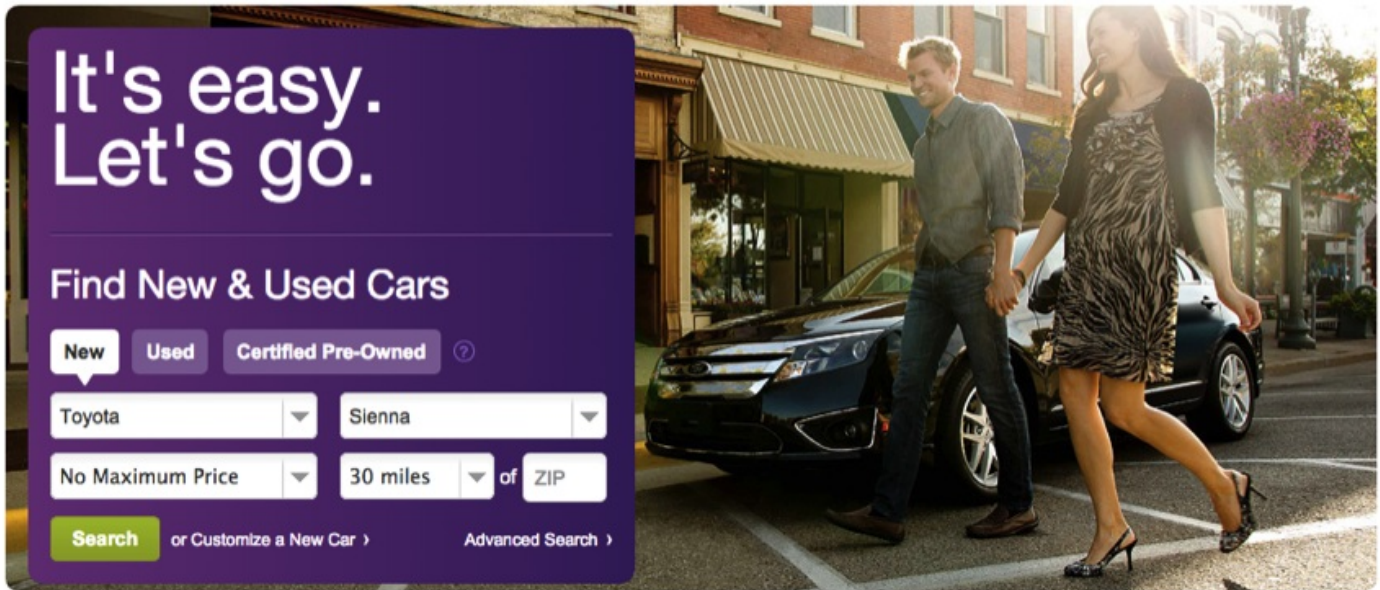
It's easy. Let's go. Nothing confusing there, right?

So please, make it a priority to improve your home page bounce rate by carefully scrutinizing the most important line on your website, the home page headline. Ask yourself:

- Is your headline written from the visitor's point of view?
- Does it answer the question, "what's in it for me?"
- Does it invoke a sense of belonging for a specific persona?
- What can you extract to get at the core of your message?

Now go consider if you need to replace your home page headline and stick it.

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