

Copywriting on Tight Deadlines: How ordinary marketers are achieving 103% gains with a step-by-step framework

ABSTRACT

In this Web clinic transcript, Dr. Flint McGlaughlin and fellow presenters from the MECLABS team introduce the results of a case study that shows how testing copywriting achieved a 103% gain in conversion. The team also presents parallels between storytelling and copywriting and how ordinary marketers can easily create highly effective copy using a simple three-step framework.





Copywriting on Tight Deadlines

How ordinary marketers are achieving 103% gains with a step-by-step framework

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[Note: This document is a transcript of a live Web clinic, "Copywriting on Tight Deadlines: How ordinary marketers are achieving 103% gains with a step-by-step framework," that originally aired on June 06, 2012. A [full video replay](#) is also available.]

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Good afternoon everyone or good morning, depending on what part of the world you are in. Today's clinic is "Copywriting on Tight Deadlines: How ordinary marketers are achieving 103% gains with a step-by-step framework". Now the 103% is important because it suggests to you that beneath the series of recommendations, there is a data set. Candidly, that 103% represents one experiment in an entire library of case studies that have helped to shape what you are going to learn today. But it also touches closely on something that I think marketers struggle with on a daily basis.

We are under pressure, we have deadlines, we have results that we must achieve and even when we achieve them, they are followed by yet another demand for a higher level of results. In the midst of this pressure, we are asked to write good copy and I have talked to marketers all over the world who expressed to me a sort of insecurity about their ability to craft just the right presentation of their offer. In fact, we have heard of those gurus on the internet who charge enormous amounts of money and can help craft the beautiful long copy sale. Some of us have learned a few principles from a clinic or from a blog or from a book. But most of us don't have a repeatable methodology, a clear sort of systematic way to get the answers.

I would like to do two things today. I would like to help you sort of discover the framework that we have been pioneering through our research and more importantly I would like to sort of inspire you in the sense that you need to be encouraged. You don't have to be a word master to write great copy, "Clarity Trumps Persuasion", we will say more about that before we are done. Understanding the way human thought unfolds in a sort of story sequence, learning

how to pace and synchronize your structure, your words, your offer in a way that connects deeply with that unfolding structure is something that can sort of set you free and give you peace about achieving remarkably effective copy in short period of time.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: We will talk more about before we are done, but I want to remind you that you can, you can use #webclinic in order to discuss or to give us questions, answers, comment on what's taking place. I also want to point out that I am joined today by Jon Powell and Paul Cheney. Paul is appropriate for this. We have been pushing him to get on stage. He is actually one of our top copywriters. He is responsible for a lot of the work that you see all over the Internet and a lot of the work that you see coming out of MECLABS, MarketingExperiments etc.

Jon Powell started out I think I can say just kind of joined years ago, many years ago, about a 100 years ago as my Assistant. He was not a normal hire, he was hired to be more than my assistant, but he was put into a mentoring program. Today there is a whole room full of young men who sit behind me and participate in all that we do. Jon went through that program and excelled. Today he is a Senior Manager of Research and Strategy. He handles some of the largest projects we do around the world with some of the largest companies in the world and has had to work through many of the challenges I am going to talk to you about.

He is here along with Paul, to sort of, add more texture to what I have to say and before the day is over we are going to be taking copy that you have submitted and begin to optimize and make suggestions for you about how to improve your headlines and your transitions etc. This will be a very dense clinic full of information and you will need to follow me because I have got to pace myself to achieve as much as possible in the shortest period of time, and yet maintain some level of simplicity and clarity. And I must say that after the case study for just a bit you might be confused wondering how does all this connect, that you will see. Before we are done, we will try to bring it all together in a sort of contouring image, a unifying theme that will help you go away saying, I know what to do next as I start my next half a page.

Background and Test Design



Experiment ID: *Encyclopedia Britannica*

Location: MarketingExperiments Research Library

Research Notes:

Background: Well-known B2C company offering an online encyclopedia subscription product

Goal: To get visitors to sign up for a free trial

Primary research question: Which landing page will have the highest subscription rate?

Test Design: A/B split test (variable cluster)

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: Keeping that in mind let me talk to you about an experiment. You will recognize the company, its Encyclopedia Britannica. We worked with a Senior Leader and their management team years ago as they were challenged with the digital age. Encyclopedia Britannica had a digital subscription offer. This is a long story. I could spend an hour explaining it but it's a lovely way to talk about the importance of crafting proper copy.

Experiment: Control

Original Landing Page:

- The headline does not communicate the value proposition
- The “member benefits,” which are primary selling points, are in a separate column, not directly in the customer’s eye path
- The images on the left and bottom do not help communicate anything about the service or why they should try it

Control

The screenshot shows the Britannica Online landing page. At the top, it says 'Encyclopedia Britannica Online' and 'Already a member? Log in.' The main headline is 'Why Try Britannica Online?'. Below this, there are several sections: 'More Comprehensive than Any Other English-language Encyclopedia', 'Trustworthy Results', 'Spend Less Time Searching and More Time Finding', 'Help for Students', 'The Answers You Need, the Topics You Care About', and 'What Members Are Saying About Britannica Online'. On the right side, there is a 'Member Benefits' section with a list of features. At the bottom, there is a 'Take a FREE TRIAL' button. Orange arrows from the text on the left point to the headline, the member benefits list, and the 'Take a FREE TRIAL' button.

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: You can see the original, the control. This was their best performing page and on this page is essential information that will help you make the decision to purchase a subscription. I have to say that while its difficult to discern this particular offer had a rich value proposition even in the face and yes and I am going to say a dirty word in the Britannica role I suppose not that they had ever said that but and I like them, but both groups but in sort of the age of the Internet and particularly Wikipedia, they still had an offer with significant value, but understand there is a difference between realty and perception and for the prospect, perception is reality.

So the question became, how do we communicate this in a more effective way? Now I would like to tell you the series of experiments, the conversation we had with them, there was a sort of research grant in the form of a bonus on top of the normal research budget that we had to work with based on achieving what they felt was a stellar number, 20%. They felt that would be the highest number we could achieve together. We did talk them into, after much laughter, a grant based on 50% and then we did something rather ridiculous. We asked, what would happen if we could help you achieve a 100%? Now a 100% lift means a doubling of revenue. You recognize that a doubling of revenue for a digital offer which of course entails a great deal of profit.

The leaders on the Britannica side were intelligent, they were capable and they were determined to do whatever it takes to make a difference. So we didn't go and I could again unpack all of the changes that were made, but this is to help you understand the significance of re-crafting critical expressions.

Experiment: Treatment

Treatment Landing Page:

- The new headline and sub-headline describe exactly what you get
- Bullets are used to emphasize the valuable features of the service in an easy-to-read format
- The new image is clearer and includes a caption that re-emphasizes the value proposition

Treatment

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Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: So if you look at the treatment you will notice that there is a new headline. The sub-headline describes exactly what you get. There is a dramatic difference between the two, I will show them to you just a moment side by side, but there is a dramatic difference between the two.

Bullets are used to emphasize the valuable features and specificity is brought in instead of great claims. The graphic is redesigned to communicate the essence of the value proposition, and yes we do something that might be crass in today's world of design beauty, we used a caption. If you just look at the graphic and read the caption in one moment, capture the essence of offering. I could say so much more, but there is enormous amount of science in this treatment.

Experiment: Treatment

Treatment Landing Page:

- Activate Your Free Trial” is used instead of “Please Enter Your Billing Information” or “Subscribe Now” messaging
- Savings over the print edition instantly shows the customer the “value”
- Button copy emphasizes the “receiving” aspect of the transaction instead of “giving” language such as “submit”

Treatment

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Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: I could talk about the way we emphasized the saving, see that yellow highlight, that’s not something we did on the slide. That was done on the original page because at the precise moment, we asked you to start your free trial and we remind you that if you continue you will save “X” hundreds of dollars, over 1,200 dollars off price of the print editions.

And by the way, we arrived at that number on our own by asking lots of questions. It didn’t appear on the original page. In fact, I don’t think it was clear to anyone that you were getting full access to the complete Encyclopedia Britannica set and when you start comparing the cost of a free trial which was remarkably low, around \$11.95 a month, compared to the enormous savings off the print edition, knowing that you are also getting much more up-to-date information etc., etc., etc., in formats that are more useful like you go on and on. We suddenly had something very powerful to say. It was just a matter of asking the right questions. One of those questions we ask is, “Well how much does a print edition cost?”

We had an interesting series of answers to that, but instead we got to the bottom line and compared the differentials and began to craft that little statement with yellow highlight in bold text and I could say a great deal more. All I want you to see, not so much learning from this case study, I just want to point to that.

Experiment: Side-by-side

Original

➔

Treatment

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: I also want to make the point that when you compare the original, which had two years of optimization work before we got involved in lots of copywriting expertise from expert copywriters and you compare the treatment. There is a dramatic difference in the way we interact with the thought sequence of the person reading the copy.

I don't believe in optimizing Web pages, I believe in optimizing thought sequences and that's what occurred here and without going into too much more detail you can read a full explanation of the case study at Marketingexperiments.com.

Experiment: Results



103% Increase in Conversion

The Treatment generated 103% more free trial sign ups than the control

Versions	CR	Rel. diff	Stat. Conf
Control	1.00%	-	-
Treatment	2.03%	103%	 95%

- ✓ **What you need to understand:** By cutting meaningless “power copy” and clearly stating the value proposition, the treatment out-performed the control by 103%.

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: Look at the difference. A new page produced 103% increase in conversion. That’s rich. Many of the classic copywriting approaches were completely eliminated on this treatment. Lots of the kinds of words that we so frequently see sprinkled into our power copy were missing. But they weren’t missing because we overlooked them. We tore them out with a ruthless intent because they were in the way and what you see is a result that is essentially double the revenue.

Now here is a point. If you get into one of these clinics please note this I am not interested in pressing you with the scientist at MECLABS and MarketingExperiments. Nor is it important for us to simply entertain you in the time that we have.

What we discovered

Key Principles

1. When it comes to crafting effective copy, ***clarity trumps persuasion***.
2. In order to achieve clarity, you must synchronize your copy to the thought sequences of the reader.
3. Human thoughts tend to arrange themselves in story. Therefore synchronizing your copy to the visitor’s thought sequence requires a story-based framework.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: This is to ground what I want to say next in that data to draw some critical points that you need to understand that will empower the step-by-step process. It's getting ready to unfold for you. The first is this, when it comes to crafting effective copy "clarity trumps persuasion". I cannot say that often enough. I have said it in a new way recently in my book that's coming out. I have said that when you understand the value proposition and you implement it properly "clarity is persuasion". For now, you need to understand that you don't have to worry so much about learning those rich power words or getting the perfect structure or learning how to somehow hype people, persuade people and overwhelm them with power of any thoughts. Rather, you need to say clearly something true and I will tell you more about that in just a bit.

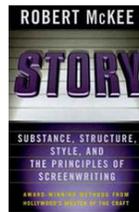
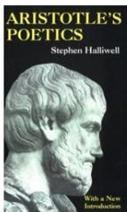
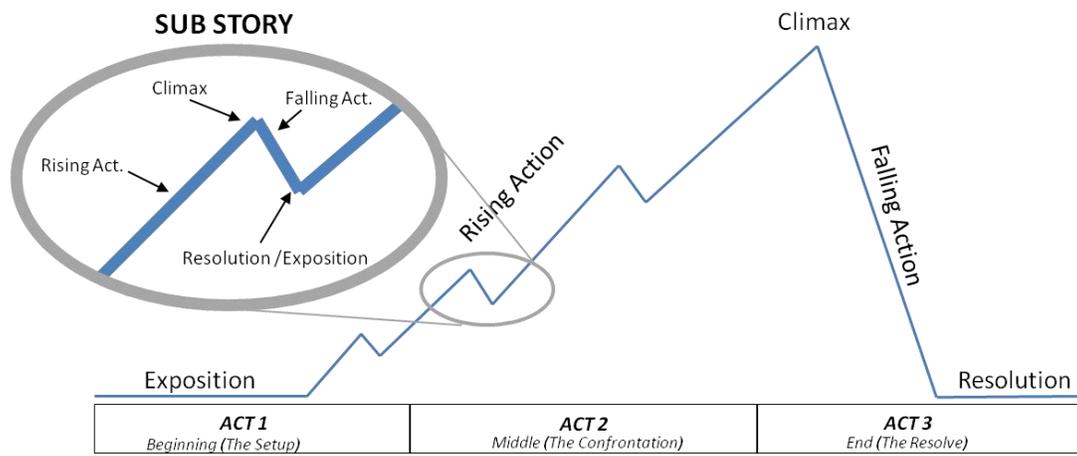
It brings me to the second piece though. In order to achieve clarity, you got to synchronize the flow of your copy to the thought sequence of the reader. This is a very important point. Now, it's one of the points that you can listen to and say "You know that make sense," but just because it makes sense doesn't make it easy to translate into action. Much of this clinic is going to about how to make point two come alive on your pages. Which makes brings to the point three, "Human thoughts tend to arrange themselves in a story". Therefore, synchronizing your copy to the visitor's thought sequence requires a story-based framework.

Now, this is perhaps one of the most important things I can emphasize and for a bit we are going to talk about story. And as we do I hope you are going to realize that somehow, some way, this is going to connect back to point two and enable point one. These are principles, these are not steps. These principles however set up the steps. Before I can take you through the steps and then the live optimization, I need to explain how point three really works.

How can I write effective copy without working late?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: So that's the plan and it begins with a simple question summarizing everything I have said. I don't have all night, you don't have all night, you have deadlines, I have deadlines and everybody in this business has deadlines. How can we write effective copy in the limited time?

How People Tend to Think



People's thoughts tend to arrange themselves in story, therefore understanding your visitor's thought sequence comes down to understanding the basic structure of a story. Each part of the conversion process can be tied to story...

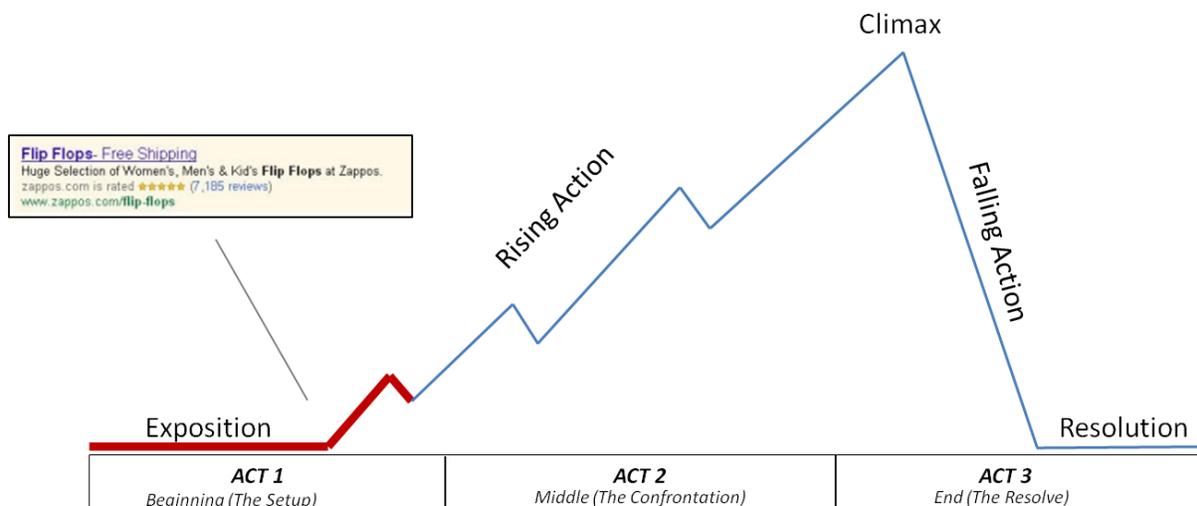
Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: That brings me to this explanation of story and on the left is a copy of my book from my library. It's called "Aristotle's Poetics". I read it first years ago, and I have read it again on multiple occasions. Poetics was Aristotle's sort of rumination of the power of story. And he described a multi-act sequence for the way stories should unfold that to this day drives what you see when you watch a major motion picture. It's fascinating to me that human nature is so consistent that what Aristotle said thousands of years ago has implications, deep and significant implications, for what you and I do and for what we even see on the screen. Now I have next to that my second favorite book on story, written by a Ph.D., who has done something that many with a Ph.D. can't do. He has transcended his discipline to learn how to communicate to people without a Ph.D. and he has written a phenomenal book. This is an older book but is a superb book, the best I have read yet on story, by Robert McGee, and I recommend it.

Robert fixes screenplays and trains the best writers in the world, and he is superb at what he does and I have been interested in his work because I have written a lot of screenplays and a lot of fiction. And in fact, this isn't in the script and I may get in trouble for this, and you can tweet me and tell me that this was stupid for me to say, but I want you to understand that I have been student studying story for years as part of understanding what happens at MECLABS. We have also been producing television, you probably don't know that. I won a grand prize for a fiction short story in a U.S competition as I was trying to constantly understand this process. I don't feel very awkward saying that, but I want you to

know that a deep understanding of story has a lot to do with what we have been teaching you about optimization and what we have been researching for all these years in our laboratory.

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: So let's think about story and understand how the typical story is paced. You can see that there is a three act structure, a beginning, the middle, and the end. You have the exposition, the rising action, the climax, the falling action and the resolution. Those are common terms for the writer. I want you to notice that there are small bits of drama. You see if you look on the graph, you will actually see where they are sort of drops, peaks and valleys within the major peak and major drop. Those sub-stories, those sub-dramas are critical because copy has the same sort of pattern embedded in it.

How story connects to the conversion process

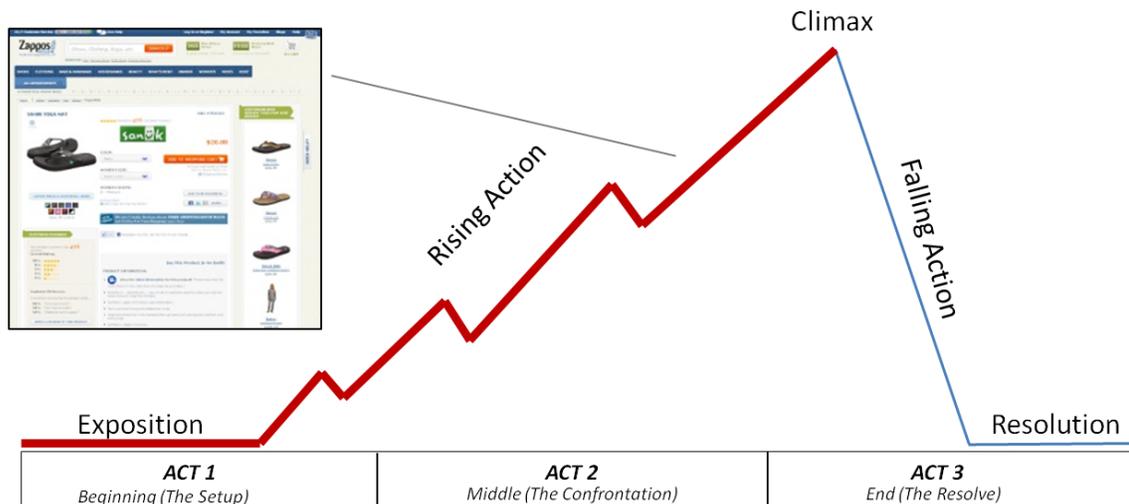


The Exposition: As it relates to conversion, the main story is usually set up in the channels (PPC, Email, Banners, etc.). The overarching goal of this step is to engage the visitor, start building the problem, and lead them deeper into the conversation. Keep in mind there is a sub-story surrounding step-level conversion goal (getting them to click the ad, etc.).

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: And you might liken the exposition portion of the story, what we are sort of setting up what's going to come next, where we are laying the foundation. Exposition is a lot like what happens in your channels, we have an example here in the form of paid search ad.

The paid search ad is creating space in your mind for what comes next. It's connecting to a question that you have. It's intensifying that question and driving you towards a potential resolution. It follows a pattern. The overarching goal of this step is to engage the visitor, and to start building the problem and lead them deeper into conversation.

How story connects to the conversion process

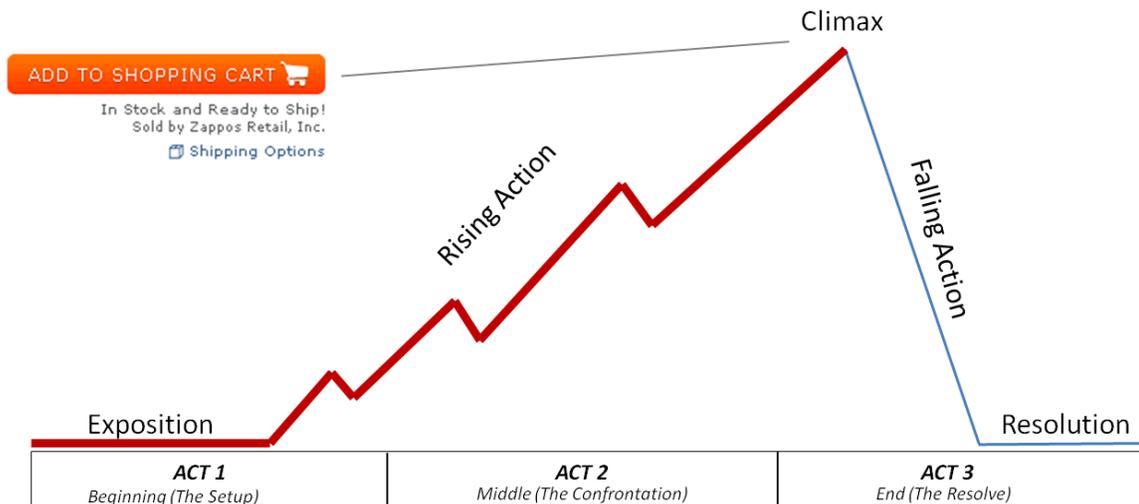


The Rising Action: As it relates to conversion, the rising action is intensified mainly through the landing page. The overarching goal is to continue intensifying the problem and present your value as the unique solution. Keep in mind there is a sub-story surrounding step-level conversion goal (getting them to click the ad, etc.).

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now, there then comes the rising action. And this landing page has peaks and valleys, in a sort of, growing and by the way it's a good example because it's not your classic long copy page, it's not the page you might see for say a MarketingExperiments or MarketingSherpa summit. In an e-commerce page, or any page we interact with, there should be an understanding about this rising action. The rising action is intensified mainly through the landing page.

The overarching goal is to continue intensifying the problem and present your value at or really in the form of the unique solution and there are sort of some sub-stories surrounding the step levels in this process. Those step levels are tightly connected to something you have heard me teach in other clinics, I can't teach it now called "The micro yes's". If you know my theory and teaching about the inverted funnel, I have said to you many times that the funnel is essentially a series of micro-yes's that lead towards a macro-yes. As you consider that and as you reflect on that, look at this story and before we are done again if you are new, if you haven't been to one of these clinics before stay with us because this is going to get very practical with lots of examples and steps in just a few moments.

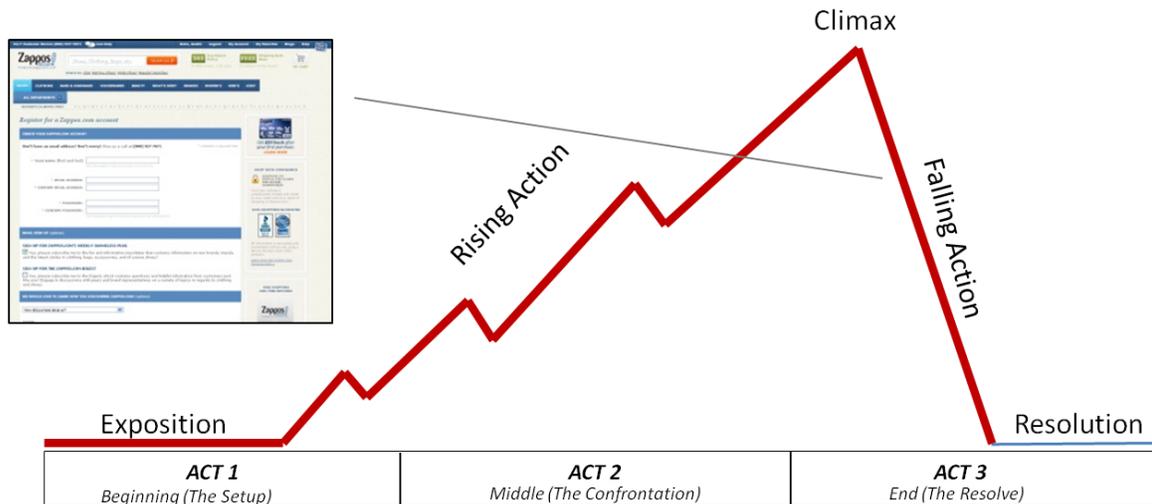
How story connects to the conversion process



The Climax: As it relates to conversion, the climax happens at the point of decision for the main conversion objective (to buy, submit information, etc.). Most of the time this happens at the call-to-action on the landing page, where the rising action is at the highest intensity.

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: Now you have the climax. We could argue about where the climax is in the purchase process, but in this example we position it right there where you sort of click the button. The climax is not the purchase but it's the decision to purchase. And what we have to be careful of is that in this falling action, we don't lose them and that we achieve full resolution.

How story connects to the conversion process

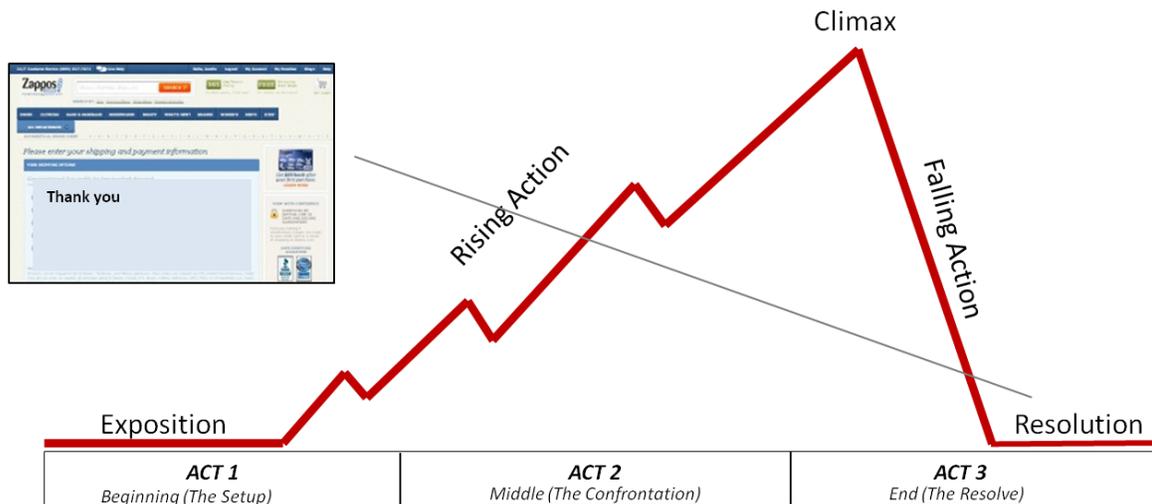


The Falling Action: As it relates to conversion, the falling action occurs after the conversion commitment has been made, and consists of all the steps that might be required to actualize the decision (filling out payment info, shipping info, etc.). The falling action might be virtually absent if the payoff on the conversion commitment is actualized immediately (free digital offers, etc.).

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: So when I say decision or purchase really it's the decision to take the primary conversion action just to be clear for those of you that might have an offer that doesn't lead towards that it might generate leads.

As it relates to conversion the following action occurs after the conversion commitment has been made and consists of all the steps required to actualize the decision. And you might say but you know, "Shouldn't I be escalating at that point? In a sense, "Yes", but really the steps afterwards support a sort of climatic decision to say "Yes" and unless we mess them up the assumption is the person you click this and I am only talking about the legitimate candidate, the legitimate prospect who clicks this is now made the main decision. We just got to keep from losing them in the follow-up.

How story connects to the conversion process



The Resolution: As it relates to conversion, the resolution occurs when the visitor is aware of and satisfied with the completion (or actualization) of the value exchange. The goal is to reassure the visitor that the problem has been solved by their decision.

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: And then there is the resolution and that occurs when the visitor is aware of and satisfied with the completion or the actualization of what we call in philosophy “The value exchange”. And the goal is to bring peace to reassure the visitor through the satisfaction of filling the initial void, the initial need or the initial volume.

So, how does story help me write clear copy?

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: Now here is the question I would be asking if I were you is, “Ok, that is an interesting thought, but how does this help me write a clear copy?” I think that we debated, [here at MECLABS], that if I were teaching for four hours, then I probably would take an hour and a half to teach you what I have just talked to you about. And the more you understand it, the more you are going to understand on how to communicate to people who essentially are living out the story as they interact with your offer. The climax of that story is the decision for the value exchange and you have got to know how to get into that story and guide it.

Now let’s talk about how it connects to writing copy. Here is a key. By knowing where each copy element falls in the story, you can carefully craft each word, each sentence and each paragraph to specifically match the visitor’s thought sequence.

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What's wrong with this page?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: And so let's look at an example and then we are going to break it down into steps. We are going to see the optimization summit 2011, now this is not a commercial for the optimization summit in 2012, this is last year's. By the way the 2012 however is next what is it, a week from now in Denver?

Paul Cheney: You are right, it is the 11th.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: I think I fly out this Sunday to get prepared for four days but this is from the year before. And if you look carefully at this page, it looks like well written copy. We have a headline, sub-headline, opening line underneath that. "This is the event you can't afford to miss," the stakes are too high. Doesn't that sound like classic copy? And then, if you are like most, you see the psychology of that. "If you are like most marketers and business executives," now we are identifying with them, "your day is a whirlwind of activity," and it begins to sort of paint up problem.

If you are not taking the time to measure what matters, I am just sort of skipping ahead, experimenting test. Everything on here would pass the muster of the average copywriting analysis, but the whole page is fatally flawed. This was an authentic page created in our group by one of our members pre-testing as we were thinking about the way to approach this. That's the top half.

Optimization Summit 2011 Example

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Learn how the right metrics, the right experiments and the right strategies can completely change the playing field for you and your organization.

This is the event that you can't afford to miss – the stakes are too high.

If you're like most marketers and business executives, your typical day is a whirlwind of move from task to task and project to project at an astounding rate. But have you ever considered the cost of not optimizing the marketing tactics that you are performing right now?

Every day you delay applying the science of optimization to your marketing, you are losing out on the opportunity to *measure what matters*, *experiment and test* your marketing activities, and *optimize your conversion processes*. It's highly likely that you are even missing out on thousands of dollars without even knowing it.

At Optimization Summit 2011, you will receive hands-on training to get started on ground-breaking improvements for your organization by taking advantage of four key benefits:

1. An inspiring *pre-summit workshop* that will teach you the meta-theory of optimization that has been proven to work in thousands of experiments
2. Results-based *how-to presentations* from experts in the online marketing industry
3. *Powerful case studies* from marketing people – your peers - that have successfully implemented measurement, testing and optimization strategies for their companies
4. *Private coaching clinics* to help kick-start your new marketing initiatives

We certainly hope you'll be able to join us in our inaugural summit for website optimizers. For more information about the event – agenda, locations, coaching clinics and more - please browse this site or click below to start the registration process.

I'm Ready to Optimize!

Video of Flint

What's wrong with this page?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Here is the bottom half of the page. Look at the bottom, I hate it. "Video of Flint," I probably hate that the most. I don't always like seeing myself on video and I prefer not to watch them. And now Paul is over here making fun of me right now. I am going to do the next one with a Fabio [Lanzoni] wig on Paul, to sort of give myself that luxurious look.

Anyway look at one, two, three and four. We lay it out and we ask for the action.

Optimization Summit 2011 Example

Original Draft

Optimization Summit: Maximize ROI of Your Online Marketing

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Every day you delay applying the science of optimization to your marketing, you are losing real dollars.

If you're not taking the time to *measure what matters*, *experiment and test* your mission-critical activities, and *optimize your conversion processes* it's highly likely that you are leaking thousands – or even millions – of dollars without even knowing it.

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Video of Flint

I'm Ready to Optimize!

Optimized Final

Apply the Science of Optimization to Your Marketing

The Optimization Summit is laser-focused on helping marketers discover what really works in optimization and how to apply the science of optimization to their specific marketing needs.



To meet this lofty goal and provide you the best possible Summit, we'll rely on case studies from your peers and the extensive MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments research libraries, which include *more than*:

- 10 years of optimization experiments
- 10,000 landing pages tested and optimized
- 1,000 marketing case studies
- \$10 million in optimization marketing research

During the three days of Optimization Summit 2011 you will learn how to:

- **Measure what matters** and use web analytics to make *meaningful* decisions
- **Test your mission-critical activities** using *valid and scientific* experiments
- **Optimize your conversion processes** by stepping into the mind of the consumer

The MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments teams have spent countless hours researching and testing to ensure that the content presented is relevant to your business.

At the Summit you'll learn from the world's largest library of case studies, including more than 10,000 landing pages. At the Summit you'll learn from the world's largest library of case studies, including more than 10,000 landing pages. At the Summit you'll learn from the world's largest library of case studies, including more than 10,000 landing pages.

Every piece of copy doesn't have to be a masterpiece, but every piece of copy must be clear.

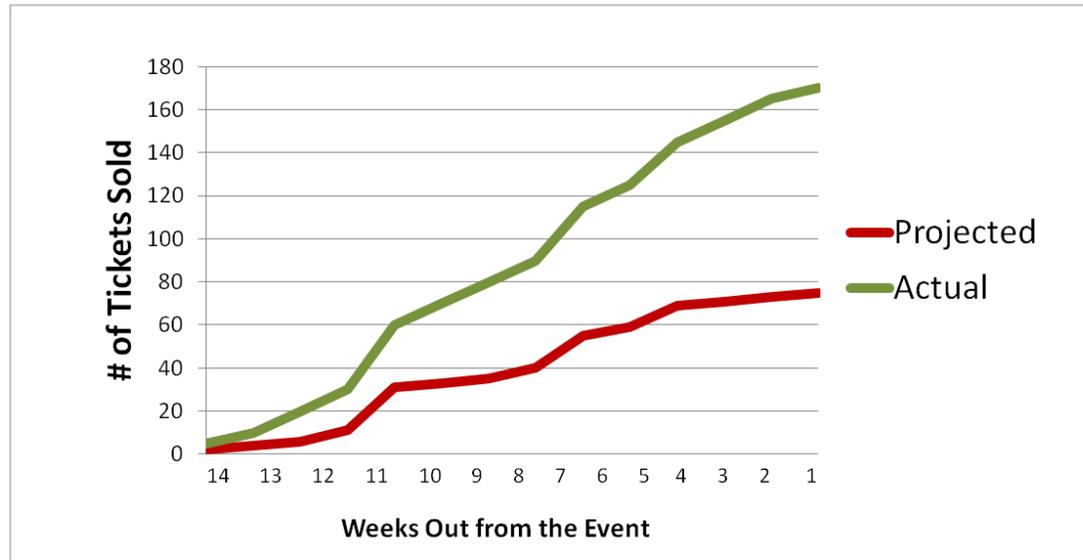
Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now I want you to see the draft. You can see it here and I want you to see the optimized final. And notice that there is a significant difference. First of all, the message, “Apply the Science of Optimization to Your Marketing”. Then there is a difference in the two lines of the first paragraph and what we see next in the bullet points. And you may say, “Well I don’t understand the big difference yet,” don’t worry, you will. We are going to break it down. All I want you to see for now is the difference.

Every piece of copy and I emphasize this before I flip to the results. Every piece of copy doesn’t have to be a masterpiece, but every piece of copy must be clear. Listen to me. Some are perfectionists, and our copy is never done. Just like a good book, it’s never done. But we work within deadlines and all we can do is achieve the most that we can within the limitations of our resources. In many cases, it’s often the combination of time and budget because you don’t have the budget to outsource either.

The reality is marketer, take a deep breath. You don’t have to write masterpieces. In fact if your product is good enough, if your offer is good enough and if your value proposition is strong enough, a masterpiece is redundant. You need to know how to say things right. I want to say it again, you need to know how to say things right. There is the difference between trying to say things right and simply writing a piece or creating a piece of beautiful copywriting. There will be a time in your career when you get to sit down probably and take all the time you want because what you are going to do next is so important. Congratulations, it will be a lovely creative experience but that’s not the world most of us live in day today.

So we quickly move to this piece. I want to tell you that I could shred the piece on the right, but it was sufficient.

Optimization Summit 2011 Example: Results



- ✓ **What you need to understand:** The optimized final landing page generated more than twice the amount of tickets than originally projected, eventually leading to a completely sold out event.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: It was sufficient because you can see the difference in tickets sold and I won't get into the testing the experiments and I know that there is much more I can say about just to help you understand why and how we know the second work better than the first. But can you see the difference in projection? You see how many more tickets we sold than we actually expected to sell and it continued this year again we are at record levels for 2012 and the event coming up right now.

Optimization Summit 2011 Example: Results

Apply the Science of Optimization to Your Marketing

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MarketingExperiments Certification

- All over-complex
- Specific to the business
- Addressing your marketing goals

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1. **10 Years of Optimization Laboratory Research**
MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments have more than 10 years of scientific research spanning 1,300 plus experiments, including more than 1 billion emails and 10,000 landing pages. *At the Summit you'll learn from the world's largest library of case studies*

So don't delay, reserve your ticket today and save \$200.

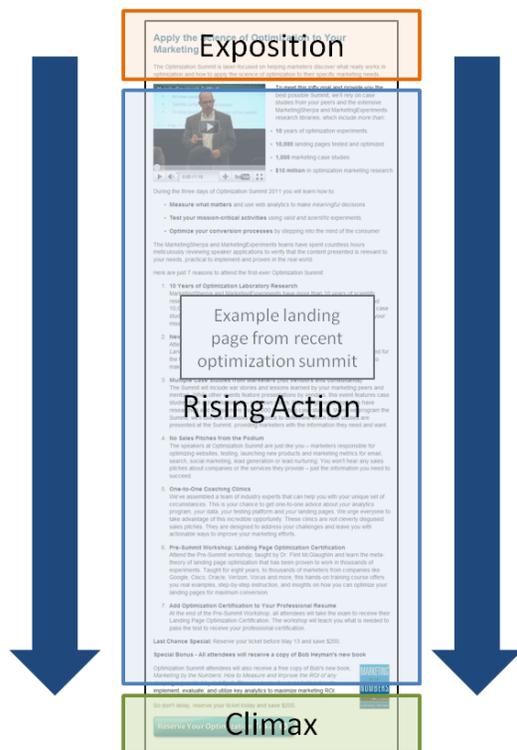
Reserve Your Optimization Ticket >



Working from the framework, our copywriters were able to book every seat at the summit without writing a flawless copy.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: So, what I would like you to go back and ask yourself is, “What was the difference?” And there is a more profound question. “What was the difference that we can actualize into a transferable set of principle steps?” That is the balance of our time together. That’s going to guide how I speak to you and set us up for the live optimization. So be ready with a pencil perhaps, to mark down the steps and the supporting information beneath them and let’s establish a framework and unpack these two pages.

Introduction: The 3-step framework



In the same way there are three acts in a story, there are three steps to crafting compelling copy for (in this case) a landing page.

STEP 1: Create your exposition

STEP 2: Create your rising action

STEP 3: Create your climax/resolution

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: So I shall begin by showing you the entire page. Look how long it is. By the way, long copy is perfectly acceptable in many situations if you wouldn't believe. You might be asking, "Dr. McLaughlin, is long copy the best and always the best way", no. It's not. But I will tell you what our problem is. It isn't that we overuse it, it's that we underuse it. And too many times marketers are busy figuring that they are going to improve conversion by getting all that text off the page.

That's a big mistake in most cases. It's not getting the text off the page. Instead, it's getting the wrong text off the page and adding the right text. That's a different position, that's a different perspective and it's the one you need to adopt if you want to get the highest conversion rates. So, you see the page behind me. It is quite long, but remember that we sold out. And remember that everybody that purchased went through this process virtually. There was only one gateway and they all went through this gateway. We didn't go to a trade show and pre-sell this, almost all the orders came through an interaction with the page you're seeing there.

So I want to make a point you can see it on the right hand side of the screen. There are in some ways three acts in a story and three steps to crafting a compelling piece of copy. So let's begin with the exposition. You will see step one, is to set up what's coming next. Now that's a very important point because we often think that the headlines job is simply to interrupt them. Advertising has gotten good at interrupting us. In ways we don't expect, for example have you clicked on a website and started to read and something pops up in your face and it makes you click and interact with it. Or they hide the

little “x” somewhere that is difficult for you to discover so they can get you to somehow interact with this interrupt that they have placed right in front of you.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: I am not saying it’s always bad, what I am saying that in most cases it’s not a great way to create a great relationship with the person whom you need mostly and whom you need a great relationship with most of all, the customer. [Peter]Drucker said, “The purpose of a business is to create a customer.”, and those are a bad way to create a customer. Now, am I saying those interruptions were always wrong, I am not. But fundamentally, an interruption is not enough. “Do I need your attention?” “Yes”, but getting your attention is simply not enough.

So in the second step, we transfer the attention into series of sub-plots, sub-dramas and sub stories that keep the action in the mind rising being towards the climax in resolution that’s happening in this page. Now you can see that the middle block is a big block. You might say, “Well I see these three points but the middle block is so big,” “How do I actually find some sort of parity here and how do I connect all of these pieces?” I want to share that with you.

Step 1: Create your exposition



Opening chase scene



Story click: Luke discovers *The Force* & his destiny

In a story, the exposition does two things:

1. Captures the audience’s attention
2. Sets the stage for rest of story by achieving “story click.”

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: I want to start by working with each phase and I am going to go back to the story, and then back to the example, and then give you the sub-steps and principles.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: So, here is the scene that most of you probably recall. You might be surprised, but I never saw *Star Wars* and I am being made fun of for it ever since we started our preparation for the first delivery of this clinic. I was in the Yukon. I was in the bush with no electricity and no running water. It was a 120 mile ride on horseback to a log cabin. It was 40 below zero and at times, even 60 below zero. It was really cold. I had 3,000 books in my dad's library. My dad is a scholar and we didn't have TV and I didn't see a lot. Now part of the time, I was in the bush, but even before that, I just didn't see a lot of the theatrical releases.

So, "*Star Wars*" was a blockbuster hit, and if you are paying attention to the recent issue of *Forbes Magazine* you will see that [George] Lucas is still making money. I don't have the numbers. I think from my memory, please you can correct me via Twitter if you would like. I think it was almost 93million dollars. But around 90 million of that he made this year mostly from that franchise as it still produces money. He is on the list of the top 100 most powerful celebrities, but in the story the expedition does two things and you see it here in *Star Wars* and we've since watched pieces of it and I do have experts on my staff. Daniel Burstein, who is our Director of Editorial Content here at MECLABS, is also a *Star Wars* aficionado. And we turn to Dan when we have questions about *Star Wars*. I also think Paul Cheney has seen it and probably everybody else in our company except me has seen it. I just got two thumbs up from Dan through the studio window.

It captures the audience's attention, number one. But the second thing that the exposition does is it sets the stage for the rest of the story by achieving story click. Now story click is something screenwriters are familiar with. Have you ever sat down to watch a movie and it got your attention, but you don't really know what you are looking at. You are trying to figure out where all this is going and you don't mind that in the beginning. You are carefully trying to sort it out because you are interested. Writers have discovered, that if they wait too long however to give the story click, the audience gets impatient, frustrated and upset. The good screenwriter knows how to start with something that captures your attention, typically its curiosity, and they convert curiosity into suspense. Curiosity makes you want to know what's going to happen. Suspense is more connected to the characters and you are wondering what's going to happen to them.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Either way at some point in any movie you have seen, whether it's "*Star Wars*" or "*Mission Impossible*," or even the latest theatrical release, there is a point that you reach in which you encounter the, "Where is the story is going with the basic context," question. That point is called the "story click." Now listen, in Web page after Web page, in long copy page after long copy page, or in short copy pages of every variety imagined and even on ecommerce sites that I go to, I can't find the story click. I don't actually know the direction that all of this is going and what I am supposed to do. We will look at examples coming out, but you have got to accomplish two things in that exposition at the beginning. You have got to capture their attention and you have to convert it into interest by helping the visitor grasp where all this is going.

Step 1: Create your exposition

Apply the Science of Optimization to Your Marketing

The Optimization Summit is laser-focused on helping marketers discover what really works in optimization and how to apply the science of optimization to their specific marketing needs.



MarketingExperiments: Certification

- An over-correction
- Specific to the marketing concern
- In close proximity to the concern

To meet this lofty goal and provide you the best possible Summit, we'll rely on case studies from your peers and the extensive MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments research libraries, which include *more than*:

On a landing page, the exposition is achieved through:

1. An attention capturing headline
2. A first paragraph with an obvious “story click.”

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Here there is an example. The headline captures your attention. We don't use a powerful sub-header. When I say powerful, it depends on whether you call that first paragraph a sub-header or not. In our case, it was sufficient and MarketingExperiments in particular is careful not to sound too much like some sort of typical vendor because we have a laboratory and there is a clinical approach. But it says the optimization summit is laser focused on helping marketers discover what really works in optimization and how to apply to science of optimization that our specific marketing needs. And so, we have sort of very quickly captured your attention and then we set up what's coming next.

Step 1: Create you exposition and deliver your “story click”

Step 1: Create your exposition

The Headline

- The role of a landing page headline is to arrest the visitors attention and get them into the first paragraph.
- Our testing suggests two effective strategies:
 1. Making a **Promise**
 2. Identifying a **Problem**



Dr. Flint McLaughlin: And all of that is of no value unless we can arrest your attention at the beginning, convert it into interest, and then move you forward into the main body of topic. Anybody that certainly teach on headlines knows something I tell you this is the headline, has the precise the same job, it is in fact a pick up line.

The goal of the headline is to get someone into a conversation. It's not to sell your product, its not even to express your value proposition. Can you express your value proposition with a headline? Often, it's the best way, but that's still not the point. That's just the maintenance. You need the headline to get their attention and focus it down into the beginning of conversation and we found there are two critical ways. These are things worth making note of. If you want to get exposition right in your copy, consider making a promise. It has to be a credible promise. One that instantly feels like you can deliver a promise and also consider identifying a problem. Now we present solutions before we build problems and that's a big mistake. The only time you can ignore spending too much time on the problem is when the audience already feels that acutely and knows that you are presenting a solution to that particular and very relevant problem. But in every case, the problem must precede the resolution. I am going to go on.

Step 1: Create your exposition

The First Paragraph

- The goal of the first paragraph is to get the visitor into the conversation. You do this by ensuring you answer three questions:

1. *Where am I?*
2. *What can I do here?*
3. *Why should I do it?*

- You must answer “what” before answering “why.”



IMPORTANT NOTE: “Story click” occurs when all of those questions have been addressed.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: So the goal of the first paragraph then is to get them deeper into this conversation and you have to answer three questions right away in order to sort of establish “story click”. The first one is “Where am I?” Any time there is transition, any time people move from one place to another, they have to sort of orient themselves and this occurs, this occurs on the page as well as it does on a piece of geography. It occurs in the mind. When people come out of the search engine, they’re not sure they are on the page they want to be on. They are not sure they are on the right page. If they are unclear, they seek clarity by clicking the little green arrow at the top. They land on your page with one foot forward and one back foot in the search engine and your job is to immediately get the back foot out of the search engine and on your page. Otherwise it will pick up their front foot go back to the search engine and click on another.

Now I am going to be teaching all of this on video and if you haven’t done this before we will give you access to what we are teaching. You find this movement going on and this is how Google accounts make their money. We go to the search engine. We take a step in, we look around if this is what we are looking for we might bring our back foot over and now we are clearly on the page. Most of us however don’t, not with the first click. We pull that front foot back out of the click another and then we click on another till we find something that feels like its where we are supposed to be. Now as soon as we get there since we get there we have another question. We don’t know we have this question it’s not like we typically articulate it in our conscious mind but its right there in the subconscious mind and it’s driving our activities.

“What can I do here?” How many of you have clicked onto a landing page and you don’t even know what you are supposed to do? That’s 80% of the pages I have seen on the Internet. Those of you in e-commerce, it’s a little bit easier, but even there we don’t know what the best way to shop is. We can shop by brand or category, or do we shop by product name? How do I find what I am looking for in the fastest possible way? Many times we put a bunch of products right in their face, right in their homepage, and if they happen to be looking for one of those products it’s very powerful. But if not, we confuse them. Am I against putting key products on the home page, I am not. I think it works, but you have got to know how to do it or you will confuse them. Because they are not sure as to what they can do here or what is the easiest way to get it done. This brings me to the third point, “Why should I do it?”

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: This is the beginning of the value proposition. The most profound thing we have discovered at MECLABS is a functional framework for the value proposition. We have a primary value proposition and we have derivatives and a lot of research behind it. I can’t explain it now, but I can articulate it into a single question. Your value proposition is essentially embodied in the answer to the primary question and is this. “If I am the ideal customer, why should I purchase from you rather than any of your competitors?” So if you cannot answer that, then you are not ready to trade. You are simply surviving in pockets of ignorance.

So, if you have been in these clinics, you have heard me talk about these three critical questions. Forgive me for much of what you are going to hear next will not be different than what you have probably heard before, but I cannot skip this because we are in those first four inches, those first seven seconds and part of what you have to do with the headline, sub-header and opening line of the paragraph begins to answer those questions. You must answer one or two instantly and start to answer three within the first paragraph. By the way, this assumes you have a paragraph. Copywriters of the world, those of you that are online right now, you know the importance of a paragraph, but too many marketers are relying on some sort of television production, we call it flash.

We are going to hit them with entertainment and then when they are trying to read it, we are going to switch it up on them and it’s really good because when we show it to the management it looks like it’s sophisticated. It looks like what they see on television and also it solves a lot of real estate wars because you have 6 people wanting the same four inches and so we will give it to all six of them. Three seconds at a time and all we are doing is operating with company-logic instead of customer-logic for satisfying our needs instead of the customer needs. The customer needs to know “Where they are,” exactly, “What they can do here,” and “Why they should do it.” We often interfere with that process by bouncing images in front of them instead of thought. With that in mind, I am still going.

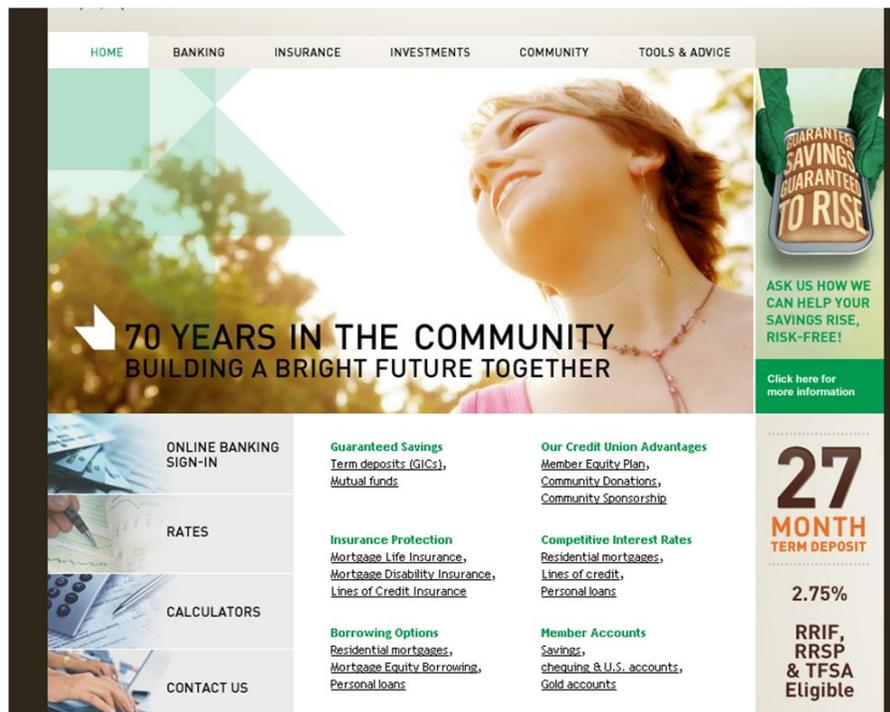
Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: So, it’s important also that you answer the “what” before you answer the “why”. A lot of us start talking about how great we are and why you should do business with us. Well first of all, if you do that in the wrong tone then I don’t trust you to start with. If your marketing voice is different than your real world voice, we have already got a problem. Marketers will meet each other after work, sit down at a bar and have a conversation that’s honest and transparent and did build relationships. Then they will go right back to their office and write with a whole different voice that sounds like the marketing voice of the world. It’s full of hype. We say, “we are the leading this”, or “the world’s fastest”

that and “the greatest this” and all we are doing is using language that if we took it with us after work and used it with our friends, then we would probably lose those friends.

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: We didn’t get those friends by making braggadocious self-claims. We got those friends by connecting and building relationships. By being honest, being transparent and even being vulnerable by admitting what we can’t do. Now I stress that because in our rush to tell people how great our company is, we often tell them “why” they should do something before we are really clear about “what” they can do here. What you are asking to do on this page is it to generate a lead and we often don’t know that it’s a download. Why? Because there are 16 calls- to-action on the same page! They are not even, not focused, layered or sequenced. Instead, they are all screaming at me at the same time. I come to your page and I don’t even hear a story. I don’t read words or listen to a voice. Instead I am hearing a plurality of voices. In fact, there are so many voices that I lose them and your voice becomes only noise.

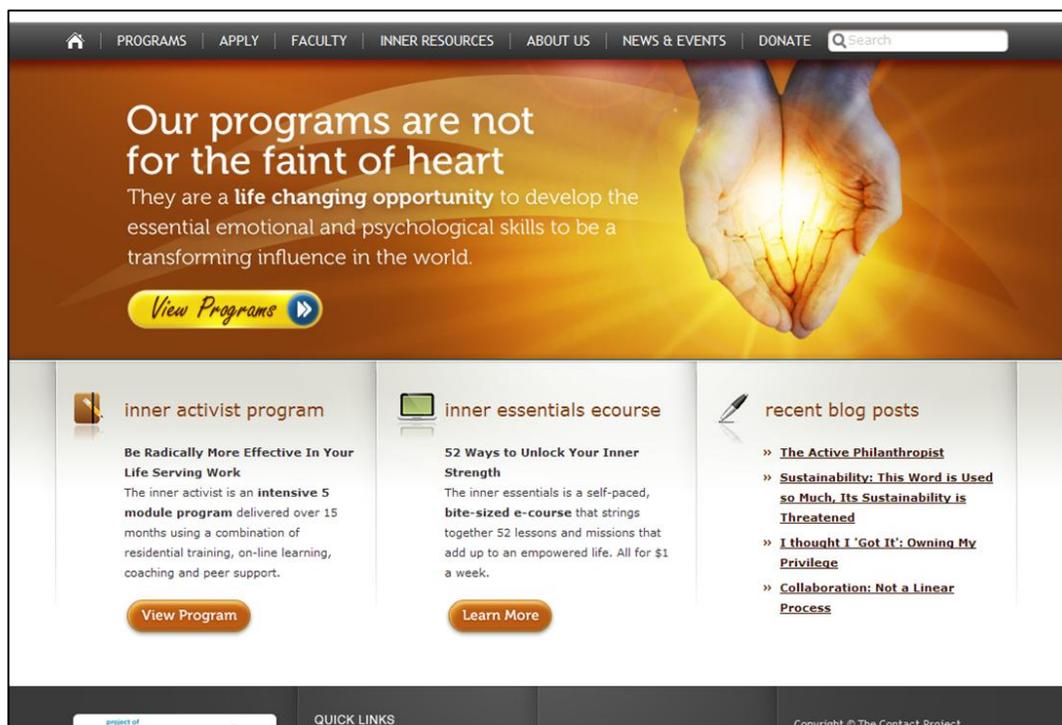
Marketers, we can’t control the unfolding story if we don’t understand that our job is no to hit them with so many offers until we finally find one they like or so many calls-to-action that one of them might connect. Our job is to know what they need and communicate clearly. Keep this in mind, and I am going to keep going. I am just in the exposition phase. I know that live-op is coming. I am going to sort of tighten my paces as I move forward, but there is a lot that has to be done here. We neglect the first four inches of the page and work on everything else afterwards and what we have doesn’t matter if you get disrupted.

Step 1: Where’s the story click?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: So here is an example of just a Web page somebody sent to us. “70 years in the community, building a bright future together” Is this woman in pain? Actually, I am not sure what she is doing but none of that looks normal. They are laughing at me [in the studio] Look how the page, half of the page is a picture of the underside of her chin. And “70 years in the community,” what does that have to do with her face? And then I’ve got a whole bunch of boxes and I don’t have “story click”. I don’t even know where am at. I don’t know what I can do here and I don’t know why I should do it. This page, to express it in very scientific terms, sucks. I don’t mean to be rude. I just want you to understand how bad it is. And I also am not trying to hurt anybody that submitted the page. I am just trying to teach you, and the reality is we don’t have time to miss the vital importance of getting those three questions right.

Step 1: Where’s the story click?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Here comes the next. Where is the “story click” on this page? It actually looks like there are three things talking at once. There are two evenly weighted buttons and a bunch of other links on the right-hand side. There is a button above those buttons. I count one, two buttons and then one, two, three, four and five calls-to-action including a view programs button. I don’t know how they all come together. This is the kind of page that the Internet is full of. It’s good news for you if you have a competitor, because they are doing it wrong. And we got people doing it wrong both copying each other. We call that best practices and that’s not best practices, that’s called pooled ignorance. You need to know systematically how to get engaged in that new conversation and unfolding story in their mind.

Step 2: Create you rising action

Step 2: Create your rising action

Obi-Wan fights Darth Vader. Vader wins.



In a story, the rising action serves to intensify the problem.

Rising action is marked by things like fight scenes, plot twists, character insights, etc.

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: So let's go to the second step, creating your rising action. Remember, there are three big pieces here. We are going to talk about the second one and here is piece create your rising action. This is where everyone [in the film *Star Wars*], fights Darth Vader and of course, Darth Vader wins. That is important because that makes it impossible for Luke [Skywalker] to win. If Obi [Wan Kenobi] loses, then how could Luke [Skywalker] possibly win against this villain? We are building the intensity of the problem and this is often marked by things like fight scenes and plucked with character insights and there is sort of an internal story going on that is the story inside of the main character's life while the external story is also taking place. The external storyline is the story outside of the opposition that is typically characterized as two forms of opposition.

One is the obstacle character and the, what we call the antagonist because the protagonist is the main character. But there is also a sort of internal opposition and if that overcome problems inside fears, lack of confidence, believing they are the chosen now whatever happens to be. Now how does that connect with the landing page?

Step 2: Create your rising action

- On a landing page, most of the page copy will serve to intensify the problem and the solution.
- We do this with five copy elements that we call “intensifiers”: **proofs, features, benefits, incentive, and urgency.**

Web Page – Body Copy



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- 10 Years of Optimization Laboratory Research**
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- New Research on Optimization from MarketingSherpa**
Attendees will receive benchmarks and analysis from MarketingSherpa's first ever *Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Report*. This new research will be presented for the **first time** at the Summit and will arm you with the data and insight necessary to make the best possible decisions for your optimization strategy.
- Multiple Case Studies from Marketers (not vendors and consultants)**
The Summit will include war stories and lessons learned by your marketing peers and mentors. While other events feature presentations by vendors, this event features case

ce to determine which case studies are relevant with the information they need and want.

Just like you – marketers responsible for new products and marketing metrics for email, in or lead nurturing. You won't hear any sales they provide – just the information you need to

erts that can help you with your unique set of one-to-one advice about your analytics and your landing pages. We urge everyone to unity. These clinics are not cleverly disguised press your challenges and leave you with ng efforts.

Optimization Certification
by Dr. Flint McLaughlin and learn the meta-has been proven to work in thousands of thousands of marketers from companies like nd more, this hands-on training course offers on, and insights on how you can optimize your

or Professional Resume
all attendees will take the exam to receive their one-to-one advice about your analytics and certification.
ore May 13 and save \$200.

a copy of Bob Heyman's new book
a free copy of Bob's new book, *and Improve the ROI of any*

campaign, provided by HubSpot. This new book shows marketers how to implement, evaluate, and utilize key analytics to maximize marketing ROI.

So don't delay, reserve your ticket today and save \$200



Dr. Flint McLaughlin: What we have done is intensified the problem or intensified the solution, the mix between which one we focus on the most depends on how cognizant, how aware the audience is of their problem. Now we do this with five elements. This is practical, this is that long section, when you saw that long section you might have said, Well gosh, that's one section and you should have broke that down into four for us. Look its three acts whether we want it to be or not. It's really the question of what you are doing that middle act. And I will tell you that you can see five elements in front of you. There are proofs, features, benefits incentives and urgency elements. All of those elements are ways that we can intensify either the problem or the solution.

The Rising Action

Intensifiers

Proofs: Specific statements – usually quantified – that bring credibility to the value proposition. (e.g., “10,000 landing pages tested...”)

Benefits: Specific statements that demonstrate how the main value will benefit the visitor’s current situation. (e.g., “Optimize your conversion processes...”)

Features: Specific statements that provide the tangible details of the offer (e.g., “Attendees will receive benchmarks and analysis from X...”)

• 10 years of optimization experiments
 • 10,000 landing pages tested and optimized
 • 1,000 marketing case studies
 • \$10 million in optimization marketing research

During the three days of Optimization Summit 2011 you will learn how to:

- **Measure what matters** and use web analytics to make *meaningful* decisions
- **Test your mission-critical activities** using *valid and scientific* experiments
- **Optimize your conversion processes** by stepping into the mind of the consumer

The MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments teams have spent countless hours meticulously reviewing speaker applications to verify that the content presented is relevant to your needs, practical to implement and proven in the real world.

Here are just 7 reasons to attend the first-ever Optimization Summit:

1. **10 Years of Optimization Laboratory Research**
 MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments have more than 10 years of scientific research spanning 1,300 plus experiments, including more than 1 billion emails and 10,000 landing pages. At the Summit you'll learn from the world's largest library of case studies and research available, designed to help you measure what matters, test your mission-critical activities and optimize your conversion processes.
2. **New Research on Optimization from MarketingSherpa**
 Attendees will receive benchmarks and analysis from MarketingSherpa's first ever *Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Report*. This new research will be presented for the **first time** at the Summit and will arm you with the data and insight necessary to make the best possible decisions for your optimization strategy.
3. **Multiple Case Studies from Marketers (not vendors and consultants)**
 The Summit will include war stories and lessons learned by your marketing peers and mentors. While other events feature presentations by vendors, this event features case

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: I am going to continue but I am going to how you some examples of each before I do so I am walking over to the screen and saying is this helping you talk to me. I want to look at you as you use the Q & A feature or tweets to tell me and give me feedback so I can optimize live based on what you are telling me. All right, I am watching Karen McGray and Robert. Thank you for the kind words, just keep giving us your feedback. We are reading it to see if we are helping you in the most effective way we possibly can. While my staff is reading that and I am sort of watching it over here I am going to keep going.

Here is an example of intensifiers, look at the statement, ten years of optimization experiments, by the way that’s an understatement we have been doing it a lot longer and we have done that and said that because we would rather understate and overstate. We want to be accurate with what we say. 10,000 landing pages tested and optimized. “1,000 marketing case studies”. 10 million, that’s way under the number. Why? Because it’s enough and was safe enough to say, but if we went back into the research it’s far more than that. But what are we doing there? We are communicating, we are intensifying the solution, isn’t it credible to think that out of all that, someone might be able to do this event and learn something. So here is an example of benefits.

Now we taken intensifiers and we translated them. We have taken the proofs and we have how that translates into benefits. And you will learn to do the things described there. “Measure what matters” “test your mission critical activities”, “optimize your conversion process”, same thing we are going to be learning in Denver next week, except this one will be even more sophisticated than last year.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: In fact we are only running live experiments and doing the validity with you, the audience is going to create treatments that we actually take live and we want to show you an unfolding experiment in all the optimization science behind it. But that's proved some benefits, features, "ten years of optimization laboratory research" and we explain that for new researchers like it says here "1,300 plus major experiments" and it just starts to explain what you will receive. You know the language there tangible details. We've got to translate now and this is very important so listen to me carefully. Every great writer knows this when they are writing a story, but every great copywriter knows it also. Whenever you're promising something in exchange, you've got to help them conceptualize, help them imagine, exactly what it is they are getting and how it looks in their life. If you can't do that, you are going to leave them trying to figure that out and that's far too much unsupervised thinking.

Unsupervised thinking is a phrase that I have used before and it almost sounds manipulative, but I don't mean for it to be manipulative. I just mean that you can't leave it up to them to make the meaning. You've got to help them make the meaning because you are trying to help them make what is the right choice and if you have an authentic value proposition, if you are the best solution for that particular customer set, you are doing the right thing as you serve them in this way.

Step 2: Create Your Rising Action

Intensifiers

Incentive: An appealing element you introduce to stimulate a desired action (e.g., "All attendees will receive a copy of Bob Heyman's new book...")

Urgency: An element of constraint you introduce to stimulate a desired action within a specific time-frame. (e.g., "reserve your ticket today and save \$200")

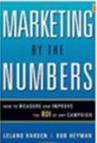
actionable ways to improve your marketing efforts.

- 6. Pre-Summit Workshop: Landing Page Optimization Certification**
Attend the Pre-Summit workshop, taught by Dr. Flint McGlaughlin and learn the meta-theory of landing page optimization that has been proven to work in thousands of experiments. Taught for eight years, to thousands of marketers from companies like Google, Cisco, Oracle, Verizon, Vocus and more, this hands-on training course offers you real examples, step-by-step instruction, and insights on how you can optimize your landing pages for maximum conversion.
- 7. Add Optimization Certification to Your Professional Resume**
At the end of the Pre-Summit Workshop, all attendees will take the exam to receive their Landing Page Optimization Certification. The workshop will teach you what is needed to pass the test to receive your professional certification.

Lost Chance Special: Reserve your ticket before May 13 and save \$200.

Special Bonus - All attendees will receive a copy of Bob Heyman's new book

Optimization Summit attendees will also receive a free copy of Bob's new book, *Marketing by the Numbers: How to Measure and Improve the ROI of any campaign*, provided by HubSpot. This new book shows marketers how to implement, evaluate, and utilize key analytics to maximize marketing ROI.



So don't delay, reserve your ticket today and save \$200.

[Reserve Your Optimization Ticket >](#)

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: This slide brings me now to another intensifier, incentive. "All attendees will receive a copy of Bob Heyman's new book" and it shows a copy of the book. Also present is urgency, as

it talks about the ticket sellout as a critical reason why you should reserve your ticket today and “save \$200 dollars”. Do you see how all those intensifiers are being built in? This page and you will be able to see this when we release the video and the transcript of today’s teaching, is a good model for how copy can unfold.

The Rising Action: Internal vs. external

IMPORTANT NOTE: All five of these copy elements can appeal to both the internal and external challenges and triumphs of the character.

External Story:

Save the World



The boss wants me to fix our metrics problems

5. One-to-One Coaching Clinics

We've assembled a team of industry experts that can help you with your unique set of circumstances. This is your chance to get one-to-one advice about *your* analytics program, *your* data, *your* testing platform and *your* landing pages. We urge everyone to take advantage of this incredible opportunity. These clinics are not cleverly disguised sales pitches. They are designed to address your challenges and leave you with actionable ways to improve your marketing efforts.

Internal Story:

Become a Jedi Master



I'd like to advance my career

7. Add Optimization Certification to Your Professional Resume

At the end of the Pre-Summit Workshop, all attendees will take the exam to receive their Landing Page Optimization Certification. The workshop will teach you what is needed to pass the test to receive your professional certification.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now, all five of these elements can appeal to both the internal and external challenges and for the character. Now listen, this is big most profound thing I have to say. Let me suppose you are in service business, and I know everybody is not in that but it’s a good example. Suppose you are on the phone right now. You offer a service, I am going to make the service up let’s suppose that you have people get more meaning out of their metrics. That’s your main business. That’s your service basis, you go in and you straighten up metrics and you help them translate the metrics into ROI actionable decisions.

Now if that is your service, bear in mind that you are actually achieving a sort of resolution to two stories. The first is the external. That company can get a higher set of results. A better set of results and more yes’s by interpreting their metrics. And by having a better understanding about the customer, that now translates the particular behaviors, which translates into more conversions. And that translates into more top line and that translates into a lower CPA. And that translates into more margins. You can see now that I am telling the story and this is how it works. That gives them an ROI. That’s the outside story just like here. The external story of *Star Wars* is to save the world, but there is also an internal story.

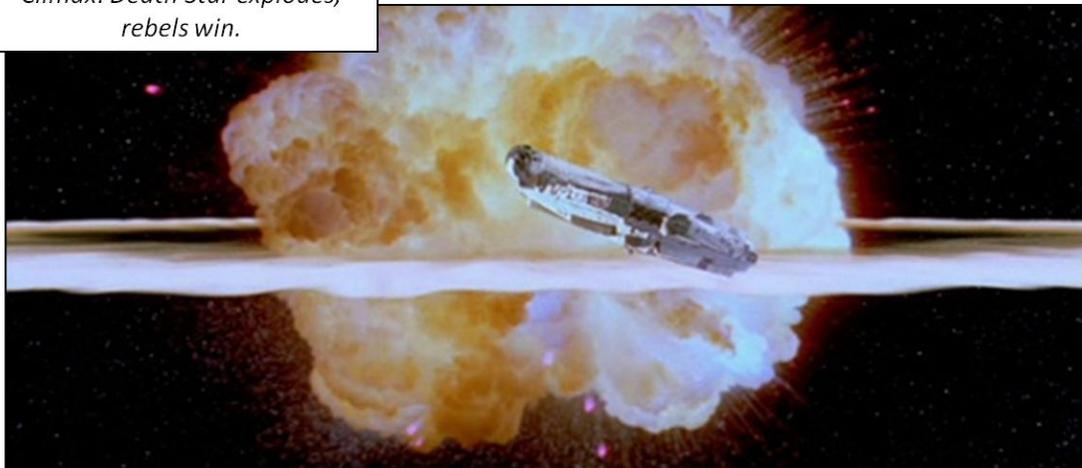
Dr. Flint McLaughlin: The internal story is that you yourself will learn something that will make your career better in the future, achieve significant results that will be valued by your boss. And if the savvy marketer understands how their solution is driving both the external victory and the internal victory, they can write far more effective copies. Here is the internal story for Luke [Skywalker] to overcome his past and become a Jedi master. All of that is sort of locked up in this unfolding set of actions and what's happening on the outside are simply critical drivers of what's happening on the inside, and frankly what's happening on the inside, its resolution, is what produces the win on the outside.

Now I say that carefully, anybody that's familiar with screen writing and story play knows that the typical resolution in the third act occurs because something changes in the character. That enables them to see the world differently or behave differently and thus they are able to overcome the challenge. Now there is an exception to that, that's in that rare case where they open the stories, the character never changes in the phase of opposition but that's a rare and separate sort of storyline. Most stories on the outside are driven by change on the inside. Copywriter, you are telling a story that has an impact on the external also the internal and all you talk about are the external in this point.

Step 3: Create your climax/resolution

Step 3: Create your climax/resolution

Climax: Death Star explodes, rebels win.



In a story, the climax is the single event that everything builds toward.

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: So that brings me to the third act. I have got to get the live optimization, I have got to teach this and there is a question on the screen. Here it is, let me see I don't see the question right now. Oh yes, here it is. *"It seems a bit unfair to compare homepages serving multiple functions and masters to a dedicated landing page. How could the home page for MarketingSherpa compare?"*

Let me explain that to you in a split second. I have an entire web clinic on the difference between landing pages and homepages. But guess what? Homepage as I mentioned too, in most cases the homepage is the front door and the job of the homepage is to get you in the right room. Did you hear that? And so no, it's not about getting a person in a specific room, but instead getting each person into the right room. And so the homepage has a very parallel set of principles that guide it. It's just that the outcome isn't necessarily to click on a specific link unless your homepage is your landing page. But rather, making certain that you get on the right path to the right link and there is a way you approach that. So let me continue, create your climax and resolution. In a story the climax is a single event that everything builds towards.

Step 3: Create your climax/resolution

Web Page – Call to Action



Reserve Your Optimization Ticket

On a landing page, the climax is the main call to action.

The goal is to lead the visitor to (and through) the pivotal decision.

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: And here it is for our optimization summit, “Reserve your optimization ticket”. I want you to click on that button, but to get you to click in that button I have got to get you to say yes many more times first. This is the macro-yes, press the button. Even I say it's the beginning the micro-yes. You could argue with me that the micro-yes occurs when they click confirm or the send order. I understand that but I don't want to get lost in that point, I just want you to know that this climax is at the peak of rising action. And with sub-dramas the climax becomes a sort of sub-climax and every sub-drama is a micro-yes. That is “Will I read from the headline to the opening landing page”, or “Will I clickthrough on this ad” or perhaps “Will I read this headline and move from this headline to the first paragraph” and what you see is this driving into the text that requires a whole bunch of acquiescence. A whole lot of yes's and all it takes is for one “no” to stop the whole process.

Step 3: Create Your Climax

- Four questions to ask yourself about your call-to-action (CTA):

1. Is your CTA clearly visible?
2. Does your CTA imply value, immediacy, or urgency?
3. Does it come in the right time in the thought sequence/story?
4. Does your CTA ask or assume?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: So here are four questions to ask at the call-to-action stage. One, “Is it really visible?” I’ll be honest; I look at page after page and it is hard to figure where I am supposed to click. Does your call-to-action imply value immediacy and/or urgency? Do you hear that? Your button, your call-to-action should be value positive, not value neutral and not value negative. Its value negative when you use words like “submit” or “register”, its value neutral when you say something like click here. It should be value positive. It should give me a reason to click that connects me with an immediate benefit. Do you see the immediacy here? I also want value. I want immediacy and I want urgency.

You will see in this button it says, reserve your ticket for the day and save \$200. There is urgency there. Does it imply value or are reserving your space? How good is this button, seven out of ten? It worked and we sold out so bravo to the copywriter. Could it be better? Sure. But it has urgency. It implies value trading on the velocity and momentum of the earlier copy and that’s where value is derived and it has immediacy.

All right so keeping all of that let’s go to the next. Does it come in the right time in the thought sequence? Listen putting that button too early is asking me to make a decision before I have enough information to make a proper decision which means my decision is no. I have told this over and over again I don’t want to wear my audience out something you heard overall again please bear with me I am trying to, we are trying to save the world and we have to keep saying this over and over again. With Jon Powell to my right, he is married but if Jon were single and he met a girl tonight and she was at a restaurant or a bar, and he walked up to her, kissed her full on the lips and asked her to marry him, he has probably got the call-to-action too early in the process.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: You have heard me say this and I generally tell it in the form of the story, I just want to make a point. What did Jon do there? He got the call-to-action above the fold. Congratulations, he also lost the girl. Had he walked up to her asked a sensible question, engaged in a conversation and

then went through a series of micro-yes's that led with probably getting a number so you could contact her and then led to perhaps, you know meeting her for Starbucks coffee and then leads to the process that creates any successful relationship. Jon's wife, his current wife, they met online. They were gamers and stuff like that, right Jon? And then he flew down and met her. How long did it take Jon?

Jon Powell: Six months.

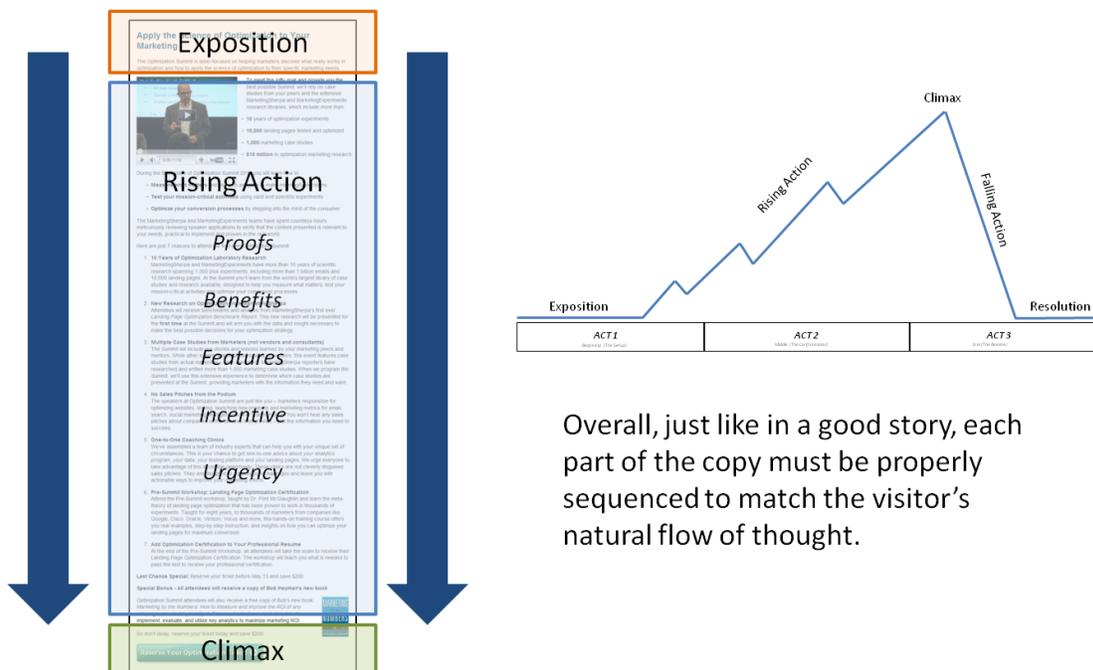
Dr. Flint McLaughlin: Six months of micro yes's.

Jon Powell: It took me six months to fly down, and then after that we dated for another year.

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: And then another year. Six months to fly down. That was a big sort of micro-yes. That's rising action, then another year before he got her to say yes. And I have Jon sitting right here with me and I got to tell you he is really ugly. I am truly teasing Jon because he was my assistant so I can't help but tease him. I was there. I saw it all, I was at the wedding and through 18 months of optimization here at MECLABS, we did all that we could to help.

My point for you is, get the call-to-action in the right order. Here is question number four. "Does are your call-to-action ask or assume?" I don't know where we got the idea that we are supposed to force people, that they are all sheep, and we are supposed to shout at them loudly. The louder we shout and the more authority that we acclaim, the quicker they are going to rush out and do what we want. This is stupid arrogant thinking. You need to ask, we can ask sometimes and at least ask or even if it's in not in the form of a question mark, it should be asked politely. We are talking to people, not targets and it changes the way we craft a copy.

Summary: Putting it all together



Overall, just like in a good story, each part of the copy must be properly sequenced to match the visitor's natural flow of thought.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Look at this sketch. It summarizes everything and then I am going to move to live optimization. These story elements are now crafted into the sketch. You have the exposition, you have the rising action and the components beneath it that proves the benefits. The features, the incentives, the urgency and you have the climax. And there is great parallel between unfolding thought sequence in the mind of the prospect and the unfolding thought sequence in the mind of the audience. Learn to benefit in your copy from the parallels.

Marketing Team Training Week

Marketing Team Training Week
Baltimore, MD

DAY 1 - Mon, July 30
Value Proposition

DAY 2 - Tues, July 31
B2B or Email Strategies

DAY 3 - Wed, Aug 1
LPO or Analytics

Build Your Own Curriculum

Save \$50 on My Ticket

The graphic features a central image of four business professionals (three men and one woman) gathered around a laptop, looking at the screen. The text is presented in a clean, professional font with a color palette of dark blue, light blue, and white.

MECLABS.com/TrainingWeek

[Note: The Marketing Team Training Week was held in Baltimore, MD on July 30th - August 1st, 2012. If you weren't able to attend, you can take the online, on-demand version of these certification courses using the links below.]

[MarketingExperiments Landing Page Optimization Online Certification Course](#)

[MarketingSherpa B2B Marketing Advanced Practices Online Certification Course](#)

[MarketingExperiments Email Messaging Online Certification Course](#)

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: As we continue, you will notice that my team wants me to remind you that we have a training week in Baltimore, Maryland. Three days of nothing but training! It's us, it's our scientists, including me teaching, teaching, teaching, teaching and teaching for hours to certify you and helping you learn. You can read about it there.

Live Optimization

Live Optimization

Submission #1

[www.indeck.com/
rental_boilers.asp](http://www.indeck.com/rental_boilers.asp)

The screenshot shows the INDECK website's 'RENTAL BOILERS' page. The header includes the INDECK logo and tagline 'THE POWERHOUSE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY'. A navigation menu contains links for PRODUCTS, SERVICES, PARTS, INDUSTRIES, ABOUT, CONTACT, and a search bar. The main content area is titled 'RENTAL BOILERS' and features a sidebar with a menu of categories: BOILERS, GENERATORS, CHILLERS, COMBUSTION CONTROLS, DEARATORS, GREEN POWER, LIBRARY, PURCHASE BOILERS, RENTAL BOILERS, and 24/7 EMERGENCY RENTAL SERVICES. The main content area includes a sub-header 'RENTAL BOILERS' and a paragraph stating 'Wherever and whenever customers need power, in an emergency or to meet a temporary need, Indeck can turn it on fast.' Below this, there are sections for 'Trailer-Mounted Watertube Boilers' (listing various models and capacities), 'Mobile Boiler Rooms', 'Skid Mounted Boilers', and 'Auxiliary Equipment'. A contact form on the right side is titled 'For Boiler Sales Rental or Lease 800-446-3325' and includes fields for Name, Company, Title, Phone, E-mail, and Comments, along with Submit and Reset buttons.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: I am going to move now to live optimization. I have just a few moments left, so we are going to do one. We are moving on to the final submission. Is that you Paul Cheney, is this your first time up here?

Paul Cheney: Yes.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Okay. So look here please audience, you can't click away yet. I tried to get Paul up here before and I have him here now. You will see that he is articulate, he is handsome and he is intelligent. Tell us what you would do to make this better?

Paul Cheney: Yeah so the first thing I would want to do about this page is imagine it through the eyes of the customer. So in thinking in terms of story, right now it looks like it's optimized for SEO. There is a keyword up there and there is not a lot of clarity. So the first thing I would do is maybe say, and by the way audience, this page is selling boilers. The boilers offered here provide heat and humidity to buildings and facilities. I would want to know two things if I am going to rent a boiler. A; Can the boiler be delivered to my area? And, B; How fast can I get it? Usually, if I am going to rent a boiler it's probably because of a disaster situation or my boiler just quit on me.

So I am going to suggest maybe a headline like "Get your boiler in x amount of days" and then maybe a sub-headline that says, "We are the world's largest provider of boilers," and so we can get them to you in x amount of days. Or more specifically, "we can get to you the right model that you need" I would

include some relevant specs on the boilers in the copy below the sub-headline. I will let Flint continue the optimization with the “submit” button down there.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Okay excellent. We have two minutes left so I will keep going, otherwise I would have to do a song now. So Paul, please stay up here with me and we will close out the clinic together. Listen guys, of course the colors are all wrong making it hard to read. The design here is fatally flawed, but let’s talk more specifically about the copy. We need a headline. Don’t just tell me we are on that; tell me what I can do here. The white text underneath rental boiler doesn’t really serve the headline. It looks like opening text to the paragraph. It looks jumbled together; there is no space between it in the first paragraph so it looks like its part of the paragraph.

We need a strong headline. And if you made the claim that Paul just said about “world’s largest unit”, you need to substantiate it with statistics, with information and with specificity. And then you need to sort of unfold in a reasonable order and you then need to ask yourself, “How much information do they need in order to provide me with that form on the right.” And what are they getting? It says for boiler sales, rentals or lease and it gives you an 800 number and a form.

Number one, I just call the number. I wouldn’t put that right on the form if I wasn’t going to use it. Putting on the form is the wrong place. Number two, it tells me that if I submit this I am going to be pestered by a salesman, so the entire messaging is wrong. I don’t have a strong enough value proposition being offered on this page. What is the value proposition on this page about? Well, it is tangibly about the boilers, but in reality it’s about what I get in exchange for giving me that lead information. You need to give me a better reason to complete that form and we don’t do that.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: This looks like the typical sort of form done by someone in the engineering and manufacturing trades. Just an experiment and Perry submitted this page. And Perry, I know that I don’t have time to help you as much I would like. But Perry we just did a form like this for a company, if I told you their name you would know who they are. They are multi-billion dollar industrial organization and we optimized their lead generation form and the results produced a 600% plus increase.

If you will send us what you are thinking about this form, we will have Paul or Jon, or one of this here actually give you back some feedback because you have been brave enough to provide your submissions. Others that you have sent your pages in and we ran out of time because material was so important to communicate it. We will try to get your pages in and use them. We will let you know when and how we might be able to help you.

I want to thank you for coming today. I would like to ask you to go ahead and give us some feedback on how well this has worked for you and before I go, I would like to you to use the Q & A feature and tell me did you find this helpful today. Give me your feedback, so I can read it because I am going straight out of the studio only after I have read that into my next engagement. I am grateful for your trust and I would ask that if you find this useful, you tell a friend, we need to build a community of evidence based marketers.

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Welcome to the MarketingExperiments Journal email for March 17, 2011. Every three weeks we send this high-level update of our research to 98,000 marketers. Today you'll find:

- The on-demand replay of [Do You Have the Right Value Proposition?](#), where we taught five simple steps to determine your optimal value proposition
- An invitation to our next Web clinic, where we will discuss proven strategies for [Converting Leads to Sales](#)
- An opportunity to [share your optimization and testing discoveries](#) with your peers at the 2011 Optimization Summit and receive a complimentary ticket to this inaugural event.

Our job is to help you do your job better. [Let us know](#) how we can help.

Daniel Burstein
Director of Editorial Content
MECLABS Primary Research

Resource #1

Do You Have the Right Value Proposition?
How to test, measure, and integrate your Value Proposition online

According to Dr. Flint McGlaughlin, there are five simple steps any marketer can take to identify their optimal value proposition. During this dense, yet very practical, Web clinic, he reviewed two recent experiments aimed at discovering value propositions that increase customer response.

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Discover What Really Works in Optimization

[MarketingExperiments](#) is a primary research facility, wholly-owned by [MECLABS](#), with a simple (but not easy) seven-word mission statement: **To discover what really works in optimization.**

We focus all of our experimentation on optimizing marketing communications. To that end we test every conceivable approach and we publish the results in the *MarketingExperiments Journal* ([subscribe](#)).

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Would you like to learn the MarketingExperiments optimization methodologies from the inside out? We're always looking for the next great optimizer to push our research forward. Learn more on our [careers page](#).

Share your success and learnings

While we at MarketingExperiments are glad to share what we've discovered about optimization to date through our own experimentation, we also publish case studies and completed tests to facilitate peer-learning from real marketers with real challenges.

To that end, we're always looking to shine a light on your hard work. If you have a success or learning you'd like to share, [let us know](#).